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“Amazons” in the Pantheon? Women Warriors, Nationalism, and Hero Cults in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Chile and Peru

Gabriel Cid

War, Nationalism, and Female Heroism in Nineteenth-Century Latin America

This chapter addresses the paradox of female access to the national pantheon of heroes in two Latin American national cases: nineteenth-century wars fought in Chile and Peru and their aftermaths. Warfare was endemic in Latin America during the nineteenth century and played a decisive role in the process of nation-state formation. Conflict played a role not only in setting borders and in the concentration or fragmentation of state power, but also in the creation of narratives about the nation-state.¹ Since the break with the Spanish Monarchy, the war and the army have had a key impact in the region. Power disputes, competition over economic resources, provincial and ethnic conflicts, as well as the definition of the limits between the new states, made military violence an everyday factor on the continent. A widespread consensus exists regarding the deep-seated links between warfare and nationalism, as military confrontations between communities tend to accentuate their contrasts and differences, often linking them to real or imagined ethnic factors. Memory policies, with their associated rituals and discourses, help to keep these nationalist narratives alive long after the wars have ended. The relationship between war and nationalism not only functions during periods of conflict, but also continues long after the fighting has ended.²

One area in which this type of relationship can be clearly seen is in the creation of pantheons of national heroes, most of which in Latin America are peopled by figures linked to warfare.³ The link between war and the creation of heroes should come as no surprise, particularly as few values are as highly prized as a willingness to die in the defense of the nation. The exaltation of the idea of sacrifice plays a key role in attaining the status of hero, as it provides a dramatic display of the “sanctification of shared values.”⁴

What is more, times of war bring with them greater fluidity in social conventions, demand greater social mobilization, and encourage the democratization of the national

pantheons. This has a significant impact on the issue examined here: female warriors. Indeed, war has a paradoxical dimension. On the one hand, as Nira Yuval-Davies has written, wars often reinforce the sexual division of labor. Thus, although certain archetypes of warrior women exist—such as the Amazons of the Ancient Greeks—the prevailing discourse maintained that women soldiers were “unnatural,” as femininity has traditionally been associated with peace.⁵ This led to recurring themes that distance women from the battlefield, limiting their sphere of action to caring for the wounded, feeding the troops, performing charitable work linked to the social consequences of conflict, and so forth.

Nonetheless, themes of sacrifice linked to collective defense of the nation, together with the flexibility of social conventions in times of war, have also formed a route for women to be recognized as heroes. In fact, the archetype of the Amazon enabled the concept of women warriors to enter familiar narratives. The inevitable connection between the Amazons of myth and women involved in armed conflict granted these female soldiers a “mythogenic” background, to use Burke’s term,⁶ which facilitated their entry into spaces of public recognition.

This very paradox of the role performed by women can be analyzed in historical terms. The wars that Chile and Peru fought in the nineteenth century provide several female heroes whose public acceptance shows the different ways in which this issue was addressed. In Chile, although framework for women’s labors during wartime remained traditional, several cases exist of female soldiers—with Candelaria Pérez, the famed “Sergeant Candelaria” as the principal archetype—who challenged these roles and received not only official recognition, but also renown amongst their contemporaries, although this was short-lived. Meanwhile, in Peru, the tendency toward division of roles during wartime remained more rigid than in Chile. Models for the creation of heroes were therefore generally attached to women who followed these roles, either collectively—the *rabonas* and *cantineras* (sutlers)—⁷ or individually. Except for a few cases that only came to public recognition after their time, and with tales that took on a more apocryphal style—such as Leonor Ordoñez—female warriors were not widely celebrated amongst their contemporaries. All in all, the presence of women in official recognition of heroes of Peru’s nineteenth-century wars seems to have been more successful and long-lasting than in the case of Chile. This later recovery of the memory of female warriors in the Peruvian case has more to do with the need to construct ethnically popular icons according to the official indigenous nationalist agenda than a redefinition of gender roles as a result of the wars themselves. The weight of oral tradition helped to make these heroines moldable characters according to the needs of the populist and nationalist discourses of the 1960s and 1970s, unlike the Chilean case, where these narratives were built in wartime and then forgotten.

I suggest that these differences refer to the ways of conceptualizing war in both countries. In the Chilean case, it was a war of conquest, so the nationalist discourse and its gender roles tended to feminize the adversary and his passivity and submission to the victor army.⁸ In this structure, the warlike actions carried out by women, in addition to having historical antecedents, also possessed a positive value for the contemporaries,

who exalted the military courage. In the Peruvian case, the late feminine heroization referred more to the particularities of a less martial nationalism than the Chilean, and founded on revenge, collective victimization, and irredentist discourse regarding the conquered territories. Thus, in the Peruvian historical narrative, the action of women tended to be used to show the excesses of the Chilean occupation, focusing on the acts of violence committed by the troops that had a recurring objective in Peruvian women. It was only in the 1960s and 1970s that said discourse, while still important, gave way to the discourses around female heroization, but in the key of nationalist exaltation of popular resistance to the invader. Thus, the differences in female heroic representations have to do with the different ways of conceiving the nationalist discourse in both countries based on their divergent war experience

The "Chilean Amazon": The Sergeant Candelaria

One of the first regional armed conflicts amongst countries that were emerging from their recent independence came in 1836, with the War of the Peru-Bolivian Confederation. In that year, the politician and military Andrés de Santa Cruz led the project of forming a supranational state uniting the republics of Bolivia and Peru. For the Chilean government the establishment of the Peru-Bolivian Confederation implied a threat to the balance of powers in the South Pacific, risking the position of the port of Valparaíso as the center of the region's trade. For that reason, supported by some Peruvian caudillos dissatisfied with the policies of Santa Cruz, he decreed war which lasted for three years. In January of 1839, the decisive Battle of Yungay put an end to the Confederation, gaining Chile new national heroes, chosen from those who played the most outstanding roles in the fighting: General Manuel Bulnes (who went on to take the presidency in 1841); Juan Colipí, whose image evokes the country's indigenous legacy; and the woman, Candelaria Pérez, known as "Sergeant Candelaria."

Pérez came from humble origins and is believed to have worked as a domestic servant in Valparaíso before moving to Peru and finding similar work there. She managed to save enough money to open a small Chilean tavern in the port city of Callao, but the outbreak of hostilities between the two countries forced her to close the business. Having enrolled first as a spy, then as a sutler in the Carampangue Battalion, she finally attained a combat position and fought with outstanding courage in the Battle of Yungay.⁹

The heroine caused great commotion upon returning to Santiago in the victory parade for Chilean troops in December 1839, particularly for the "great emotional power over the imagination of the people whenever something departs from the ordinary progress of human happenings," as the journalist Vicente Reyes noted. This situation could help to explain her popularity following the war, together with a number of other "mythogenic" characteristics, as Reyes spoke of her as a Chilean Joan of Arc, and a "Chilean Amazon."¹⁰ Antonio Barrena, who was himself a veteran, recalled that during those days "everyone would ask after her, everyone sought the honor of being introduced to her so they could shake her hand, and meet the heroine of modern

times." Riding a horse that was given to her by one of her admirers, Candelaria Pérez "looked prouder than any Amazon in the gaze of a country in awe of her heroism and eager to see her."¹¹

Her popularity among the people of Santiago, together with her performance on the battlefield, led to pressure on the government to award her some official recognition. A short while later, in January 1840, the authorities promoted her to the rank of sergeant—leading to her nickname of "Sergeant Candelaria"—and awarded her a state pension. A few months later, President Prieto himself petitioned Congress to promote her to the rank of sub-lieutenant. Echoing a motion raised by General Bulnes, he justified the promotion claiming that Candelaria Pérez was a "remarkable woman" whose patriotism led her to abandon "her former relations and whatever she possessed" to serve in the army, coping with "the rigors and privations" of the campaign alongside her male counterparts. The crowning moment of her heroism was the Battle of Yungay, when she even "came to rival the most seasoned warriors in the vanguard." This increase in her pension not only covered her material needs, but also comprised an "equitable and fair measure that still affects the honor of the nation."¹² Congress passed the motion a month later, concluding that the measure was "a well-earned award in view of the efforts and patriotism shown by the recipient throughout the Peru campaign, setting an example that perhaps served to encourage the heroic feats of arms that were performed during that war."¹³

However, despite these events, her immediate rush of popularity and renown faded over the course of time, until Pérez was all but forgotten. The only attempts to recover her fame came from literary circles, stemming from a logic of historical curiosity and a yearning for justice. For instance, February of 1849 saw the premiere of the play *La acción de Yungay* by Manuel de Santiago Concha, with the character of "Sergeant Candelaria" as one of the protagonists.¹⁴ The audience included Pérez herself, who was quickly noticed and given an ovation. That was to be the last public recognition that she enjoyed.

The writer Vicente Reyes, fascinated by this remarkable phenomenon of popularity and forgetfulness, interviewed the heroine in 1859. The veteran told the young writer about her adventures with an evident desire to reclaim her place among the country's heroes. Reyes himself was insistent on that point, contrasting the few days of glory when Candelaria entered Santiago after the war, when "leading dignitaries were quick to festoon her with congratulations," with the descent into obscurity suffered by the majority of war veterans. By the late 1850s, the mythical heroine had been reduced "almost to the condition of an invalid," living with a meager pension—increased by 5 pesos in 1852—so Reyes called for her to be granted a further bonus, in recognition of "the uniqueness of her services, and as an encouragement for the future."¹⁵

In 1869, the prolific historian Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, like Vicente Reyes, decided to visit Candelaria's modest home to hear about her adventures from her own lips. He wrote that her humble origins—easily perceptible in her "clearly mestizo" physiognomy—had played a role in her public appeal, paving the way for the public's empathy with "modern Chile's most famous Amazon." Vicuña Mackenna was particularly interested in the process whereby Pérez "went from tavern-keeper to heroine," with the war providing the necessary opportunity. Without the war,

Candelaria Pérez would have led an unimportant life. It was only in the context of warfare that her heroic virtues were manifested, in a reflection that transposed the characteristics that the people admired: patriotism, sacrifice, solidarity, and courage. The fame attained by "Sergeant Candelaria" was quick to ebb, as Vicuña Mackenna wrote. When he visited her she was living "on little apart from public charity," and "in the seclusion of a hermit." Without the war that had been her route to heroization, Candelaria Pérez returned to her "meager existence."¹⁶

One year after that meeting, the newspapers of Santiago announced the death of Candelaria Pérez, on March 28, 1870. Her death reinvigorated the myth of "Sergeant Candelaria." For example, *El Ferrocarril* recalled "her admirable bravery and fearlessness," particularly for a woman.¹⁷ Another newspaper, *El Independiente*, briefly memorialized the "life of this manly woman, who is both one of the celebrities of our army, and an eminently popular heroine," as "her name is familiar to everyone, and nobody is unaware of the feats of Sergeant Candelaria." It reported that her adoption as a folk hero was rooted in oral tradition, "the only thing that has spread word of her, often ascribing incredible actions to her."¹⁸

The opinion published in *El Independiente* reflects the staying power of popular tradition about the construction of heroic narratives. The tension between neglect of "Sergeant Candelaria" amongst the official authorities and remembrance in oral tradition helps to understand the comment made by writer Ventura Blanco in 1870, who wondered why, as the woman was living out her years under conditions of penury, the "people were still enthusiastically repeating tales of her feats."¹⁹ If Vicente Reyes's goal was to rescue the heroic deeds of Candelaria Pérez in the collective memory, and Vicuña Mackenna was endeavoring to explain the astounding journey that took her from innkeeper to "modern Chile's most famous Amazon," then Ventura Blanco's mission was to mythify the image of "Sergeant Candelaria" in the wake of her death. He too had interviewed her, and went on to present her as the most genuinely popular heroine the country had ever known.

In a nationalist historiographical essay, Blanco called for a "task of justice reparation" for that "exceptional woman," noting the outstanding features of her character and filling the narrative with anecdotes that underscore the bravery of a heroine who nonetheless died in "misery and abandonment." The humbleness of her funeral provides an indicator of this abandonment: only five mourners attended. Blanco closes with a call to buy a burial monument for the heroine, which he described as a "work of holy reparation," and the only way to "snatch remembrance of this extraordinary woman from the obscurity of the grave."²⁰

Blanco's proposal bore fruit, as a few years later historian Gonzalo Bulnes mentioned the poem that was carved on the new tomb of "Sergeant Candelaria," perhaps written by Blanco himself:

"Beneath this cross, the key of heaven, lies/An extraordinary, heroic woman, Honor of Chile on Peruvian soil,/So unfortunate, Sergeant Candelaria. Remembering Yungay with holy zeal/The people raise their prayers for her, And in remembrance of her noble story,/Mourn her troubles and honor her name."²¹

The War of the Pacific and Female Heroism in Chile and Peru

A decade after the death of "Sergeant Candelaria," Peru and Chile were once again at war. The War of the Pacific (1879–84), caused by border disputes in the saltpeter zone of the Atacama Desert, was fought between Chile and its Andean neighbors, and had an immense impact on the region not only by redrawing the countries' borders—the incorporation of the Atacama Desert into Chilean territory, leaving Bolivia landlocked—and its repercussions on the power balance in South America, but also for the nationalistic narratives that emerged from the conflict.

The war led to an extensive mobilization of the military forces, the logistical capacities, and the civil society of the combatant nations.²² Women were certainly not left on the sidelines, not only because the scale of the conflict made their support a necessity, but also because, unlike the previous war, the existence of women's organizations resulted in great visibility for women's participation, in a manner that had not previously been seen during wartime.

Indeed, exhortations in the press in both countries encouraged women to take part. For example, Chilean educator José Bernardo Suárez called on the country's women to come to its defense: "Our virtuous ladies must take on an important role in this war: collecting contributions to provide the government with weapons; organizing dances and gatherings for the same purpose; encouraging mothers not to protest against their sons going off to war; and spreading this message."²³ This type of discourse tends to feature a paradoxical dimension: while encouraging women to take part, it also limits their participation to the domestic roles assigned to them. Women certainly had no place on the battlefield in Suárez's view: "The delicacy of the female sex is at odds with the ideas of destruction that war represents." "Women are born to perpetuate humanity, and not to destroy it," so the female sex had to be "left outside the life of the barracks and the encampment."²⁴ Such comments were not unique to the situation of Chile. In the words of the Lima newspaper *El Peruano*, "Christian civilization" has excused women of the "duty to take up arms," but does require them "to share with the citizens the exhaustion and sacrifice of war, helping to soften the barbarism of war and its disastrous results."²⁵

By taking on these roles, women cooperated actively both on the home front and through several organizations that focused mainly on supplying food and caring for the wounded and children left orphaned by the conflict. Associations like the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the Company of Mary, Cruz Blanca in Perú, and the Sociedad Protectora de Santiago y Valparaíso, the Casa de María and the Sociedad del Perpetuo Socorro in Chile provided opportunities for women's participation during the war.²⁶

Although the prevailing discourse on women's roles tended to limit them to the home front, a few dissenters called such messages into question. Eva Canel, a Spanish publicist living in Lima, called for an expansion of women's sphere of activity, to "shake off this absurd timorousness" and "sacrifice our wellbeing for the sake of our patriotic love." Some of the "manlier women" could even go to the battlefield "to help those who fall."²⁷ In fact, in 1882, around twenty women from the city of Arequipa requested permission to create a female military unit, claiming it did not matter to "patriotic

love whether it was contained in the body of a woman." The move to the battlefield emerged through the logic of supporting men's efforts in combat, both materially and emotionally: "Our enthusiasm cannot be silenced because we were born women [...] let us mix our blood with that of those who we love most dearly," they concluded.²⁸

Some of the most noteworthy women who wanted to take part in the conflict from within the theater of operations included the sutlers, known as *cantineras* amongst Chilean forces, and *rabonas* amongst the Peruvians. During the wars that were fought in the nineteenth century, these were women who brought their peacetime roles to the battle zone: cooking and delivering food, washing soldiers' clothing, and taking care of the sick.²⁹ Many of them were the wives and partners of soldiers, although sometimes soldiers' mothers also performed these duties. Thus, even though these *cantineras* and *rabonas* accompanied the armies to the battlefield, prevailing discourses called for them to maintain behavior associated with femininity. Indeed, writer Abelardo Gamarra described the Peruvian *rabonas* as the soldiers' "companions in their exhaustion, with no stake in their glories." They were "the type of faithful wife, the model of wives, the angel dressed in sackcloth."³⁰

Cantineras and *rabonas* tended to personify the division of roles in wartime, even in combat zones. Nonetheless, the fact that they traveled to the front presented them with a strong opportunity to transition from caring for the wounded to becoming women warriors. However, despite these similarities, there were major differences in social recognition of military action by women between the two countries. In Chile, military action performed by women was quick to be celebrated and lauded with public recognition among contemporaries, and then faded over the course of time. Conversely, in Peru, the model associated with femininity was maintained, although this did not exclude the possibility of military action; and although little recognition was accorded at the time, this did provide women with a route into the pantheon of national heroes, where their deeds were remembered for longer and with more formal success than in Chile.

In "Sergeant Candelaria," Chilean society already possessed a heroic archetype that could be mobilized to recognize further military prowess amongst women, fitting it into a well-established interpretative framework. The Tarapacá Campaign (April–December 1879), the first phase of the land campaign of the war, proved to be the birthing grounds of feminine combat heroism. A case in point would be that of the *cantineras* of the Second Line, Leonor Solar and Rosa Ramírez, martyrs of the Battle of Tarapacá. Solar and Ramírez, who before the outbreak of war had been working as seamstresses, were pulled into the din of battle, pinned down in a farmhouse, wounded, and finally captured by a Peruvian unit. According to a newspaper, the Peruvian troops mercilessly fell into "an orgy of blood and cruelty," mutilating the *cantineras*' breasts and butchering their bodies, before burning down the farmhouse with their bodies inside.³¹ Nothing was found amidst the ashes except for the scorched shoe of one of the women, which Patricio Lynch, the commanding officer of Iquique, sent back to Santiago along with other war trophies, as a patriotic relic.³²

In the same battle, another *cantinera* attained public recognition in a very different way. Dolores Rodríguez—lauded in the press as a "second Sergeant Candelaria"—accompanied her husband to the battlefield as his *cantinera*. When he was killed,

she took up his rifle and killed three Peruvian soldiers, before being wounded in the leg.³³ The press highlighted one of her actions as the most praiseworthy: even though the *cantinera* was wounded, she expressed a desire to continue with the campaign instead of returning home, proof of “how much Chilean bravery is capable of, even in the female sex.”³⁴ Dolores Rodríguez was promoted to the rank of sergeant by the Commander in Chief, Erasmo Escala.

The most striking case of a *cantinera* who personified the link between vengeance, warfare, and heroism with remarkable popularity during the war was Irene Morales. Born in 1865 in the district of Chimba, Santiago—the same as Candelaria Pérez—Morales had worked as a seamstress, and entered into her first marriage at the age of twelve. Quickly widowed, she moved north to the city of Antofagasta and married a man named Santiago Pizarro. Pizarro became involved in a quarrel with a Bolivian soldier, was executed in September 1878, and his body abandoned in the desert. The Chilean occupation of Antofagasta in 1879 brought Morales an opportunity for revenge. An eyewitness reported that amongst the crowd that received the incoming Chilean troops, one effusive orator stood out, haranguing the crowd to take up arms and seek out revenge on the Bolivians: that orator was Irene Morales.³⁵ She dressed as a man in order to join the army, and took part in the landing at Pisagua and the Battle of Dolores, where she fought alongside her male counterparts. On learning of her performance on the battlefield, General Baquedano allowed her to wear a feminine military uniform, and promoted her to the rank of sergeant. She later took part in the capture of Arica—where her unquenchable thirst for vengeance caused her to order the execution of more than sixty Peruvian prisoners—³⁶ and in the decisive battles of Chorrillos and Miraflores.

Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna saw Morales's story as similar to that of the “widely celebrated Candelaria.” And although he never hid his distaste for the “woman warrior, soldierly and masculine,” he could not fail to recognize the heroism displayed by Morales in the many battles in which she fought. There can be no doubt that these were exceptional actions and worthy of recognition, but he still urged the heroine to return to the place that society assigned to women in times of peace. It was time, he advised Morales, to swap “her warrior's revolver for her old, honored and beloved sewing machine”³⁷—advice that Morales ignored.

Meanwhile, in Peru, the activities of women during wartime fit the established frameworks for feminine behavior under such conditions. Thus, apart from the broad case of the *rabonas*, only two women played a striking role on the front lines, particularly in the irregular combat that resisted the Chilean invasion from 1881 to 1884: Leonor Ordoñez and Antonia Moreno de Cáceres.

While little documentary evidence exists, and significant parts of her life story are known largely from the oral tradition, Leonor Ordoñez seems to have followed a similar path to the Chilean *cantineras*. Born in Huancani in 1837, Ordoñez enlisted as a *rabona* to join her husband in the war; he was then killed in the battles to defend the capital from Chilean forces. Following defeats at Chorrillos and Miraflores, Ordoñez returned to the mountains to take part in the irregular combat led by Andrés A. Cáceres. In the town of Huancani, in the Mantaro Valley, Leonor Ordoñez led a guerrilla band numbering more than forty local farmers who brought sticks, stones, shovels, and

Figure 10.1 Irene Morales, c. 1881 (National History Museum).

spears, operating at the orders of Father Buenaventura Mendoza. In the Huaripampa Engagement (April 22, 1882), Ordoñez was captured, tortured, and eventually put to death by troops commanded by Colonel J. Antonio Gutiérrez.³⁸

Peruvian feminine heroism, albeit necessarily rooted in a logic based on the society's expectations of women's roles, was perhaps best incarnated by Antonia Moreno. She was not a woman soldier but assumed a remarkable role during the Chilean occupation,

although always in the footsteps of her husband, Andrés A. Cáceres, the leader of the mountain resistance groups. Born in Ica in 1848, following the occupation of Lima by Chilean forces, Moreno undertook significant actions as part of the Patriotic Resistance Committee, working to obtain money and intelligence, and to oversee the delivery of weapons and ammunition to the guerrilla fighters in the Andes.³⁹

Under the steady gaze of occupying Chilean forces, Moreno decided to take her three daughters and flee to the mountains to meet up with Cáceres. It was her participation in the Breña Campaign that earned her the recognition of the people at large, particularly among indigenous peoples, as she was seen as the leader of the *rabonas* and worked closely with her husband, the so-called “Wizard of the Andes.” His legendary charisma certainly played a major role in fostering the heroic narrative upon which much of this recognition was built. Cáceres, who spoke Quechua, had a significant symbolic background for the indigenous people of the Andes, who saw him as a continuation of their Inca heritage. The deployment of this “mythogenic” feature was a key element in his heroization. According to Antonia Moreno’s memoirs—an unique historical source about the 1879 women warriors⁴⁰—“the Indians saw Cáceres as a reincarnation of the Inca,” calling him “Tayta with so much adoration that they moved him.” The same indigenous people of the highlands called her “great mother.”⁴¹ It was from that position, repeated time and again in historiography, that Moreno earned public recognition: wife, mother, and selfless companion.

“Amazons” in the Pantheon? Memories, Gender, and Nationalism in the Postwar

In October of 1883, Chile and Peru signed the Treaty of Ancón, putting an end to the war. However, one issue remained unresolved: sovereignty over the regions of Tacna and Arica, that Chile had annexed during the conflict. Disputes over this issue only came to an end in 1929, so the rivalries and shared imageries that arose during the war lasted for decades. Those were prolific years for the creation of *lieux de mémoire* for the war, a time when the hero cult, expressed in public sculptures, the names given to places and streets, and civic rituals, reached a peak of intensity. These dimensions of heroization were limited to a select group of male heroes who stood for patriotic virtues such as bravery and selfless sacrifice.⁴²

This process must be understood as something more complex than a simple imposition of nationalism as a state ideology. Indeed, both the nationalistic narrative and the rituals for bringing it into society were often promoted by civil society itself, particularly among veterans. It is relevant to examine this issue considering the concept described by Jay Winter as “collective remembrance,” a public recollection that is different from that of the state, but rather founded on a need for public sharing of the experiences linked to something so shocking as warfare, preventing its oblivion.⁴³

The postwar years saw the formation of a duality in the remembrance of the warrior women discussed in this essay. In Chile, the country that had seen more cases of women soldiers, the national pantheon of heroes minimized the visibility of women. Even the *Álbum de la gloria de Chile* [Album of the Glory of Chile], which Benjamín

Vicuña Mackenna published during the years after the war, dedicated only a few lines to the part women had played in the conflict. The book, which provides biographical sketches of more than a hundred personalities described as heroes, mentions women only in the broadest category of "the anonymous of the war." They only warranted an evidentiary appendix in his thesis on how Chile had defeated its neighbors thanks to collective national heroism. In this scenario, women's participation in the war should have been described, "be it with the Roman matron's majestic cloak, with the virgin's spotless apron, or with the picturesque suits of the battalion *cantineras*," only mentioning the most outstanding female warfighters: Leonor González, the martyred *cantineras* of the Second Line Regiment, María Quiteria Ramírez, and the "cruel and avenging" Irene Morales.⁴⁴

In general, both the decorations and the pensions were limited to the best-known cases in the public domain. Thus, in 1888 the Chilean government decided to award Irene Morales a life pension of 15 pesos per month, in recognition of her work during the war. A decade later, the same award was made to Josefa del Carmen Herrera, and the following year, 1898, saw the same benefit going to *cantinera* Juana López.⁴⁵ This tension between official recognition and oblivion amongst the populous is clear in the cases of Irene Morales and Juana López, both of whom died in obscurity, but this led paradoxically to efforts made among certain circles to restore their place of honor in the collective memory of the war.

Thus, only two years after being awarded her government pension, Irene Morales died of pneumonia on August 25, 1890, in the wards of San Borja Hospital. The poet Rómulo Larrañaga dedicated some of his works to her as an homage, calling her "a shrine of the whole republic": the woman who "cured the wounded" and, when the time came, "herself did battle/with extraordinary valor."⁴⁶ Indeed, although Larrañaga had already hatched the idea of a public collection to fund a worthy mausoleum for the heroine, he had to wait until the next century to see it become reality, in November 1903.

The outcome for Juana López followed a very similar pattern of recognition by the authorities, and oblivion and repositioning amongst the people. In January 1904, a few years after being awarded her meager government pension, López died. "Not a soldier, not a musician, nobody was drawn to accompany her remains due to patriotic sentiment. She who gave up four lives for the nation died, abandoned by everyone," wrote a newspaper, together with a call to collect funds to build a mausoleum in her honor.⁴⁷ The mausoleum was opened five years later, amidst celebrations of the centenary of Chile's independence, in a patriotic ceremony that was actively attended by both veterans and municipal authorities.

Set against this background, the case of Filomena Valenzuela is truly exceptional. In the north of the country, in lands still disputed with Peru, during the crudest moments of Chilean nationalist propaganda, the female veteran's presence was at the forefront of the commemoration ceremonies supported by patriotic and veterans' groups. During the following years, and until her death in 1924, she resided in the port city of Iquique and played a leading role in festivities associated with the war, turning her into something of a people's icon in the region, a "revered shrine of our army."⁴⁸ In fact, the author of a biography written in Iquique during that period—Spanish writer José de la Cruz Vallejo—set out to use her life as an example of values that contemporary

society should imitate. If the Chileans were “the manliest of the Hispano-American peoples,” Filomena Valenzuela was able to meet that description, being a woman with “a manly disposition.” Her participation in the war showed it clearly: “In the years of her youth, when the world shows a woman its most tempting charms, when feminine souls dream of an ideal future, she opted to sacrifice herself for her homeland and suffer the grueling rigours of a military campaign.”⁴⁹

In Peru, recognition of women’s participation in the war was slightly more significant, although it continued to frame their value in the context of expected wartime gender roles. For example, Antonia Moreno received public recognition following the war, not least due to her position as First Lady, although even this was not without its problems. Indeed, as Iván Millones notes, Andrés A. Cáceres’ rise to power in 1886 was as much the consummation of public recognition for his personage—a “living hero”—as the start of his move into political debate, and later displacement. A decade later, once again in power and with every intention of retaining it, he was deposed and exiled after a civil war (1894–95), justified by a strong anti-militarist sentiment sustained by the Civilist Party.⁵⁰ There can be no doubt that these events affected the way in which his wife would be remembered. While she was able to enjoy the privileges of power, she was also obliged to suffer its detriment. For example, in 1890, Peruvian intellectual Clorinda Matto de Turner started a series of biographies of significant women in national politics with a profile of Antonia Moreno, as one of the few women who had entered such circles through her own merits. Although the editor of *Perú Ilustrado* saw her husband, Marshal Cáceres, as the main hero, Antonia Moreno had suffered “all of the privations” of the war at his side. Moreno therefore represented a model of the “selfless patriot” and “good Peruvian woman,” as she had faced the vicissitudes of war with a combination of “Spartan resolve” and “Christian resignation.”⁵¹ But her husband’s fall in 1895 besmirched the reputation of Antonia Moreno by association, particularly in Lima’s satirical press, which, in the midst of the political polarization brought about by the civil war, set out to vilify her for her humble and provincial origins, calling her a *rabona* or labeling her “Madame Melon.” So it was that when Antonia Moreno died, in February 1916, the press barely covered the news, and the obituaries that were published returned to the same entrenched archetypes: a selfless wife and mother.⁵² Years later came the official recognition of another female Peruvian war hero, Leonor Ordoñez. In 1918, residents of Huancani sent Congress a request to rename their district after the local heroine, a motion that was passed. A regional law passed in September of 1920 thus approved the creation of Leonor Ordoñez District, an utterly unique form of recognition by both the people and the authorities, for one of the female warfighters considered here. However, paradoxically, this led to the disappearance of any mention of Ordoñez herself until the centennial of the War of the Pacific in 1979–84.

In the postwar memory, the Peruvian women were included in the national narrative, albeit in a systematic manner built on the existing beliefs regarding traditional women’s roles. Feminist academic Elvira García dedicated several pages of her 1924 book *La mujer peruana a través de los siglos* [The Peruvian Woman through the Centuries] to examining the role performed by Peruvian women in different wars, but generally most of those women took part in a manner based on the concepts of

charity and care for the wounded. Except for characters rooted largely in fiction—like Dolores the *rabona*, an incarnation of the indigenous women in their struggle against the Chilean invaders—or forged in oral tradition like "Marta the cantinera," García continued to see Antonia Moreno as the feminine ideal.⁵³ A decade later J. Armando Guinet included the same women as the only female individuals to appear in his compendium of heroes *Los grandes del Perú* [The Greats of Peru] albeit with extremely minimal descriptions that once again prolonged the bifurcation of stories about the war's women in Peru: recognition of Antonia Moreno linked to her husband, and the lionization of partly legendary folk heroes, like Dolores the *rabona*.⁵⁴

The most significant process of female hero-making associated with the war took place around the centenary of the War of the Pacific. The years running up to the centennial were marked by a profound change in the country's national narratives, brought about by the left-wing military regime of Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968–75). The central change was the positioning of ordinary people, the indigenous and the mestizo groups—the *cholos*—as core elements of the Peruvian identity.⁵⁵ It should therefore come as no surprise that a wide range of heroic icons were selected for veneration, expressing values linked to this new national identity.

The repositioning of a range of heroic discourses around women's participation in the War of the Pacific illustrates this point by expressing the core concept of the time: underscoring the contrast between folk heroism as a collective lionization with no distinction based on race or gender in the resistance against the Chilean invasion, compared with the collusion and clear lack of unity amongst the collaborationist upper classes. Gathering resources, providing supplies, curing the wounded, and accompanying soldiers on the battlefield, Peruvian women asserted their collective heroism, claimed Judith Prieto.⁵⁶ Indeed, as a media group stated at the centennial celebration of the Breña Campaign, if "the official history always omitted what the ordinary people went through in its stories of the past," it was time to reclaim the people's contributions during wartime, when women had played a crucial role. To highlight female contribution was also to highlight the contribution made by the people, helping to empower a new narrative about the nation's collective valor, finally giving visibility to the "historic ferociousness and bravery of the Peruvian woman."⁵⁷

Thus, alongside the names that were already a part of the shared consciousness regarding the war, new ones began to appear, although always based on the logic of highlighting resistance to the enemy and appealing to cases that could underscore the regional or racial features of the heroines. This was the work of César Ángeles: academic, journalist, and folklore expert, through novelistic descriptions, filled with patriotic stereotypes and unencumbered by any supporting historical evidence. For example, Hortensia Ceballos, the local heroine of Pisagua, provided a case study in sacrificial resistance to the enemy. When the port city was being invaded, she saw her entire family murdered by Chilean troops and decided to kill herself with her husband's bayonet, thrusting it through her neck. This act showcased her as an "unfading heroine, whose life and deeds comprise the most extraordinary example of heroism and sacrifice."⁵⁸ The tale of Catalina Buendía, which was based solely on oral traditions in the Ica region, was even more novelistic and paraded all the elements that the nationalistic rhetoric of the day wanted to hear. An Afro-Peruvian, Buendía had led

Figure 10.2 Leonor Ordoñez Monument, Huancaní, Perú.

resistance against the occupation in the town of San José de los Molinos, where, crying out “Not one step! Long live Peru!” she died, impaled on the staff of the Peruvian flag.⁵⁹

Against this backdrop, it should come as no surprise that the country’s leading newspaper, *El Comercio*, launched the “Heroine Antonia Moreno de Cáceres Prize” for teachers and students to prepare a biographical sketch of someone who, in the words of her great-granddaughter, had “used her presence and that of her daughters to foment the spirit of sacrifice and love for the flag” amongst the peoples of the Andes.⁶⁰

The edifying description of Antonia Moreno that was assembled by teacher Grecia Mendoza in a text published for the competition, rescued figures like Moreno from oblivion, after the "oligarchy" had banished their historic narratives.

An examination of the different facets of Antonia Moreno—the epitome of motherly love, marital companionship, and feminine patriotic selflessness, a woman of the people who respected indigenous customs—could be used to provide the youth with a "symbol of inspiration for their moral learnings," an example "to follow, striving tirelessly in the hope that the people would someday receive justice." Most of all, the prevailing narrative during that period saw Antonia Moreno as a model of social integration and national unity: "despite coming from the coast, she learned to love Andean customs, farmers, highlanders, and to live with them in their homeland, taking everything with great responsibility."⁶¹

Finally, the most decisive milestone that must be mentioned in any discussion of the heroic narrative for women during those years was the incorporation of both Leonor Ordoñez and Antonia Moreno into the official Peruvian pantheon of national heroes, the formal and definitive recognition of their category as heroines. Under Law 1906, the Peruvian government the Crypt of Heroes of the War of the Pacific, a canonical *lieux de mémoire* for the conflict, housing the remains of the nation's most important heroes: Miguel Grau, Francisco Bolognesi, and Andrés A. Cáceres, together with a hundred other figures. It was only in 1988 that the expansion of the mausoleum broke the male monopoly on civic value that had held sway before, with the exceptional burial of two women in that pantheon: Leonor Ordoñez and Antonia Moreno de Cáceres.⁶²

Thus, unlike the situation in Chile, where women soldiers were recognized during their lifetime but were then swiftly forgotten, Peru was slower to acknowledge the women who took part in the war and even disregarded their irrefutable contributions on the battlefield but made sure that their recognition was eventually formalized in official *lieux de mémoire*. The move was a success, and to this day has achieved its goal in collective memory. Women won access to the pantheon, albeit not necessarily women combatants.

Notes

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- 4 Laurence van Ypersele "Héros et héroïsation," in *Questions d'histoire contemporaine: Conflits, mémoires et identités* (Paris: PUF, 2006), 164.
- 5 Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London: Sage, 1997), 93–115.
- 6 Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 50–52.
- 7 The *cantineras* and *rabonas*—translated as sutlers in this work—played different roles in times of war, like civilian merchant, camp-follower and nurse functions,

superimposing all these tasks. Many times, they had an army license to provide these services, but not always.

- 8 See Carmen Mc Evoy "Bella Lima ya tiemblas llorosa del triunfante chileno en poder: Una aproximación a los elementos de género en el discurso nacionalista chileno," in *El hechizo de las imágenes: Estatus social, género y etnicidad en la Historia Peruana*, ed. Narda Henríquez (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2000), 195–222.
- 9 Ignacio Silva, *La Sarjento Candelaria Pérez* (Santiago: Imprenta Cervantes, 1904), 27–42.
- 10 Vicente Reyes, "La Sarjenta Candelaria," *La Semana*, Santiago, June 11, 1859, 53.
- 11 Antonio Barrena, *Vida de un Soldado: Desde la Toma de Valdivia (1820) a la victoria de Yungay (1839)* (Santiago: RIL, 2009), 260.
- 12 José Varas, *Recopilación de leyes, decretos supremos i circulares concernientes al Ejército, desde abril de 1839 a diciembre de 1858* (Santiago: Imprenta Chilena, 1860), 33.
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- 15 Reyes, "La Sarjenta Candelaria," 56.
- 16 Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, "La sarjento Candelaria y la Monja Alférez. Estudio crítico," in *Miscelánea* (Santiago: Imprenta del Mercurio, 1872), 236–242.
- 17 *El Ferrocarril*, Santiago, March 30, 1870.
- 18 "Candelaria Pérez," *El Independiente*, Santiago, March 30, 1870.
- 19 Ventura Blanco, "La Sarjento Candelaria," *La Estrella de Chile*, Santiago, April 17, 1870, 431–435.
- 20 Blanco, "La Sarjento Candelaria," 431–435.
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- 24 "Las mujeres soldados," *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, July 24, 1880.
- 25 "Actualidad," *El Peruano*, Lima, July 4, 1879.
- 26 Maritza Villavicencio, "Acción de las mujeres peruanas durante la guerra con Chile," *Debates en Sociología* 10 (1984): 147–158; Juan José Rodríguez, "El bello sexo en guerra: cultura política y género durante la Guerra del Pacífico," *Illapa* 5 (2009): 83–120; and Paz Larraín, *Presencia de la mujer chilena en la Guerra del Pacífico* (Santiago: Centro de Estudios Bicentenario, 2006), 125–167.
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- 31 Rafael Egaña, "Los Mártires del Rancho," *El Nuevo Ferrocarril*, December 11, 1879.
- 32 "Las Heroínas del 2° de Línea," *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, April 13, 1882.
- 33 "Más detalles sobre Tarapacá," *Los Tiempos*, Santiago, December 7, 1879.
- 34 "Una heroína chilena," *La Patria*, Valparaíso, December 11, 1879.

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- 55 Juan Martínez Sánchez, *La revolución peruana: ideología y práctica política de un gobierno militar, 1968–1975* (Seville: CSIC/Universidad de Sevilla, 2002), 166–174.
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