

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT



THE POLITICS OF GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND LABOR IN
THE CHILEAN AGRARIAN REFORM, 1950-1973

HEIDI TINSMAN

Partners in Conflict



Next Wave New Directions in Women's Studies

*A series edited by Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan,
and Robyn Wiegman*

Heidi Tinsman

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The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor
in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950–1973

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For Erik

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preface

This book started as one thing and became something else. In the summer of 1991, I was contemplating dropping out of history graduate school to pursue what, at the time, I supposed would be a more meaningful career in law. Thanks to a series of lucky accidents, I ended up working as a legal researcher in rural Chile for a nonprofit organization called the Casa del Temporero, which had assisted in the creation of Chile's first union of temporary fruit workers in the Aconcagua Valley county of Santa María. General Augusto Pinochet's seventeen-year dictatorship had formally ended just the previous year with the inauguration of Chile's first democratically elected president since Salvador Allende.

The countryside, especially the Aconcagua Valley, still reeled from the ways military rule had dramatically transformed it. Fresh-fruit exports of grapes, apples, and peaches had become Chile's third most lucrative source of foreign currency. Aconcagua was the heart of a half-billion dollar industry hugely dependent on tens of thousands of hyperexploited seasonal laborers, nearly half of them women. Women had played a major role in the formation of the Santa María union and had been at the forefront of many struggles by rural poor people throughout the dictatorship. The implications of such female agency for daily gender dynamics was *the* topic of conversation at every union meeting and community dance I attended. Equality between men and women had been formally recognized as central to the union's mission, and men and women heatedly and often humorously debated what this meant for interactions on production lines and in private bedrooms.

I was enthralled. Here were agricultural workers vigorously defend-

ing their rights in defiance of stereotypes about rural passivity and the overwhelming force of neoliberal capitalism. Here were poor women articulating a feminist stance, asserting leadership within the labor movement, and engaging with issues of democratization. Here was a story worth telling.

But it was not the story I ended up writing. The heroics I sought to thrust on fruit workers ended up being more complicated and limited than my initial romantic narrative had envisioned. And the working-class radicalism and idealism that I did encounter began to seem, upon closer inspection, less an obvious, automatic response to military dictatorship and proletarianization than a reworking of sensibilities about social justice rooted in an earlier utopian moment: the radical populism of Chile's Agrarian Reform between 1964 and 1973.

I discovered the Agrarian Reform because of workers' memories and despite the conventions of Chilean history's periodization. Most literature sharply differentiates between life before and after the military coup against Popular Unity socialism on September 11, 1973. As the narrative goes, a completely new authoritarian order stopped dead in its tracks the massive land redistribution and widespread peasant mobilization that had been the Agrarian Reform. But in interviews and oral histories with fruit workers and labor activists about life during the dictatorship, men and women repeatedly referenced the Agrarian Reform (as well as the latifundia arrangements preceding it) as a comparative index of their current fortunes. Although opinions about the Agrarian Reform's accomplishments varied widely, there was near unanimity about the fact that it had attempted to politically empower and materially uplift rural poor people in ways utterly unmatched before or since. Whether or not it had succeeded, the Agrarian Reform represented the only rural democratic precedent from which Chilean fruit workers and their advocates could draw for envisioning the post-Pinochet future.

This does not mean that the Agrarian Reform was the only source of reference or inspiration for surviving and critiquing dictatorship. But it was surely one of the most important. In recent years, the role of memory has emerged as a rich and important site of historical investigation. This book, however, is devoted to making arguments about the Agrarian Reform experience itself in order to suggest why its memory matters. It is particularly concerned with questions about gender and the

distinct and unequal legacies that the Agrarian Reform bequeathed to women and men. Both the exciting achievements and the sobering limits of present-day Chilean women fruit workers' efforts to advocate equality with men have roots in those years. This book honors and criticizes a utopian project, some of whose goals are still in the making.

acknowledgments

My debts for this book are many. Financial support for initial research was provided by fellowships from the Social Science Research Council and the Inter-American Foundation. Subsequent research was financed by grants from Yale University, the Mellon Foundation, and the University of California at Irvine.

As a graduate student at Yale University, I had the good fortune to work with a number of fine scholars. Emilia Viotti da Costa served as my advisor and provided an extremely smart example of teaching and writing history. Danny James's engagement with feminist labor studies and his pioneering work in oral history were, and continue to be, a source of great inspiration. Nancy Cott's graduate courses and her generous comments on my dissertation helped support this project through various phases. David Montgomery's seminars and comments provided similar continuity. Patricia Pessar kindly served as an additional dissertation reader and offered much helpful guidance.

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I have also benefited from the keen minds and solidarity of numerous other colleagues and friends in the United States. Michael Jiménez provided me with an unmatched example of passion for the historian's craft when I was an undergraduate at Princeton. I join many others in grieving his premature death and feel privileged to have been his student. Peter Winn offered me sage advice on Popular Unity politics and much appreciated faith in my project. I am thankful to John D. French, Gilbert Joseph, and Cristóbal Kay for their suggestions and support. The Duke Labor History Conference provided a particularly rich intellectual space over the years, and I am fortunate to have benefited from its many participants. Temma Kaplan served as a reader for Duke University Press, offering superb and motivating direction on revisions. My editor Valerie Millholland gave excellent, frank advice and helped me steer a straight course.

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abbreviations

APROFA	Asociación de Protección de la Familia (Association for the Protection of the Family)
CEMA	Centro de Madres (Mothers' Center)
CERA	Centro de Reforma Agraria (Agrarian Reform Center)
CNPP	Consejería Nacional de Promoción Popular (National Council of Popular Promotion)
CORA	Corporación de la Reforma Agraria (Corporation for Agrarian Reform)
CUT	Central Unica de Trabajadores (United Central of Workers)
IER	Instituto de Educación Rural (Rural Education Institute)
INDAP	Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario (Institute of Agricultural Development)
SNA	Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura (National Agricultural Society)
SNS	Sociedad Nacional de Salud (National Health Society)
UOC	Unidad Obrero Campesino (Worker-Campesino Unity)
UP	Unidad Popular (Popular Unity)

Partners in Conflict

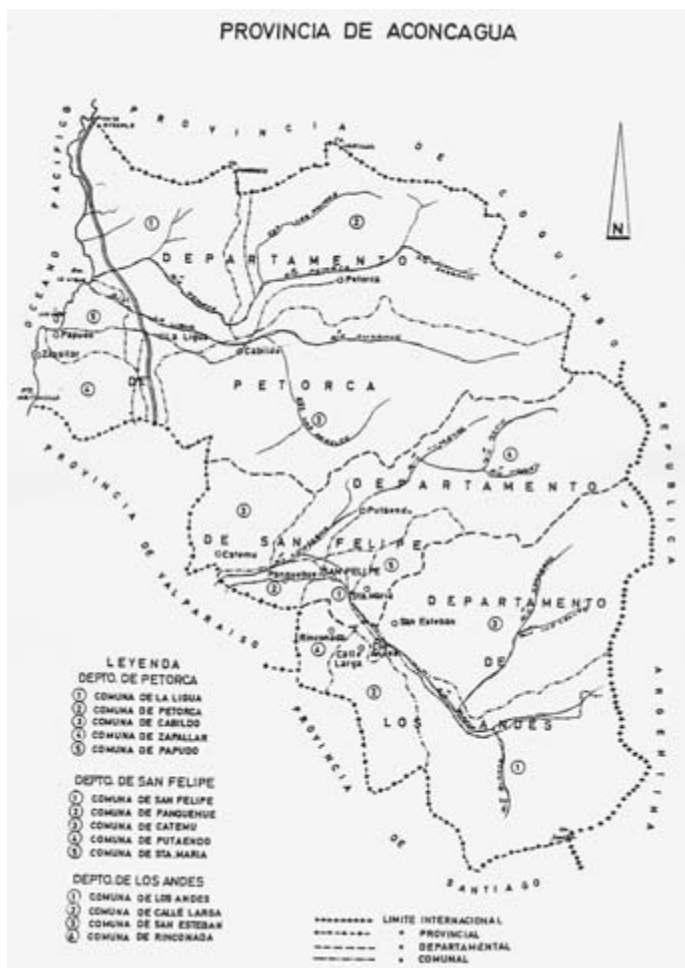


Map 1
Chile, provinces and
cities of the central
region.

introduction

Between 1964 and 1973, the Chilean state expropriated almost half the country's agricultural land and began redistributing it to campesino peasants. In nine short years, this policy, known as the Agrarian Reform, virtually dismantled the latifundia system of large estates and semipeon laborers that had dominated Chilean agriculture since the nineteenth century and whose roots were far older. The Agrarian Reform sparked the explosive growth of a militant rural labor movement that, during the same nine years, recruited a quarter-million members and gave the rural poor a meaningful voice in national politics for the first time. It encouraged massive state investments in rural education and health care, including the first national birth control programs, and initiated projects aimed explicitly at mobilizing rural women and young people. These were radical policies with radical goals.

The Agrarian Reform was begun in full by President Eduardo Frei's liberal Christian Democratic government (1964–1970), which aimed to make small peasant farmers the basis for revitalizing capitalist agribusiness. It was accelerated by President Salvador Allende's Popular Unity coalition of Marxist and social democratic parties (1970–1973), which sought to use collective holdings as the basis for creating socialism. Despite profound differences between these administrations, both Catholics and Marxists shared a bold optimism that their version of the Agrarian Reform was revolutionary. Both sought national salvation through restructuring the agrarian economy, the political empowerment of the peasantry, and the moral rehabilitation of rural society. Such zeal reflected both the heady utopianism and the Cold War fears of the 1960s.



Map 2 Province of Aconcagua, 1970.

It was an era that, particularly in Latin America, reverberated with the aftershocks of the Cuban Revolution and in which numerous countries linked the restructuring of agriculture to modernity. Initial results in Chile were impressive. Until Allende's 1973 overthrow by a bloody military coup, Chile's Agrarian Reform was proportionally the most extensive and least violent land reform project carried out by democratically elected leaders without a prior armed revolution anywhere in Latin America, and arguably the world.

Partners in Conflict tells a story about rural women and men before and during this time of dramatic change. It is a story about the centrality of gender and sexuality to the ways campesino women and men negotiated daily life, participated in, or were marginalized from, political struggle, and benefited from, or were hurt by, the attempt to radically remake rural life. It is, in large part, a success story about the Agrarian Reform's real achievements and the uplift of some of Chile's poorest people. On the eve of the Agrarian Reform's premature end, the lives of most campesino peasants—female and male—had vastly improved. Rural wages had skyrocketed. Tens of thousands of rural families had been guaranteed land; tens of thousands more anticipated such privilege. Literacy rates had risen. Infant mortality and maternal death indices had fallen. Through new unions, men had negotiated better working conditions with employers. Through new community organizations, women had established craft industries and education programs. Together, women and men had fought for faster land expropriations and better housing—and they had won. There was a new emphasis on gender cooperation as men were encouraged to have more respect for wives and women were asked to better inform themselves of husbands' activities. The Agrarian Reform defined spousal partnership as critical to its success and an assurance that both men and women would benefit.

But *Partners in Conflict* is also a story about inequality. Chile's Agrarian Reform empowered men more than it did women. Men, not women, were the direct recipients of land. Men, not women, made up the bulk of rural unions. Men, not women, were defined as principal actors in creating a new world. Most women reaped the fruits of the Agrarian Reform indirectly, as wives and daughters of men who either earned better wages or had access to land. Women's activism largely provided sideline support for men's initiatives. These disparities sprang from the ways that the Agrarian Reform left the principle of men's authority over women fundamentally unchallenged. In particular, a version of patriarchal family remained foundational to the way rural society was rebuilt. This was true for the Christian Democrats' attempt to reform capitalism as well as for Popular Unity's effort to create socialism. Both Catholics and Marxists envisioned the Agrarian Reform as a process in which male citizen-producers would responsibly provide for domesticated, if better educated and more civic-minded, wives and children. Both placed pri-

ority on invigorating the confidence of campesino men to achieve the leadership and solidarity necessary for transforming society. The shared rallying cry to “turn the campesino man into his own boss” expressed an emphasis on reconstituting masculinity and defined men as the Agrarian Reform’s main protagonists, affirming their ultimate power over women within the supposedly harmonious family.

Yet this is not a simple story about women’s exclusion and the triumph of male dominance. Women participated in the creation of the Agrarian Reform, and most rural women benefited greatly from it and applauded its goals. Despite their marginalization within the labor movement, women played significant roles in struggles for housing, land, and higher wages—an activism that opened new spaces for female leadership within rural communities. Although the Agrarian Reform reinforced the principle of men’s leadership within the family, its emphasis on mutual support and cooperation between spouses afforded some women the opportunity to challenge male excess and to assert their own needs. At the very least, most rural women enjoyed higher standards of living during the Agrarian Reform, and most understood benefits for men as benefits for themselves.

This book traces the dialectical tensions between women’s real uplift within the Agrarian Reform and the gender hierarchies that made such uplift inferior and subordinate to that of men. It recounts the importance of women’s labor to Chile’s pre-Agrarian Reform world of large estates and subsistence agriculture, and it explores the Agrarian Reform’s increasing validation of female domesticity and women’s family-based activism. It argues that this contrasted with and complemented the Agrarian Reform’s emphasis on transforming men from servile laborers into productive breadwinners and political militants. Finally, it examines the political consequences of gender difference. It challenges longstanding assumptions, still prevalent in scholarly and activist circles alike, that Chilean women were hostile to radical politics in general and opposed to the Popular Unity (UP) project in particular. *Partners in Conflict* argues that most rural women staunchly defended the Agrarian Reform and that the UP had a solid base, if never a majority, of campesina support throughout its tenure. At the same time, this book maintains that men were far better positioned than women to navigate the political turbulence of the Agrarian Reform’s later years and enjoyed far greater social freedoms

than their female counterparts outside the home. This made women increasingly fearful of the consequences of class struggle and weakened their ability to fully shape the Agrarian Reform as a project.

Chile's Agrarian Reform was unique but not singular. During the twentieth century, a diverse range of political leaderships throughout the world undertook agrarian reforms for the purpose of spurring national development and modernizing supposedly backward rural populations. Agrarian reform was at the heart of all major popular revolutions since 1900, including those of Mexico, Russia, China, Cuba, and Nicaragua. They defined massive land redistribution into communal forms of ownership as key to turning peasants into worker-citizens and to building socialism (or, in the case of Mexico, to protecting peasants and economic sovereignty). The idea that the state could legitimately expropriate land in the name of the social good also gained surprisingly wide acceptance in the capitalist world. Throughout Latin America and Asia—including Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Indonesia, and the Philippines—numerous agrarian reforms were part of a U.S.-led effort during the Cold War to preempt the attractions of communism by encouraging stable capitalist development. Agrarian reform was meant to break up supposedly feudal land monopolies and to replace them with competitive family farms that would satisfy domestic consumption, encourage industrialization, and spread democratic values.

Chile's Agrarian Reform shared elements of both the capitalist and revolutionary models. It began as an effort to rehabilitate capitalism and became a project for building socialism. Under Frei, it was heavily financed and greatly celebrated by the United States; under Allende, the U.S. government deemed it a communist threat and justification for supporting a military coup. Like agrarian reforms elsewhere, Chile's was heavily directed from above in both phases, reflecting the conviction shared by socialist and capitalist promoters alike that the state had a crucial role to play in transforming society. Yet, as was true for revolutionary projects but less so for capitalist ones, the Chilean Agrarian Reform, both under Frei and Allende, encouraged the mass mobilization of peasants and generated intense class conflict. Similar to that in Mexico in the 1930s and 1940s, China in the 1950s, and Cuba in the 1960s, the explosive growth of Chile's rural labor movement helped peasants successfully challenge, and in many cases displace, their class superiors. Peas-

ant empowerment was extensive even during Frei's Agrarian Reform, an exception among capitalist projects, where governments were generally wary of peasant unions for anything other than consolidating state power. Even under Allende, however, peasant mobilization in Chile unfolded quite differently than in other revolutionary projects. Unlike in Mexico, the USSR, China, or Cuba, Chilean unions were never directly controlled by the state but, instead, composed of multiple, competing tendencies across a broad center-left political spectrum. This made it easier for portions of the labor movement to challenge state power, contest decisions, and shape the course of the Agrarian Reform from below.

It was similarly striking that such a massive mobilization of poor people and redistribution of wealth took place within the context of a capitalist democracy. Chile's Agrarian Reform in both phases was implemented under conditions of political pluralism, through laws and institutions set up to protect private property and without defeating the propertied classes. Land expropriation and redistribution thus rested on laws passed by a congress, and interpreted by courts, in which powerful landowners and other elites continued to serve. Such conditions made Allende's plans for building socialism especially remarkable since, unlike other revolutionary models, the UP set out to dismantle capitalism without full (or even majority) control of state power. Throughout the 1970–1973 period, a diverse coalition of elite and middle-class opponents remained free to openly organize against Allende as well as to control congress, the media, and important sectors of the armed forces. As many would argue in retrospect, this situation surely contributed to the UP's overthrow and cast doubt on the viability of creating socialism without prior revolution. Yet it is perhaps more remarkable that, given the constraints, the UP's Agrarian Reform was as radical and successful as it was.

The exceptionalism of Chile's Agrarian Reform created a flurry of early commentary and scholarship in the 1960s and 1970s. Before the 1973 coup, there was widespread hope that the scale of Chile's land expropriations, combined with extensive social welfare programs and peasant unionization, would provide a model for modernization and democracy elsewhere in the hemisphere. Social scientists and economic development specialists mapped connections between land expropriation and national production, charted the growth of labor organizations and peasants' civic participation, and predicted shifts in rural values and behav-

ior.¹ Most researchers were Chileans based at prestigious universities in Santiago or at nonprofit agencies funded by the United Nations. Others were from abroad, including elsewhere in Latin America and Europe. A large contingent hailed from U.S. government agencies and universities operating in the spirit of, and often with funding from, the Alliance for Progress, a U.S. State Department initiative aimed at encouraging development throughout Latin America.² Events in Cuba and debates over modernization keenly shaped the intellectual climate. A largely U.S.-based theory that Keynesian economics and entrepreneurial incentives would spur development stages increasingly knocked heads with a more Latin America-based critique of imperialism and economic dependency. Researchers' political leanings and policy proscriptions varied widely, but all shared a common faith in state-led development and the belief that some version of the Agrarian Reform could succeed.

Following Allende's overthrow, such optimism soured. Discussions about the Agrarian Reform were recast as narratives of failure. The political urgency to explain the reasons behind the coup gave a certain overdetermined cast to scholarship (one always knew the story would end badly) and suggested that the Agrarian Reform was partly to blame. But it also produced many superb studies with a critical appreciation of the Agrarian Reform's contradictions. In particular, scholars moved away from the mechanical functionalism of earlier literature on development and emphasized the Agrarian Reform as a process of class conflict and political struggle. Authors such as Solon Barraclough, José Bengoa, José Antonio Fernández, Jorge Echenique, Sergio Gómez, Cristóbal Kay, Brian Loveman, Ian Roxborough, Peter Winn, and others gave attention to the ways in which land redistribution had intensified social stratification in the countryside by privileging some campesino peasants over others.³ Although many of these authors were sympathetic to Popular Unity goals, they sharply criticized Allende's government for failing to mobilize migrant workers, a potentially radical base of support, as well as for misunderstanding many peasants' desire for individual, rather than communal, forms of landownership. Scholars placed particular emphasis on the role of the rural labor movement. While viewing unions as a positive sign of campesino empowerment, these writers argued that labor's political polarization had exacerbated divisions among campesinos and encouraged peasants to pursue strikes and land occupations inde-

pendently of, and often against, the interest of the government in power. Such conflict, it was implied, had undermined the Agrarian Reform's legitimacy and contributed to military takeover.⁴

Women are strikingly absent from these accounts. Most scholarship on Chile's Agrarian Reform tells stories only about men—men's struggle for land, men's empowerment in unions, men's conflicts on the eve of military rule. This tendency partly reflects the Agrarian Reform's actual focus on men: government officials and union leaders rarely mentioned women; documents on strike activities and state-managed farms say little about a female presence. But the omission of women also derives from a certain acceptance by researchers that the Agrarian Reform's focus on men was natural and obvious, undeserving of analytical inquiry. It likewise stems from the generational assumption—shared by scholars across academic disciplines and national borders at the time—that research on women was something separate from the sociology of the agrarian economy and that stories about men could serve as the general history of an era. In most accounts of Chile's Agrarian Reform, the terms *campesino* and *peasant* implicitly designate male characters, but they simultaneously refer to “the rural poor” as a whole. This unwittingly suggests both that women were never actors in the Agrarian Reform and that women's historical experiences were the same as men's.

A few pioneering feminist works on the lives of rural women made important qualifications to this narrative. Patricia Garrett and Ximena Valdés both argued that Chile's Agrarian Reform offered women few benefits and few reasons to support the governments who advocated it.⁵ They maintained that the Agrarian Reform's policy of redistributing land to household heads, who were invariably men, prevented women from receiving land and that widespread sexism prevented women's participation in unions. They argued that the minimal organizing of women that did take place served to reinforce women's traditional roles as homemakers and did little to connect women to wider political processes. Research such as Garrett's, which she conducted in the early 1970s, is particularly remarkable since it occurred alongside the more established Agrarian Reform scholarship focusing on men, but was the first to explain and challenge the consequences of men's primacy.⁶ She observed, “Symptomatic of [the] problem [in] Chile is that the effective unit of analysis has been the male head of household. The majority of the popu-

lation—the young, the old, and the female—has no analytical existence. . . . it suggests that something is fundamentally wrong with the model.”⁷

Feminist accounts of Chile echo claims by other feminists about agrarian reforms’ lackluster benefits for women elsewhere in the world. In their excellent comparative studies of agrarian reforms throughout Latin America, Carmen Diana Deere and Magdalena León also argued that most rural women were excluded from the benefits of agrarian reform because policies focused only on empowering households headed by men.⁸ This meant that most agrarian reforms—including those of Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and Chile—redistributed land and technological support almost exclusively to men. The authors found exceptions only in revolutionary Cuba and Nicaragua, where the state made women’s access to land an explicit policy goal and where women’s existing domestic responsibilities were addressed through the provision of daycare and other services.

Yet even in the case of socialist agrarian reforms, most feminist evaluations have been pessimistic. Despite initial optimism that revolutions in Russia, China, Cuba, and Nicaragua would have liberating potential for women because all four named gender equality as a primary goal, most feminists concluded that socialist agrarian reforms eventually benefited men far more than women.⁹ In cases where land was redistributed to families (the early phases of agrarian reform in the USSR and China, and in specific regions of Nicaragua and Cuba), male household heads still overwhelmingly functioned as the trustees of land.¹⁰ After forced collectivization and the creation of state farms in the USSR and China, women entered the agricultural workforce in droves, far outnumbering male workers by the middle of the twentieth century. Yet men still held more prestigious and better paid jobs, and men comprised the leadership of unions, state-farm assemblies, and advisory bodies to government.¹¹ Since women’s greater agricultural employment in the USSR and China resulted from state efforts to push men into the supposedly more skilled and modern sectors of industry and mining, agrarian reform here replicated gender hierarchies as macroeconomic necessity.

Feminists also challenged socialism’s commitment to gender equality in the family. They pointed out that during times of economic and political stress, the USSR, China, Cuba, and Nicaragua all curtailed resources for childcare and other programs aimed at easing women’s domestic bur-

dens, while little was done to reeducate men to accept women's new roles or share domestic responsibilities.¹² Judith Stacey's early work on rural China sharpened many of these claims into an explicit argument about patriarchy that deserves special mention.¹³ Stacey argued that the extension of patriarchal rights to poor men—something she dubbed “democratic patriarchy”—formed the basis of male peasant loyalty to the Chinese revolution. Stacey maintained that, although the revolution abolished some of the most extreme forms of female subordination (concubinage and footbinding), rural policies enabled peasant men to exercise authority over women in a modern version of the family. Initial radical reforms giving women greater say in marriage and divorce and abortion rights were curtailed to ensure male prerogative.¹⁴ Mary Kay Vaughan's more recent work on Mexico has made similar claims. Echoing Susan Besse's helpful insight into the modern state's role in “modernizing patriarchy,” Vaughan compellingly argues that the Mexican agrarian reform affirmed men's political and economic privilege over women while giving women new agency and validation as hygienic housewives.¹⁵

Feminist scholarship on agrarian reform, together with the broader focus in women's studies on gender and labor, has been crucial to transfiguring old paradigms for understanding work and production. Many feminist contributions have now been incorporated into labor studies and social histories. Feminists have insisted that state policies are not gender neutral, even when they do not specifically address men and women as distinct audiences. They have reiterated Ester Boserup's 1970 seminal claim that economic development projects impact men and women unequally.¹⁶ Most importantly, feminists have placed gender relations within the household at the center of the discussion. They have stressed that women's exclusion from the benefits of agrarian reform derives from their ongoing responsibility for children and housework and from the way men's more privileged positions within the family translate into superior political and economic opportunities outside the home. The analytical focus on patriarchy has underscored how gender inequality results from men's power over women, not merely from differences between what men and women do. In particular, attention to such things as marriage and abortion as sites of subordination has suggested that organizations of sexuality affect who receives land or has political voice.¹⁷

This book builds on all of these claims, and is particularly concerned

with this last issue: the connection between sexuality and how politics is gendered. Sexuality is critical to an understanding of how gender works. Most feminist labor studies have emphasized gender divisions in household labor as the cause of women's marginalization. But little has been said about why women are assigned domestic labor to begin with, why such tasks are devalued in relation to men's, and how such divisions of labor spring from men's authority over women. In other words, what creates gender difference and what structures such difference as male dominance have gone largely unexplored. Put another way, in the case of most agrarian and labor studies, too little has been said about patriarchy and what makes it tick.

Partners in Conflict understands patriarchal power to be about sexuality; particularly, but not exclusively, men's sexual authority over women. Gender—the ideological construction of male and female as different and unequal—is centrally shaped by sexuality. Sexuality refers to wider cultural meanings and practices constructed through and against ideas about the sensual body and, in mid-twentieth-century rural Chile, about heterosexual, procreative sex. Sexuality operates both as ideology and as concrete practice, the parameters of which are generated within the history of class. Sexuality manifests itself in multiple arrangements, including courtship, flirtation, marriage, commercial and informal sexual exchange, human reproduction, bodily displays, and the vast terrain of pleasure, humor, and competition over sexual agency and opportunities. Sexuality is no less social or historically created than gender, but it is distinct and it is fundamental to how gender works, from where gender acquires much of its meaning.

This concept of sexuality brings two broad traditions of feminist thinking into dialogue. It draws on radical and psychoanalytical feminism's longstanding concern with sexuality as the foundation of gender oppression and combines it with Marxist feminism's emphasis on the intersection of gender and class and on the dialectic of patriarchy and capitalism. In reaffirming the importance of sexuality to patriarchy, and in keeping patriarchy connected to the material life of class, it proposes that sexuality should have a centrality to feminist materialist analyses that they have often lacked.¹⁸ This approach adds to the recent and revitalized discussion of patriarchy and political culture in Latin American history, but it refocuses the debate specifically on issues of labor and

agrarian reform.¹⁹ In turn, it contributes to a growing and important literature on gender and labor history, as distinct from the study of women's work alone.²⁰

Between 1950 and 1973, sexuality was fundamental to the meaning of masculinity and femininity in rural Chile. Sexuality was critical to how women and men were constituted as gendered beings within the latifundia system and, later, within the Agrarian Reform. It underlay women's unequal incorporation into the labor force and political struggle. The assumed naturalness of men's sexual authority over women conditioned gendered divisions of labor and informed the consensus among political parties and rural unions across the political spectrum that female participation in labor struggles should be circumscribed by women's roles as wives and mothers. It underlay the assumption held both by Christian Democrats and Popular Unity leftists that the Agrarian Reform should primarily empower rural men. Sexuality also constituted a central matrix within which campesino men and women embraced and contested the parameters of the Agrarian Reform; they understood social disparities between male and female power in sexual ways and welcomed or resisted land reform and labor mobilization depending on the sexual risks and opportunities they associated with such change.

Patriarchy, and the way it is constructed by sexuality, does not imply women's passivity or necessary exclusion. Women were neither passive nor excluded from Chile's Agrarian Reform. Indeed, much of this book's energy is devoted to recovering just how much women's activities mattered to the Agrarian Reform and how much they benefited from it. In this sense, the book departs significantly from earlier feminist works that showcased how women were left out. This divergence stems from generational shifts in feminist thinking about patriarchy. In earlier scholarship, the term invoked a coherent system of male dominance that functioned to subordinate women throughout society. Given the need to disrupt triumphalist narratives about male progress, as well as to deflect hostility to feminist paradigms, feminists stressed the overarching pervasiveness of patriarchy.²¹ More recently, and in response to debates within feminist circles about agency, diversity, and postmodernism, feminists have emphasized patriarchy's heterogeneous and contradictory nature.²² *Partners in Conflict* does not understand patriarchy as a master grid, but as a multiplicity of arrangements derived from broad principles legitimating

men's authority over women. Not automatically linked, these arrangements undergo constant negotiation and change. This more dynamic concept of patriarchy allows for an acknowledgement that, while the Agrarian Reform eroded some forms of male dominance (landowners' sense of entitlement to rural women's bodies), it strengthened others (campesino men's role as breadwinners). It also allows for a consideration of changes in degrees of male dominance and how women's actions affected those changes.

This book rephrases old questions. Earlier scholarship asked whether agrarian reforms treated women and men equally and whether socialism liberated women. Both are important questions, both were largely answered, no. This book asks whether agrarian reform, including a socialist version of it, made patriarchy easier for women to live within and negotiate. It answers that, in many aspects, yes, it did. Patriarchy remained, but the ways it had changed mattered, and they mattered to women.

Partners in Conflict privileges gender and sexuality within a broader narrative about national politics and class conflict. It is a political history and a labor history that is also always about sexuality and gender. It does not merely add women to a story where they were missing.²³ It argues that gender and sexuality involve men and that they constitute key dynamics in implementing and contesting political projects. As a state-led initiative, Chile's Agrarian Reform involved attempts by two governments to refashion gender relations and place them at the service of two distinct models of national development. Yet as numerous scholars, drawing on Gramsci's notion of hegemony, have now noted, states are not closed, coherent apparatuses executing "behavioral revolutions from above."²⁴ The Chilean state, in both its Christian Democratic and socialist form, was internally divided, and embodied a site of struggle over competing political visions. It attempted to achieve and maintain its various agendas through a multileveled process of refashioning and accommodating existing attitudes and practices about modernity and gender. Not just government agencies effectuated the Agrarian Reform's disciplinary and socializing mission; it also relied on labor unions, oppositional political parties, and the Catholic Church, all of which overlapped or competed with state goals to varying degrees. No less important was the consent and resistance of individual campesino men and women to reformist efforts. While some aspects of the Agrarian Reform's gendered

mission were welcomed wholesale, others were only embraced in part or flatly rejected. Men and women, or specific groups of men and women, often took distinct sides.

This book begins in the 1950s with the Chilean latifundia system of great estates and spans the development of the Agrarian Reform throughout the 1960s until its abrupt end with Allende's overthrow in 1973. The first two chapters examine the significance of gender and sexuality in the 1950s and early 1960s to creating divisions of labor within Chile's *inquilino* system of semipeonage and their importance to shoring up landowners' authority over workers and campesino men's authority over women. Chapters 3 through 5 address the Agrarian Reform under the Christian Democrats between 1964 and 1970. Chapter 3 explores the growth of the rural labor movement and the efforts of center and left activists and government functionaries to promote notions of male solidarity, class militancy, and patriarchal responsibility. Chapter 4 examines state-led efforts to appeal to women through a validation of domesticity and a call for gender cooperation in the family. It looks at three programs: Agrarian Reform education projects, all-female organizations called mothers' centers, and Chile's first family planning and birth control programs. Chapter 5 discusses how land expropriations and the creation of state-managed farms produced new divisions within campesino communities, heightening the masculine privilege of some men over others and emphasizing male stewardship of wives and children.

The final two chapters deal with the acceleration of land expropriations and heightened political tensions during the Popular Unity government between 1970 and 1973. Chapter 6 examines the UP's efforts to mobilize rural women by simultaneously continuing the Christian Democratic model of domestic uplift and advocating an expanded economic and political role for women as workers. Chapter 7 explores rural men's and women's very different relationships to the consequences of intensified class conflict. In particular, it discusses how women's inferior incorporation into the Agrarian Reform's most important institutions translated into increased domestic conflicts over sex: the alleged promiscuity of adolescent girls and the supposed infidelity of married men. The epilogue explores the relevance of Chile's Agrarian Reform for understanding the legacy of military dictatorship that followed Allende's overthrow.

This book focuses its story on the Aconcagua Valley, one of Chile's oldest and most productive agricultural centers. Located one hundred kilometers north of Santiago in the province of Aconcagua, the Aconcagua Valley consists of nine counties organized into the two administrative departments of San Felipe and Los Andes.²⁵ The Aconcagua Valley was one of the first areas where land was expropriated and an early center for labor organizing. Conflicts over land in this area were relatively shorter and less violent than in the Santiago metropolitan area, where urban tensions bled into rural ones, or in the south, where estates were larger and indigenous communities had more immediate claims to land. But although the Agrarian Reform unfolded in regionally specific ways, events in the Aconcagua Valley are broadly representative of dynamics within the Agrarian Reform as a whole. The Agrarian Reform was a national program and, as a social process, it was implemented in ways that frequently shared more than they differed. The inner circles of government and political parties crafted Agrarian Reform policies and rural labor strategies in a highly centralized manner. Although a diverse range of communities embraced and contested them, the pervasiveness of latifundia conditions throughout much of Chile and the national reach of Chile's political parties in rural areas meant that campesinos everywhere struggled within similar structural and ideological parameters.

This book draws on a range of sources cobbled together from what, at the time, proved a difficult and elusive historical record. Most research was carried out between 1991 and 1993, the years immediately following the end of military rule. Due to the Chilean government's lack of resources for maintaining archives and, in particular, the military regime's attempt to control information about the 1964–1973 period, no formal government archive for events after 1960 existed, nor did any formal archives for the labor movement, political parties, or women's organizations.²⁶ This situation has since changed with the opening of a twentieth-century archive, but in the early 1990s, it was still necessary to visit individual ministries where, although many documents were found, others had been systematically neglected, lost, placed off-limits to researchers, or destroyed. Some ministerial records were technically open to the public, but were warehoused, un-indexed, and in conditions that made their use formidably time-consuming for this study.²⁷ Whatever

the case, some of the more traditional records used for labor and social history were not available or utilized for this study.

But other sources filled in the gaps. The extensive archive of the Agrarian Reform's main government agency, the Corporation for Agrarian Reform (CORA) was invaluable.²⁸ The Ministry of Health provided records on maternal and infant health, abortion, and birth control; the Ministries of Housing and Agriculture were similarly helpful for information on campesino education and women's groups.²⁹ Research at the National Institute of Statistics yielded a wealth of economic and demographic information. The Catholic Church and affiliated agencies had the most extensive collection on the labor movement and rural education.³⁰ Nonprofit research centers and university libraries also had assorted documents on these topics as well as on women.³¹ Newspapers and magazines published by the rural labor movement and various political tendencies were one of the most immediate sources on activism in the countryside.³² Judicial records on domestic violence and municipal registries on marriage and baptism were important to researching gender dynamics in the family.³³

Lastly, *Partners in Conflict* heavily draws from oral sources, including eighty interviews and oral histories, most of which were conducted with campesino men and women from the Aconcagua Valley, and a few of which with Santiago-based activists and professionals. For reasons of privacy the names of most informants have been altered throughout this text.³⁴ The oral sources were critical in several ways. Given the difficulty with other sources, they helped establish a basic narrative of events. They also facilitated a certain recovery of rural people's experience not available elsewhere. In the 1960s the majority of Chilean campesinos were illiterate, leaving few written traces of their voices. Middle-class professionals and urban activists authored most records of rural life, including the labor press. This book's focus on gender and sexuality made the issue of recovery still harder. Not only did campesinos not write about their intimate lives, but Agrarian Reform functionaries and political activists—who wrote voluminously—had little to say about the subject. Oral history provided a way to interject questions and elicit responses on themes ignored or suppressed by official records.

This does not mean that oral sources necessarily make for "truer" or more "direct" renditions of events. Like all sources, oral histories are sub-