

The entry of Chilean women in university and the changes in customs through law 1872-1877

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ABSTRACT

This article reconstructs the process that culminated in the “Decreto Amunátegui”, which allowed Chilean women to apply for university, and analyzes the polemic it caused in public opinion. To this end, there is a recount of the initiatives by two female secondary high school directors, Antonia Tarragó and Isabel Le Brun (1872 and 1876), for the recognition of their students’ exams to apply to the Universidad de Chile. Press commentaries on their unsuccessful efforts contributed to building up the political environment for the signing, in February, 1877, by Miguel Luis Amunátegui, Minister of Education, of the decree facilitating the admittance of women to higher education.

This article reflects on the significance of this decree in the context of the underlying secularization process, by paying special attention to the conflict expressed in the positions adopted by the Catholic and liberal presses. The conclusion is that these discussions express the tension between tradition and modernity taking place in Chilean culture during the second half of the 19th century.

Key words: feminine education, secularization, press, public opinion.

INTRODUCTION

As from 1810, the death of the monarchical system in Latin America left the political structure headless. This void was filled with republicanism. But it was not easy to bring about the necessary transformations in these new nations, much less in a fast way. In our continent, the 19th century is one of constructions: constructing a nation, forming a State. To this end, the Spanish inheritance was of great help, as Diego Portales observed. One of the elements that took on an important role was education. The implementation of the new republican order required that the new citizens, and those that could become citizens, know and accept this order. Education had to become “the main task of the state and the most important social aim as it will prevent the uncertainties of the new and unconsolidated ideology to materialize as social instability”¹. Thus, the terror of anarchy required that the governing class make an arduous effort to include new sectors in

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¹ Ana María Stiven, *La seducción de un orden. Las élites y la construcción de Chile en las polémicas culturales y políticas del siglo XIX*, Santiago, Ediciones de la Universidad Católica de Chile, 2000, 119.

the citizenship. But who would be those destined to enter the classrooms? Men, women, rich, poor? How much education should they receive? Only primary instruction? Secondary and higher education as well? In this article we will concentrate on one specific group: women. Though society recognized the important role of mother to future citizens, who taught them in their youngest years, it took time for women to have access to a complete education, one that included university studies as well. In 1881 the first woman got enrolled in the Universidad de Chile, four years after the signing of the decree that allowed women to pursue higher education, known as Decreto Amunátegui after the Minister of Education that created it, Miguel Luis Amunátegui². These events did not lack controversy. One must not forget the discussion that characterized the second half of the 19th century: the expansion of laicism and supposed withdrawal of Catholicism to the area of personal life. In other words, secularization took the floor. Defined as the inclination of people to understand reality and the nature of things through reason, leaving religious explanations aside³; secularization was transversally present in every public opinion debate during this period. With this article, we not only pretend to address the educational subject itself, but also contribute to the knowledge of the transformations in the people's spirits. These transformations, a product of secularization, had obvious consequences in the shaping of the nation and the state, as shown by the Secular Laws and the upheavals caused by them. In response to the call of some historians regarding the need to "write down the history of secularization"⁴, this article will show that the discussion about the role women should have in society, and the type of education and instruction they should receive, is part of the debate about the secularization of this society. The entry of women in university was considered to be a triumph for the liberals, and in our opinion, it was also a step forward typical of the 19th century: it represented a change in the gradual process of spreading education in the various areas of society⁵. Despite the statement that "Catholicism appears as one of the antagonistic forces that was finally defeated"⁶, the defenders of higher education for women never considered religion to be a pernicious element. Those schools for girls

² Other Latin American countries were living the same situation as Chile. The 1870s and 1880 were rich in debates about female instruction. In Peru, the first woman to study in university (but without finishing her studies) was María Trinidad Enríquez, who embarked on the study of law in 1874, and obtained her baccalaureate in 1878. In Argentina, Cecilia Grierson became the first female professional of her country when she obtained the title of medical surgeon on July 2nd 1889, followed three years later by Elvira Rawson. In Mexico, Matilde Montoya completed her studies of medicine on August 25th 1887. In these three countries, the future professionals had to apply for a special permit of the authorities to enroll in university and in Mexico, miss Montoya had the staunch support of the President, Porfirio Díaz. In Brasil things were different. In 1881 María Augusta Generosa Estrella obtained her title in Medicine, thus becoming the first female Latin American professional. However, she studied in the United States, where female education was well advanced by then (the first female US physician Elisabeth Blackwell, obtained her title in 1845), so her case can not be studied in the context of 19th century Latin American societies. The first Brazilian woman to obtain a university title in Brazil was Rita Lobato Velho Lopes, who graduated December 10th 1887, after the government decided to open the doors of university to women in 1879. In Colombia things evolved at a surprisingly slow pace. Only in 1936 Colombian women started to follow university studies (against the will of the church), while in Bolivia, although we haven't found information about the first female university students, the discussion about the quantity and quality of the instruction women should receive was as virulent in the 1870s and 1880s as in Chile. For the study of Peru, see Francisca Denegri, *El abanico y la cigarrera. La primera generación de mujeres ilustradas en el Perú*, Lima, Ediciones IEP, 1996, 127-128; for Argentina, Cynthia Jeffress Little, "Educación, filantropía y feminismo: partes integrantes de la feminidad argentina. 1860-1926", in Asunción Lavrin (ed.), *Las mujeres latinoamericanas. Perspectivas históricas*, México D.F., Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985, 276-285. For Mexico, http://mujereshoy.com/secciones/1147_3.shtml. For Brazil, June E. Hahner, "La prensa feminista del siglo XIX y los derechos de las mujeres en el Brasil", in Lavrin, *Las mujeres latinoamericanas*, 316-318. For Colombia, Asunción Lavrin, "Recuerdos del siglo XX", in *Revista de Historia Social y de las Mentalidades*, Año VIII, Vol. 1-2, 2004, Santiago, 17-18. For Bolivia, *Las mujeres en la historia de Bolivia. Imágenes y realidades del siglo XIX (Antología)*. Study and introduction by Beatriz Rossells, La Paz, Editorial Anthropos, 2001, 96-103 y 396-410.

³ Stuvén, *La seducción de un orden*, 24.

⁴ Sol Serrano, "Espacio público y espacio religioso en Chile republicano", in *Teología y Vida*, XLIV, Santiago, 2003, 347.

⁵ About the gradual character of the changes in the 19th century, see Stuvén, *La seducción de un orden*, and Sol Serrano, *Universidad y Nación. Chile en el siglo XIX*, Editorial Universitaria, Santiago, 1994, 62.

⁶ Serrano, "Espacio Público", 346.

that wanted their students to attend university had religion classes and the teachers were Catholics⁷. The subject in the discussion about secularization is the state, this is the one being secularized (or the people that conform it), and the church is expelled and attains the same standing as all other public actors. The church could no longer be *everything*. In fact, in a plural society this *everything* did no longer exist, but there were actors who competed to attain hegemony inside the civilian society. The state acted as a regulator of these actors.

This article has two parts. The first refers to the initiatives of the directors of female secondary schools, Antonia Tarragó and Isabel Le Brun, to have university commissions validate their students' exams, the press coverage of their requests and the enactment of the Amunátegui decree that allowed women to enter university. In this section we postulate that the Amunátegui decree was an example of the meeting of modernity and tradition characteristic of the 19th century, and that this decree was vital for the forming of the citizenship of this new nation. Both elements – tradition and modernity- don't exclude one another. Claiming that one is above the other would lead to a reductionist discussion that would not be of use to the understanding of our past. The “battle” between tradition and modernity led to a compromise between both, where both traditional and modern aspects survive. On the other hand, we think that a detailed account of the facts surrounding the school directors requests and the signing of the Amunátegui decree, will be a contribution to the history of female education, as there is no bibliography (as far as we know, at least) that reconstructs this process. The *Anales de la Universidad de Chile* have been vital for our investigation. The sessions of the University Council recorded in these texts allowed us to know the development of these requests step by step⁸.

In the second part, we will revise the controversy in the press of the time following the signing of the decree (February 5th 1877). During the two months after that date, the catholic press, represented by *El Estandarte Católico*, confronted liberal papers –*El Mercurio*, *El Ferrocarril*, *La República*, *El Deber* and *La Patria*– on the convenience of women having higher education. We have identified four topics in the controversy: woman's biological mission is incompatible with the practice of liberal professions; the social role of woman is to form individuals who will become good citizens

⁷ Tancredo Pinochet, son of Isabel Le Brun (the director of a girls school that wanted her students to attain university) once made a speech that showed the secularizing and laic ambient of the period. He stated that doña Isabel “was a religious woman, but not a fanatical one”. This was during the ceremony to place the first stone of a monument in honor of his mother and Antonia Tarragó in 1941. “Los grandes maestros”, *Revista de Educación*, N° 5, Santiago, 1941, 6.

⁸ The bibliography about the Amunátegui decree, apart from being scarce and reporting the facts incompletely, in some cases has a serious defect: it only refers to the spectacular and progressive measure of including women into university life. While this perception is accurate, we think it is necessary to go even further and explain the decree in terms of the debate of the period, as we have already said. The following authors have referred to the Amunátegui decree: Amanda Labarca H. *Historia de la enseñanza en Chile*, Santiago, Editorial Universitaria, 1939, 161-167; Roberto Hernández Ponce, “Bachillerato y títulos profesionales para mujeres. Ideas y pasiones de hace cien años”, *Revista de Educación*, 63, Santiago, September 1977, 30-34; Teresa Pereira, “La mujer en el siglo XIX”, in Lucía Santa Cruz *et al.*, *Tres ensayos sobre la mujer chilena*, Santiago, Editorial Universitaria, 1978, p. 131; varios autores, *Actividades femeninas en Chile*, Santiago, Imprenta y Litografía La Ilustración, 1928; Erika Maza, “Liberales, radicales y la ciudadanía de la mujer en Chile (1872-1930)”, *Estudios Públicos*, 69, Santiago, 1998, 330-338; María José Zaldívar Larraín, *Participación femenina en Chile durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX a través del ejercicio de las libertades de imprenta, de enseñanza y de asociación*, Thesis to apply to the degree of graduate in Law and History, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, 2002; and Emma Salas Neumann, “La educación superior y los movimientos de emancipación de la mujer chilena, 1877-1950”, in Robert Austin (ed.), *Intelectuales y educación superior en Chile: de la Independencia a la democracia transicional, 1810-2001*, Santiago, Ediciones CESOC, 2004, 39-58. In our opinion, Maza has come closest to the subject, stating that the Amunátegui decree “was the final result of a succession of events, that included conservative initiatives, decisions by the University Council and the pressure of the school directors”, as we shall see later on in this paper. The relationship between the facts she points out is concluded by Sol Serrano in her classic work *Universidad y nación. Chile en el siglo XIX*, p. 339. On the other hand, María José Zaldívar's thesis publishes Antonia Tarragó's request, but doesn't report on the reception by the Universidad de Chile, as the author doesn't use the *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*. Finally, the brief article by Hernández Ponce comes close to the core of the subject, stating that “if the cause of female education were not caught up with the nuisance of anticlericalism, the church would probably have responded in a more favorable way. But could one expect anticlericalism and antiroyalism –inevitable parts of national politics- to be forgotten in those years, faced with a controversy of this nature?”.

in the future, but should a mother be skilled or only educated?; the female liberal professions as a way to obtain fortune; and the professional woman: will she fall into atheism or will she save herself from the claws of fanaticism?

THE REQUESTS BY ANTONIA TARRAGÓ AND ISABEL LE BRUN
AND THE AMUNÁTEGUI DECREE

Forwards, always forwards! The requests by Antonia Tarragó

It is known that a people's happiness depends on the civilization of its individuals under the protection of the law; but we cannot obtain civilization without work and this is taught to us by customs. These two elements of social life, laws and customs, come to us through the two beings that compose the human species. If they are just they bring about progress; but for progress to fly fast, it has to be driven in the same way by both⁹.

With these words and putting women on the train to progress, Antonia Tarragó started her request before the University Council. She wanted the council to validate the exams of her students of the "Santa Teresa" school so they could apply for university. It was October 1872 and the beginning of a long road: Chilean women would step by step begin to take part in public life as an active and independent actor.

Doña Antonia Tarragó González had founded the "Santa Teresa" school in 1864 to offer secondary female instruction. As she said herself, her aim was to "develop women's intelligence, purify their morale and cultivate their psychological abilities"¹⁰. The school constantly had pupils (in the 40 years of its life, more than 12.000 students occupied the classrooms), but the beginning was not easy. This, according to the founder, was because the level of illustration of Chilean women was in a deplorable state in that time. There were still opinions unfavorable to female education, "remnants of the colonial time"¹¹. Women only received the most elemental knowledge.

To this "torpor of customs" society was living in, one had to add that "government did not supply the means for their instruction". That is why, Tarragó continued, it was necessary to "lift women's spirits so they raise their eyes to the temple of science". But how? She gave the answer herself:

Showing her, as to the Three Wise Men, the star before her; university titles will be the star that stimulates her and moved by noble emulation, woman will reach the sanctuary of knowledge¹².

The idea was to stimulate women to continue studying. There would be no use for them to reach sixth year of secondary school if they could not go any further. This is the origin of the request the educator presented to the University Council. A "thunderous blow" as Tarragó herself called it.

Her petition was favored by the decree that established the freedom of exams¹³ issued by the Ministry of Education on January 15th of that year. The school director stated in her request that

⁹ Request of Antonia Tarragó to the University Council, Santiago, October 1872, Archive of the Ministry of Education (from now on AME), vol. 206, 99, foja 2.

¹⁰ *Memoria leída por la directora del Liceo de Santa Teresa en el acto literario musical en conmemoración del XXX aniversario de la fundación de este establecimiento el año 1864*, Santiago, Imprenta Mejía, 1894, 4.

¹¹ *Ibíd.*

¹² *Ibíd.*, 5

¹³ Dictated by the only conservative representative in the cabinet of president Federico Errázuriz, Abdón Cifuentes, this decree established that the State schools would not be examined by private schools as "this task has become excessively expensive and detrimental to the Instituto [Nacional]", and from then on, exams would be taken in the respective schools, and they would be valid to apply for university. This disposition raised turmoil in the Universidad de Chile, the

the decree “irons out some difficulties”, that is to say, the exams no longer had to be taken at the Instituto Nacional.

However, it is necessary to pause and ask oneself why Antonia Tarragó sent the request. The decree of January 15th already made things easy for her. There was no previous legislation about women’s education, neither one that permitted it nor one that prohibited it. There was no need to ask for women’s exams to be valid to apply for university if there was no disposition that stated the opposite. Clearly, there was no female secondary school financed by the state. All fiscal schools were for boys. Perhaps that is why doña Antonia made her request. And that, besides, makes this document especially relevant. In her book about the Universidad de Chile in the 19th century, Sol Serrano asks who wants education, and if it is a social demand or a state initiative. The historian postulates that the State “was the modernizing axis of education, the one that introduced scientific knowledge, the one that formed professions”. That is why the Universidad de Chile “represented a top-down reform that in a medium time frame, managed to generate a social demand for knowledge”¹⁴.

When one asks the same questions in the case of female secondary and higher education the answers are different. Tarragó’s request represents the wish of a part of society to educate and instruct women, that is to say, it was a wish for bottom-up reform¹⁵. However, the fact that the first step towards female education wasn’t taken by the State, doesn’t mean that the State did not participate in the process once it took off. Once there was a demand for education, it was possible that the State would enthusiastically join this initiative. That is why the following question comes up: how was Tarragó’s request received at the Council?

There was a discussion inside this organism about women having or not the right to obtain university degrees. In the session of October 18th 1872, in which the request was read, the dean of the Faculty of Medicine, don José Joaquín Aguirre, and the University’s secretary, Miguel Luis Amunátegui, said that they did not know of any disposition that prohibited women from aspiring to university degrees, that the issue at stake only had to do with “women manifesting, like men, their competence through the same examinations”¹⁶. However, Gabriel Ocampo, dean of the Faculty of Law, cited the *Ley de Partidas* that prohibited woman to practice law¹⁷. The rector Ignacio

government and the press, in which defenders of the freedom of education and those of a State-run school system confronted each other. The text of this decree is registered in *Anales de la Universidad de Chile* (from now on *AUCH*), book XLVI, 1872, 19-21. The controversy surrounding this measure is analyzed in detail in Serrano, *Universidad y Nación*, 229-239.

¹⁴ Serrano, *Universidad y Nación*, 16.

¹⁵ We are not denying the role Serrano assigns to the State as “modernizing axis of education”, but in fact reaffirming it. The historian herself states that the educational reforms promoted by the Chilean State led to a social demand “in a medium time frame”. We think that women’s interest in education, as shown in Antonia Tarragó’s request, and as we shall see in that of Isabel Le Brun, represent this social demand that arose in the medium time frame. Additionally, women felt that the State was concentrated on educating men and not women. In that sense, we can affirm that women take the first step in their secondary and higher education, but not to initiate a parallel process to the existing education system – that of men – but to integrate themselves in the national education network (which isn’t the same as the State network). We think that the formation of the 19th century individual is at the core of this discussion, be it man or woman, in the light of the ideas about modernity that included a political system based on popular sovereignty. In this way, education becomes the first step towards the formation of individuals who fully participate in the public sphere. Women joined this progress a bit later, and of their own initiative. There is a deeper analysis about who wants education in the introduction of the work by Sol Serrano *Universidad y nación*, and in the article by the same author “¿Quién quiere la educación? Estado y familia en Chile a mediados del siglo XIX”, in Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru (ed.), *Educación y Familia en Iberoamérica*, Mexico, 1999, 153-171, centered on the expansion of primary education. The subject is also analyzed in the work by Francois Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Lire et ecrire*, París, 1977.

¹⁶ *AUCH*, volume XLVI, 1872, 342.

¹⁷ The law cited by Ocampo is written in the third *partida*, title six and reads: “No woman, however much she has knowledge, can be a lawyer for another individual in a lawsuit. This is for two reasons. The first, because it is neither a balanced nor an honest thing for a woman to take on a man’s profession, being publicly involved with men, to reason for someone else. The second, because in ancient times it was defended so by wise men. A woman called California was knowledgeable but she was so shameless that she made the judges angry with her voice, and they could not deal with her. Considering the first reason we stated in this law, and seeing that when women loose their shame, it is a hard thing to

Domeyko and José Larraín Gandarillas, ecclesiastic member of the Council, were of the opinion that it wasn't up to them, but to the Ministry of Education to decide the matter. That is why the request of doña Antonia was turned to don Abdón Cifuentes the following day¹⁸.

Before the Ministry's answer arrived, on November 22nd, five sessions after the reading of Tarragó's request, the educator sent a document to the university Council in which she detailed the classes that were given in her establishment¹⁹. But Cifuentes hadn't answered yet, so no decision was taken about the issue. Only on December 11th document 2409 was sent to the Council, in which the Minister said that "before issuing a resolution about this subject, the government wants to know the opinion of the University Council". He requested the Council to analyze the issue and then to sent its decision to the Ministry²⁰. This ministerial document was read in the session of December 13th, but the discussion "was left pending"²¹. For the next session? The final decision came in November 1873. The delay was due to the large workload of the Council (which in fact, it had) and it had to be discussed again on another date. It was doña Antonia Tarragó who insisted on her petition. In the records of the session of November 14th, which informs of the educator's demand, it is written that she asks the Council to "release a report requested *months ago* by the Ministry of Education"²². Apparently in this occasion it was easy to reach an agreement. A few lines stated that "after some discussions, it was agreed to tell the Minister of Education that the Council sees no inconvenience for women to aspire to obtain university degrees"²³. The answer was sent to the minister on November 17. However, Abdón Cifuentes no longer occupied this position. He had had to leave his post in august 1873 because of the controversy created by the decree of freedom of exams that had made it easier for Tarragó to send her request. The new minister was José María Barceló, who never replied²⁴.

The press wasn't indifferent to Tarragó's intents. The sessions of the University Council were usually published in the most important newspapers of the country, and the delay of Tarragó's request was easy see. *El Independiente* published extensive articles about the issue. In December 1872, Máximo Ramón Lira set out his ideas in an essay titled "La mujer. Sus deberes políticos y sociales" ("Woman. Her political and social obligations"). He tried to unravel if women could aspire to obtain university degrees, practice liberal professions and have political rights. Lira started admitting women's physical weakness in comparison to that of men; but this didn't mean that their intelligence was weak as well. Those who stated the opposite, reasoning that women have never produced any masterpieces, forgot that women have never received an education to help them create masterpieces²⁵. However, Lira said, the issue in question isn't if women are capable enough

listen to them, and to discuss with them, and learning from the bad results that arose from California's voices, they defended that no woman could reason for someone else". *Las siete partidas del sabio Rey D. Alfonso el IX*. Tomo II, Barcelona, Imprenta de Antonio Bergnes, 1844, 170-171.

¹⁸ Memorandum of the University Council to the Ministry of Education, Santiago, October 19th 1872, AME, vol. 206, 99, file 1.

¹⁹ Descriptive geography, ancient history, arithmetic, sacred history, Spanish grammar and catechism.

²⁰ Official letter of the Ministry of Education, Abdón Cifuentes, to the Rector of the Universidad de Chile, Ignacio Domeyko, Santiago, December 11th 1872, AME, vol 239, 486. Copy book. This document is reproduced in the newspaper *El Independiente*, Santiago, December 18th 1872, 3.

²¹ *AUCH*, volume XLVI, 1872, 414.

²² *AUCH*, volume XLVIII, 1873, 522. Emphasized by this author.

²³ *Ibíd.*

²⁴ Despite the fact that her initiative had no positive results, Tarragó did not give up and, perhaps seeing that with written requests –that had led to bureaucratic proceedings – she would not obtain concrete results, she went to talk in person with the Minister of Education (Barceló) on several occasions to set out her request. Even so, her efforts were fruitless. These interviews were not registered in any government document, or in any in possession of Tarragó. She only refers to these intents in her discourse during the commemoration of the 30 years of the founding of her school, in 1894: "The director repeated her requests, on various occasions visiting the Ministers that occupied the post; but did not obtain favorable results". *Memoria leída por la directora del Liceo de Santa Teresa*, 8.

²⁵ Máximo R. Lira, "La mujer. Sus deberes políticos y sociales II", in *El Independiente*, Santiago, December 22nd 1872, 2.

to follow scientific studies; it is necessary to understand why they have not chosen to study them. Lira presents two causes:

Firstly, because of an erroneous opinion and general concern according to which they have been considered inept to follow scientific studies successfully; and, in the second place, because they themselves have done little to get rid of the ignorance and superficiality that seems to have befallen them²⁶.

Lira postulates that women must not leave their intelligence uncultivated, “because God, who has not done useless things, has not endowed them with intelligence to have them use it only for frivolousness”. After explaining the need for women to illustrate themselves, Lira analyses the feasibility for women to develop professionally. From a legal point of view, there is no obstacle, Lira states, as “our legislation doesn’t prohibit women to study to become a lawyer, doctor, or other liberal professional”²⁷. If there is no obstacle for women to practice scientific professions (and this makes the discussion in the University Council unnecessary), it is relevant to answer if it is *convenient*, both for society and for women, to have women receive a higher education. Society would be immensely benefited by the expansion of woman’s illustration, as she is the center of family, the basis of all social organization. As for the convenience for women, they must decide it themselves, because, Lira states, “in this, as in all analogous issues, the right solution is the one of freedom”.

We think that Lira’s questions are relevant because they make us reflect on other types of “conveniences”: is it convenient to increase women’s scopes of action, get them out of their houses and take them into the public sphere? Is it convenient for them to exchange the comfortable living rooms of their houses for a hospital ward or to a courtroom, all places in which they can relate to people outside of their intimate circle? If women develop new activities the social order can change and this will obviously bring about consequences. When women develop themselves in the public sphere (understood as any place outside the home, that is to say, in terms of publicity, not property²⁸), women will get interested in problems that are not only related to them, but to society as a whole, and they will be in condition to take part in the process of generating authorities. In fact, Lira states it like this:

When woman develops a more important role in society than she does nowadays, when her intelligence and activity are part of public progress and prosperity, then it will not be very difficult to get her some participation in the issues of the State²⁹.

Despite the support of the press and her repeated requests, Antonia Tarragó did not receive a resolution of her petition³⁰. Then in 1876 a new government took office. Aníbal Pinto became President and designated don Miguel Luis Amunátegui as Minister of Justice, Cult and Public Education. New authorities, new attempts, but these were done by another educator and director of a female school: Isabel Le Brun de Pinochet. Would she manage to fulfill the wishes of doña Antonia?

²⁶ *Ibíd.*

²⁷ *Ibíd.*

²⁸ About the definitions of “public sphere” according to publicity or property, see Sol Serrano, “La definición de lo público en un Estado Católico. El caso chileno. 1810-1885”, *Estudios Públicos*, 76, 1999, Santiago, 211-232.

²⁹ Máximo R. Lira, “La mujer. Sus deberes políticos y sociales III”, in *El Independiente*, Santiago, December 29th 1872, 2. This sentence is very up to date in Chile at the moment, in 2006.

³⁰ But she never paused. Loyal to the sentence she repeated to her students to motivate them in their studies, “forwards, always forwards!” she continued giving classes in humanities. Her students had to take exams in front of commissions formed by Tarragó to prove that “woman is capable of assimilating profound knowledge”. *Memoria leída por la directora del Liceo de Santa Teresa*, 8.

The request of Isabel Le Brun

Isabel Le Brun Reyes was born in San Felipe in 1845. After getting married she lived some time in Copiapó, and then she moved to Santiago where she founded the “Colegio de la Recoleta” (“Recoleta School”) for women in 1875, later known as “Liceo Isabel Le Brun de Pinochet”. There she not only gave primary instruction, but she also taught humanities (secondary school). At the end of the second year of the school’s functioning, on December 1st 1876, she decided to send a request to the University Council to ask for the nomination of university commissions to assist to and validate her students’ exams.

Le Brun starts her petition explaining that she has no knowledge of “any university disposition that regulates the exams taken by the young women that aspire to guarantee their aptitudes with legal certificates so as to be able to choose higher degrees”³¹. Additionally, there is no “study plan for young women”; while there are norms for those who study in private schools. Doña Isabel thought her petition could be met if exposed in the latter situation. Just like Antonia Tarragó, doña Isabel leaned on the existing decrees. The controversial decree of January 15th 1872 that was of so much use to Tarragó, didn’t exist anymore. It had been replaced in January 1874 by a new decree³² that, in turn, was reformed eight months later in reference to the exams of students of private schools³³.

Le Brun emphasized that, on seeing the educational developments of their daughters, some parents of her students had exhorted her “to give them the guarantee I search for in my request for exams assisted by university commissions”. This proves that the origin of extending female education comes “from below”; it isn’t an initiative of the State, but of privates that ask for the government’s help. How did the government respond? Did doña Isabel’s request suffer the same fate as that of Tarragó?

Apparently, things started as slowly as they did four years before. Le Brun had asked for the commissions to operate on December 31st, but the University Council acknowledged reception of the document only on the 22nd of that month. It was agreed to assign the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Francisco Vargas Fontecilla, to visit the school of Isabel Le Brun and present a report afterwards. This decision was preceded, as written in the report of the session, with “some discussion about woman’s right to give exams to apply to university”³⁴. Again, an already settled subject was discussed (as we have already seen in relation with Tarragó’s initiative). Besides, this subject had already been communicated, in its time, to the Minister of Education. However, doña Isabel did not give up and complying with the petition of Vargas Fontecilla, sent the Council a detailed report of the state of her establishment on December 28th³⁵, explaining how she planned to

³¹ The petition by Isabel Le Brun is published in *La República*, Santiago, January 16 1877, 2.

³² The decree of January 10th 1874 clearly established that the initiative of two years before had brought about more harm than benefits, because in the first argument of its preamble was written: “The decree of January 15 1872 [...] has had bad results in practice, because it has helped abuses that have compromised the seriousness of the studies, going against the government’s purposes”. *AUCH*, volume XLVIII, 1874, 18.

³³ The decree of November 9th 1874 stated in article 18: “The private schools that teach the complete course of humanities and have the necessary instruments for the teaching of physical and natural sciences –and having the University Council proof of this- can request special commissions that will receive exams inside the schools. These commissions will be formed by two tenured members and one substitute, designated by the Council, and a teacher of the school designated by its rector”. Isabel Le Brun based her request on this disposition. For the complete decree, see *Boletín de las leyes i decretos del Gobierno*, Book XLII (volume 2), Santiago, Imprenta Nacional, 1874 and *AUCH*, volume XLVI, 1874, 477-481.

³⁴ *AUCH*, volume L, 1876, 468.

³⁵ The teaching staff of the school of Isabel Le Brun is as follows: Isabel Le Brun (Literature and Grammar); Ernesto Turenne (Literature, Grammar, Higiene and Natural History); Carlos González Ugalde (French); Guillermo Davies (English and Arythmetics); Alberto Burg (German and Cosmography); M. Fidel Pinochet (Ancient and Greek History); Eduardo de la Barra (History of America and of the Middle Ages); Priest C. Emilio León (Sacred History and Religion); Nicanor Romo (Descriptive and physical Geography); Gabriel Campos (Drawing and Painting); and Margarita Caviedes

adjust to teach all the required humanities (secondary school) courses. In this report, she insisted her work would be much easier if the Council resolved “about some new study program planned for the solid education of women, which would be implemented in my school, meeting all demands accurately”³⁶. Up until then the school followed the plan of the Instituto Nacional. In the session of December 29th, the Council listened to the conclusions of Vargas Fontecilla after his visit to the school of doña Isabel. The dean stated that “as for the right of women to take exams [before university commissions], there are, in my judgment, no reasons to deny it to them”³⁷. However, no resolution was taken, “as it is late, the session was adjourned, leaving the prior issue pending”³⁸. There was no reason to lose heart, as (looking at the filled half of the glass of water and not at the empty one) the Council only had to dictate a resolution about something the members already seemed to agree upon, in favor of the request of Le Brun. But then, discouragement did come. During the following sessions (on January 5th and 11th 1877) the issue wasn’t even mentioned and then the Council took summer vacations until March.

This new failure to widen female education didn’t go unnoticed by the press. *El Independiente* was the first to cover the news, informing in their edition of December 16th 1876 that they knew of Le Brun’s request and that “two young women who study there have the intention to apply to the degree of baccalaureate in humanities and philosophy”³⁹.

But the newspaper that raised alarm for the rest of the press was *La República*, when it destined, in its edition of January 16th 1877, ample space to the intents of Isabel Le Brun. Her request was published, as well as her report about the state of her establishment and the sessions of the Council in which the subject was dealt with⁴⁰. The delay was plain to see. The next day, *El Ferrocarril* criticized the Council for its negligence, stating that “unfortunately it has not resolved an issue that it should not have discussed for a minute but should have resolved in a second”⁴¹. After a brief review of the facts, the newspaper stated that “the New Year has not given the Council inspiration and the organism is pursuing that during vacation”, when in reality, according to the editorial, it was a matter of unfounded delays. Just like Máximo Lira in 1872, *El Ferrocarril* asked where this law was that prohibited women from receiving scientific and higher education. The newspaper was categorical in its answer:

There is no such law. And if this law doesn’t exist, the University Council can’t have discussed if women did or didn’t have the right to higher education. If there is no law, the right of women is perfect, unless we establish that women in Chile are outside the law. But this impertinent declaration wouldn’t be used by the doctors of our University. [...] The University Council is confined to avoiding handing out undeserved titles. If a woman who deserves these titles, claims them, the Council, by denying her these, would incur in an arbitrary act of the worst taste possible⁴².

de Lara and Telésforo Cabero (Singing and Piano). This list was published in *La República*, Santiago, January 16th 1877, 2.

³⁶ The report is also published in *La República*, Santiago, January 16th 1877, 2.

³⁷ *AUCH*, volume L, 1876, 477.

³⁸ *Ibíd.*

³⁹ *El Independiente*, Santiago, December 16th 1876, p. 2. Two weeks later, on December 29th, the newspaper published a letter in support of Le Brun signed by the teachers who integrated the commissions that took her students’ exams and that, by the way, were not nominated by the university, but by Le Brun herself to prove her students’ abilities. According to the signatories, the exams were “worthy of being seen by the university commissions”. *El Independiente*, Santiago, December 1876, 1. This letter was also published in *El Ferrocarril*, Santiago, December 30th 1876, 2 and in *La República*, Santiago, January 18th 1877, 2.

⁴⁰ *La República*, Santiago, January 16th 1877, 2.

⁴¹ *El Ferrocarril*, Santiago, January 17th 1877, 2. This editorial was republished in *El Deber*, Valparaíso, January 18th 1877, 2.

⁴² *Ibíd.* Faced with the angry reaction of *El Ferrocarril*, a letter published in *El Independiente* on January 18 signed by “a school director” recalls that the issue of the validation of women’s exams dates back to 1872, when “the director of Santa Teresa school presented the University Council with the same request another director is presenting now”. Who was this “school director”? It wouldn’t be too farfetched to assume it was Antonia Tarragó herself. Did she want her efforts to be

El Independiente resumes the subject of the legality of women's entry to university on January 20th. With a reproachful tone, Máximo Lira criticizes the "old-fashioned" actions of the university organism:

What law or what moderately understandable reason supports the University Council in its denial to admit the rights of young women's school students to obtain university degrees?

None that we know of, unless it is the law of customs, the most severe and inflexible of all. But in our legislation there is no disposition stating that professional careers are exclusively open to men. And, above all, if there is no law prohibiting women to aspire to obtain a university degree, with what right does the Council refuse to satisfy this legitimate aspiration? The doctors of that wise organism must know that all is licit which laws do not prohibit⁴³.

How could this situation be clarified? Lira praised the initiative of the fathers who founded a secondary school for their daughters in Valparaíso, because

The issue pending before the University Council will be resolved the day the school in Valparaíso opens its doors, because *that simple fact* will prove that, according to the government, women are capable of receiving university degrees⁴⁴.

The sentence "that simple fact" shows that the bottom of the discussion was not if women had or did not have the right to study in university, there was no doubt about that since there was no legislation that prohibited it. In fact, Le Brun's request didn't look to validate female exams before university commissions, but aimed at the Council forming those commissions before December 31st, as it understood that there was no exclusive legislation for secondary and higher female education, so these would be guided by the same norms as those of male education. It was Le Brun's wish that a "study plan be dictated soon for the solid instruction of woman"⁴⁵.

At the end of January, *El Mercurio* added a new element to the debate: there were no female secondary schools that depended on the State, so education wasn't accessible to all, and parents had to pay for the education of their daughters in private schools. The newspaper asked Minister Amunátegui to "formulate a complete study program for all the secondary schools for girls, considering their peculiarities"⁴⁶. However, Amunátegui did not create a study plan for women (and thus, State female secondary schools), but issued a decree that allowed women to enter university. Was it the right thing to do?

praised? It is possible, considering that the press in general praised the director of the Recoleta School without reserve, something which could have made Tarragó uncomfortable. In fact, on January 18th, *La República* stated that before the existence of doña Isabel's school, female secondary education was not developed: "The humanities courses the young women are taught there is something new for us, used as we are to educate our daughters only with some elemental notions of grammar, arithmetic, geography, religion, some French and piano. Up until now, our schools do not give another instruction to our students, even if it means that they have to repeat the same things every year [...]. Recoleta School is something new in Chile and part of a positive future that will soon be a radical reform, a true social revolution in the interests of our fair sex". More so, in the memories of Tarragó during her commemorative speech of the 30 years of her school, she doesn't mention Le Brun's request when she refers to the Amunátegui decree. She only reports her repeated intents since 1872 and the generosity of Minister Miguel Luis Amunátegui, who, when he took office in 1876 "occupied himself since the first moment preferably in attending the request by Santa Teresa School". *Memoria leída por la directora del Liceo de Santa Teresa*, 9.

⁴³ *El Independiente*, Santiago, January 20th 1877, 1. On the same day, *El Mercurio* asked the same question and reached the same conclusions as the Santiago newspaper: "What law prevents the Council to comply with this very just demand? Don't women have perfect right to study and to practice any profession men do? Then, what are that timidity and those scruples due to? If it is ridiculous for a woman to dedicate herself to the forum or medicine, etc, that is her issue and not that of the University Council, whose role is reduced to inform about what is legal or illegal in the pretensions of the applicant". *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, January 20th 1877, 2. It is republished in *El Independiente* of January 23rd, 1.

⁴⁴ *El Independiente*, Santiago, January 20th 1877, 1. Emphasized by this author.

⁴⁵ See the beginning of this paragraph.

⁴⁶ *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, January 27th 1877, 2

The Amunátegui decree. Allowing something that wasn't forbidden

On February 5th 1877, in Viña del Mar, the Minister of Justice, Cult and Public Education, don Miguel Luis Amunátegui, signed the decree that was to become a landmark in the history of female education: the validation of women's exams before university commissions:

Considering:

1° That it is convenient to stimulate women to pursue serious and solid studies;

2° That they can practice some of the scientific professions with advantage over men;

3° That it is important to give them the means to earn their living for themselves, I decree:

Women must be admitted to take valid exams to obtain university titles, as long as they comply with the same dispositions men have to respond to⁴⁷.

It is a landmark in the history of female education, but what concrete importance did this measure have? A revision of the press of December 1876 and January 1877 concerning the request by Isabel Le Brun clearly shows that public opinion was asking for a study program for women, not for allowing women to enter university, as that was already a given right, with no law prohibiting it. Why, then, allow something that was never prohibited? The creation of a specific study plan for women also meant the creation of exclusive secondary schools for them, which in turn meant that the State had to spend important sums of money. However, and despite the growth the country had experienced since the middle of the century, as from 1875 it faced the worst economical crisis until then and the public funds had big losses⁴⁸. Perhaps that is why Amunátegui was not able to embark on a task as large as that one, even if he wanted to. Diego Barros Arana affirms as much when he refers to the ministerial work of don Miguel in his biography⁴⁹. In this context one can understand the support given to the fathers that founded secondary schools for their daughters⁵⁰. However, despite the State's support of that idea, it was only that, a support, and the new schools would not be run or financed by the State, but by privates, and not all girls would have access to them, as they wouldn't be free. Besides, they would not have the national scope that an initiative of the State would have. The schools in Valparaíso, Copiapó, Talca and Concepción were created only thanks to the parents' interest. In those cities where those who could finance such an enterprise had no interest in doing so, these schools simply did not come into existence.

For all these reasons, a detailed analysis of the Amunátegui decree is needed.

Again, we ask what it really meant. We postulate that this measure was aimed, firstly, at calming the public opinion; it was like a dramatic effect⁵¹. As we have already seen, the press gave

⁴⁷ *AUCH*, volume LII, 1877, 34.

⁴⁸ In 1875, the entries were \$16.350.119, while the spending was \$22.052.187. The next year, entries were \$15.366.717 and spending \$17.784.142. In 1877, entries summed \$18.678.956 and spending \$20.463.685. Cristián Zegers A., *Anibal Pinto. Historia política de su gobierno*, Santiago, Editorial Universitaria, 1969, 92.

⁴⁹ Diego Barros Arana, *Don Miguel Luis Amunátegui. 1828-1888*, París, Imprenta de A. Lahure, 1888, 124.

⁵⁰ *Ibíd.* 125.

⁵¹ Since the middle of the century public opinion starts to form in the country, due to the changes brought by economical growth (of mining), the expansion of education and the gradual consolidation of reformist ideas. These factors produced changes in society, which became more critical. A critical and "reasoning" press emerged, where arguments were used to defend ideas and respond to attacks. The press became the official instrument to express opinions. This new public opinion that demanded to be informed and to express itself had to be considered by the authority. It was like a "being" in itself that, in appearance inorganic, legitimized or censured the actions of that authority. Also, the emergence of a modern public opinion that represents the critic citizenship, demands the existence of a press that responds to its interests. Public opinion embodies itself in the press, and the opinions expressed in the press represent the views of public opinion that can now influence authority in concrete matters through its vote. The electoral reform of 1874 established as a prerequisite to vote only to be able to read and write, and the amount of voters increased. That is why it is so important for the government to know what the public opinion thinks and needs. The "reasoning" character of the Chilean press of the 19th century is observed by Carlos Ossandón, *El crepúsculo de los "sabios" y la irrupción de los "publicistas"*, Santiago,

ample attention to the subject of female secondary and higher education, and angrily criticized the delay of the University Council in resolving Le Brun's petition. After the decree was issued, praises came quickly. The day after the decree was signed, *El Deber* stated:

Because of this [the Amunátegui decree] one will be able to see that the immense development already existing in the education of the fair sex, isn't a simple utopia as many had believed until now, but a feasible truth⁵².

El Mercurio, on the other hand, published a lengthy editorial dedicated to the new norm in which it stated that the decree granted Le Brun her request and resolved "the difficulty the University Council has not dared to disentangle after all these months of analysis"⁵³. The editorial also sustained that "women could not be excluded from the right to obtain a profession because [...] there was no law for that"⁵⁴.

On the other hand, public opinion also understood something else, perhaps unconsciously: even if the doors to university were open for women thanks to the Amunátegui decree, that is to say, a legal measure, what happened with customs? *El Deber* stated:

The first women who'll obtain a professional title in Chile will not only suffer the bitter censures of the enemies of education, but will have to fight with great effort against all sorts of obstacles inherent to such a serious transformation of our habits⁵⁵.

Thus is the importance of the Amunátegui decree: erasing the limitations of customs through the law. Did Amunátegui sense it would happen like this? We have to remember that Miguel Luis Amunátegui was a typical public figure of the 19th century: an educator, politician, historian, and journalist. Above all, he was profoundly embedded in the subjects that had to do with the country's education. He had links with the Universidad de Chile since the 1850s, and was named General Secretary of that university in December 1860. He occupied this post until his death in 1888, leaving it only when he was called to hold ministerial positions. We cannot affirm if Amunátegui acted in conscience or not without the necessary documentation; but his figure is certainly a faithful representation of the 19th century. We could say the same about Diego Barros Arana, Andrés Bello and Ignacio Domeyko. They all represent, in different degrees, the tension modernity / tradition⁵⁶. In the memoir the then Minister of Education Amunátegui presented in 1877

ARCIS-LOM Ediciones, 1998. For a deeper analysis on public opinion, see Rafael Sagredo Baeza, *Vapor al Norte, tren al sur. El viaje presidencial como práctica política en Chile. Siglo XIX*, Santiago, Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos, El Colegio de México, Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana, 2001, 93-97. A recent work is Ángel Soto (editor), *Entre tintas y plumas. Historias de la prensa chilena del siglo XIX*, Santiago, Centro de Investigación de Medios Andes, Facultad de Comunicación, Universidad de los Andes, 2004. This book consists of seven articles about the 19th century press, and gives a selected bibliography about the subject. For the significance of the electoral reform of 1874, see J. Samuel Valenzuela, "Hacia la formación de instituciones democráticas: prácticas electorales en Chile durante el siglo XIX", in *Estudios Públicos*, 66, Santiago, 1997, 215-257.

⁵² *El Deber*, Valparaíso, February 7th 1877, 2.

⁵³ *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, February 8th 1877, 2. Also in *El Ferrocarril*, Santiago, February 1877, 2 and *El Independiente*, Santiago, February 10 1877, 1.

⁵⁴ *Ibíd.* Not only the press was happy with the measure. Various associations of artisans and industrials congratulated Amunátegui for all the "decisions taken by the ministry that tend to directly contribute to women's education". Sociedad Colón de Zapateros (from whose letter is the previous quote), Sociedad Unión de Artesanos, Comisión Central de Industriales de Santiago, Sociedad de Sastres, Sociedad de Artesanos de Vallenar, Sociedad "Unión Amigos del Bien" and Liga Protectora all expressed their joy at the new horizon for female education. Their letters are found in (following the same order of the organizations): *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, February 26th 1877; *El Ferrocarril*, Santiago, February 17th 1877, 1; *El Ferrocarril*, Santiago, February 22nd 1877, 2-3; AME, vol. 336, p. 28, foja 1; AME, vol. 339, 37, foja 1; AME, vol. 339, 52, fojas 1-2; AME, vol. 339, 40, fojas 1-3.

⁵⁵ *El Deber*, Valparaíso, February 21st 1877, 2.

⁵⁶ The case of Andrés Bello is described magnificently by Iván Jaksic, *Andrés Bello. La pasión por el orden*, Santiago, Editorial Universitaria, 2001.

to the National Congress, there seems to be a sense of the true meaning of the decree, despite the affirmation that the “rule of law” prohibited obtaining university degrees:

Undoubtedly, the simple declaration that women can practice the same scientific professions as men, if they fulfill the same requirements, isn't enough to illustrate them; but this declaration, besides putting an end to such an unjustifiable and unrespectable prohibition, is naturally a stimulus for many of them to try obtain all the knowledge they need to conquer, through the improvement of intelligence, the high post that belongs to them⁵⁷.

Shortly after the signing of the Amunátegui decree, a clear sign of the advancement of modernity, a controversy began. The diverse articles in the press about this decree are proof of a confrontation between the two different views about the country, which is based on a difference in doctrine.

CONTROVERSY IN THE PRESS ABOUT THE AMUNÁTEGUI DECREE THE CONFRONTATION OF IDEOLOGIES

...public opinion stirs and this idea [the Amunátegui decree] is surrounded by thousand joys and thousand fears, surprises, doubts and hopes⁵⁸.

The controversy that confronted the Catholic and the liberal presses for the quantity and quality of women's education is a clear example of the fight between ideologies in 19th century Chile, in which the ideas of modernity advance in detriment of traditional ideas. The advance in secularism affected the mood of the most conservative areas of the country that saw a perversion of society's order in liberalism. However, the reader must not think that the country was divided in two opposite and irreconcilable poles: conservatives on one side and liberals on the other. One of the biggest assets of 19th century Chile (in comparison to the rest of Latin America) was its republican essence. Both conservatives and liberals aimed for the maintenance of the Republic⁵⁹. They interchanged ideas during their debates, and that is why we have to study the controversies in the press. Because of the love conservatives and liberals shared for republican order, this confrontation is ideological and not political. As Ricardo Krebs states, it was “a confrontation of ideas, a fight between the values and ideals that should rule society”. The topic of discussion wasn't the republic, but what type of State was better. Conservatives did not want a secular State; hence their fears. They did not object the political and economical aspects of liberalism, but the religious and moral ones⁶⁰.

This fear made the conservative areas of society take on a defensive stance; this explains the virulence of their writings in the press to “organize the fight of believers to maintain Christian religion and save the catholic character of the nation”⁶¹. The confrontation of ideologies, by the way, occurred on the political arena, because “to improve the situation of religion and change the face of Christian nations, it is essential to work towards placing in power and Congress those men that are inspired by the best feelings towards religion”⁶².

⁵⁷ “Memoria presentada al Congreso Nacional en 1877 por el Ministro de Justicia, Culto e Instrucción Pública, don Miguel Luis Amunátegui”, in *AUCH*, volume LII, 1877, 587.

⁵⁸ Florencio Moreyra, “Ligeras observaciones al proyecto de educar científicamente a la mujer”, *Revista Chilena*, volume VIII, Santiago, 1877, 605.

⁵⁹ For a study of the Republic as central element of the order in Chile, see Stuken, *La seducción de un orden*, and Jaksic, *Andrés Bello. La pasión por el orden*.

⁶⁰ Ricardo Krebs, “El pensamiento de la Iglesia frente a la laicización del Estado en Chile. 1875-1885”, in *Catolicismo y Laicismo. Las bases doctrinales del conflicto entre la Iglesia y el Estado en Chile, 1875-1885*, Santiago, Ediciones Nueva Universidad, 1981, 19-20.

⁶¹ *Ibíd.* 25.

⁶² Collective pastoral of Chilean bishops, June 29th 1886, 950-951, cited in *ibíd.*, 24.

In the debate about female instruction, the church was represented by *El Estandarte Católico*, a newspaper founded in 1874 in response to *El Independiente*, a conservative newspaper that did not follow the dictates of the ecclesiastical hierarchy very strictly⁶³. Don Crescente Errázuriz was the main editor of *El Estandarte Católico* and kept his post until 1878 when the archbishop of Santiago, don Rafael Valentín Valdivieso (who was also his uncle and direct boss) died, and he decided to resign. He was an important figure in the daily discussion about the Amunátegui decree. He was joined by Alejandro Echeverría and Rodolfo Vergara Antúnez.

1. “To be a good mother, a good wife and a good daughter” is incompatible with the practice of liberal professions.

It is said that the new educational system will distract woman from her true mission, [...]. Those are charges based solely on routine and egotism. Is slavery woman’s mission, as it has been until now? If she has abilities and senses just like man, why would nullity and ignorance be her mission? Why must she be condemned to lack the means to earn her living by herself?⁶⁴

With this strong statement, *La República* criticized in its edition of January 25th 1877, the stance of the catholic sectors of Chilean society that objected female higher education. How did Catholics fundament their posture? Just like the liberal newspaper stated, woman’s natural mission prevented her from practicing university professions. What was woman’s natural mission? The article by don Rafael Vergara Antúnez in *El Estandarte Católico* was very clear about this:

Woman’s natural mission, that noble mission that Providence has trusted to her for the good of society and the individual, consists mainly of being a good and devoted mother, a faithful wife consecrated to domestic duties, and a submissive and obliging daughter for her parents⁶⁵.

Besides, as this was woman’s natural mission, a religious education was enough to carry it out completely, “woman doesn’t need to be wise; it is enough for her to have a mild character, a solid virtue and a generous heart”, that is to say, she didn’t need scientific instruction. Woman’s unavoidable duties at home would be incompatible with the possible practice of liberal professions: “Could a husband resign himself to renounce to that tenderness and the cares and attentions in exchange of seeing his wife always busy in the practice of a scientific profession?”⁶⁶.

The liberal press wasn’t indifferent to this situation. It admitted that the dedication the practice of a profession demanded would not allow women to devote themselves exclusively to their home, but found pertinent solutions for this. *El Deber* gave an interesting perspective when it pointed out that not all women are called to be professionals but only those that need it, thwarting the opinions of *El Estandarte Católico*:

It isn’t obligatory for women, as it isn’t for men, to have a profession; and only those who believe it will be useful for them, will pursue one. Those who have the means to live in an honest way, and those who believe it will be a danger to their virtue will not practice their professions. [...].

⁶³ Crescente Errázuriz, writer of articles of *El Estandarte Católico*, recalls in his memoirs that it was the church’s aim to “found an exclusively catholic newspaper” because in *El Independiente* “as the writers were laymen, they lacked our knowledge, relations and interest in ecclesiastic matters”. In private his relations with the conservative newspaper were inexistent, in public they complemented each other perfectly; *El Estandarte Católico* was centered on religious topics, and *El Independiente* on political ones. More so, don Crescente remembers he only talked once with Zorobabel Rodríguez, writer of *El Independiente*, when they met by chance on a tramway. Crescente Errázuriz, *Algo de lo que he visto. Memorias de don Crescente Errázuriz*, Santiago, Editorial Nascimento, 1934, 199, 207-208.

⁶⁴ *La República*, Santiago, January 25th 1877, 2.

⁶⁵ Rodolfo Vergara Antúnez, “El límite natural de la instrucción de la mujer. III”, in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 2nd 1877, 2.

⁶⁶ *Ibíd.*

Clearly, if a woman is rich and doesn't need her profession to live, she will preferably attend to her family and reserve her profession for when the need comes up. If she is poor, and the benefit she and her family obtain from the practice of her profession is bigger than that of her personal assistance to them, she will put the care of her home in the hands of someone trustworthy and practice her profession⁶⁷.

Despite these possible solutions, *El Estandarte Católico* did not back up in its stance. As a woman's place at home was something "natural", the social order would suffer a "great perturbation" if she went out of the house, because women would be turned into men:

A woman covered up in library dust, or pleading in a courtroom or doing a surgical operation or drawing a map or discussing about the criterion of certainty or about the inborn ideas is like a fish out of water or a tree transplanted in a strange climate. Just as strange as seeing a man moving the distaff or tacking hoop skirts⁶⁸.

For the social order not to be altered, the woman that wanted to practice her profession would have to give up her "natural mission". It was one thing or the other:

The woman that dedicates herself to the study and practice of a scientific profession, will have to renounce to being a mother, if she doesn't want to be an inept and damaging mother. [...]. The woman that wants to become a lawyer, doctor or engineer, will have to delay her marriage until she is 25 years old at least, unless she is lucky enough to find a man in love with science, who resigns himself to marrying a student of law, medicine or superior mathematics. It is an unfeasible utopia to demand to a woman who is attending university, to comply faithfully with domestic duties⁶⁹.

The preponderance of domestic tasks over the study of a profession in *El Estandarte Católico*, shows that women had a defined role in society. Maternity was especially important. The way in which she enacted this role was also a topic of discussion between conservatives and liberals.

2. The social role of woman: raising children that will become good citizens in the future. But should a mother be trained or only educated?

According to *El Estandarte Católico*, woman "will constitute her family's happiness and will give society those good citizens that are formed in the warmth of a Christian and religious mother's lap"⁷⁰. As we saw before, a Christian education was enough for this. However, while *El Mercurio* also pointed out that woman "shall be a good wife and mother, and the children she gives birth to will be good citizens"⁷¹, it diverged from the catholic newspaper stating that that would only be possible if she received a training superior to the one she had been receiving until then. The press

⁶⁷ *El Deber*, Valparaíso, February 16th 1877, 2. This newspaper intensifies its critic to *El Estandarte Católico* stating that the lack of attention a home may suffer when the mother works outside, happens in the poorer sectors of society and that it happens not because women want it like that, but because they have to survive: "What do poor women do when they do not have the means to survive? Do they famish themselves so they don't have to leave their home? No, they trust the care of their children to someone who can stay at home and look for an occupation in someone else's home. Well, the professional woman would do the same when she was in need. She would choose the lesser of two evils".

⁶⁸ Rodolfo Vergara Antúnez, "El límite natural de la instrucción de la mujer. III", in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 2nd 1877, 2.

⁶⁹ Rodolfo Vergara Antúnez, "Otros inconvenientes de la instrucción profesional de la mujer. IV", in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 5th 1877, 2.

⁷⁰ Rodolfo Vergara Antúnez, "El límite natural de la mujer. III", in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 2nd 1877,

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⁷¹ *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, January 20th 1877, 2.

constantly repeats this difference in opinion about woman: her role as a mother and as the one that shapes future citizens isn't questioned, but the education she has to receive to fulfill these roles differs. Let us look at the liberal point of view first.

Before the signing of the Amunátegui decree, Athos, pseudonym of José Joaquín Larraín Zañartu and correspondent of *El Mercurio* in Santiago, states that if one is to deal with the topic of female education, it is necessary to resolve first "another problem of great legal and social importance: the situation of women"⁷². He points out that despite the great influence woman can exert over man, her hands are legally bound. That is why women need to claim "their rights and try to establish absolute equality between them and their current dominators". He clarifies that equality doesn't mean that everybody has to do the same things, but that "every one carry out well and with the same freedom his or her special functions"⁷³. The first step towards changing woman's current situation is for her to get educated, Athos continues; that is how she will have the proper tools to be a good mother. In the ministerial memoir before Congress in which he explained why he decided to dictate the decree that validated female exams, Miguel Luis Amunátegui himself emphasized the importance of women at home, stating that "intellectual inequality between man and woman leads to a complete demoralization of domestic life"⁷⁴. In other writings, the minister points out the importance of woman's illustration, considering that "she can give her husband advice and teach her children"⁷⁵, because she is "the most powerful agent of illustration"⁷⁶. Better formed citizens would lead to a bigger advancement in the progress of the country. Would someone object to progress?

El Estandarte Católico rejected the liberal stance of broadening woman's intellectual horizon to fulfill her mother role better. For this newspaper, woman's role of shaping future citizens was vital too, but it wasn't necessary for her to be instructed, it was enough to be educated. What was the difference? According to don Crescente Errázuriz the instruction woman received was accidental, and the most basic knowledge was enough for her, as

What makes woman truly respectable isn't her knowledge, but her being good. [...]. When we talk about them, when we are proud of their virtues, we don't miss the fact that they aren't able to draw out a trip to Beijing on a map, telling us the climates and products of the countries we'd have to pass to get there. They left that to our geography teachers and took the place no one could replace them in: in attending, with the sublime abnegation of their whole life, to keep danger out of our way and to teach us the holy principles that constitute an honest man⁷⁷.

Errázuriz's stance was reinforced by the article of Alejandro Echeverría that proposed a study program for women. This would include geography, grammar, arithmetic, French, catechism, sacred history and history of the motherland, embroidery, sewing, rhetoric, foundations of faith, brief notions of physics and cosmography, music, poetry and painting. The priest postulated that all these courses, besides summing a not inconsiderable amount of knowledge, "do not avert woman from her natural tendency of being a provident mother, faithful wife and obedient and caring

⁷² *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, February 3rd 1877, 2.

⁷³ *Ibíd.*

⁷⁴ "Memoria presentada al Congreso Nacional en 1877 por el Ministro de Justicia, Culto e Instrucción Pública, don Miguel Luis Amunátegui", in *AUCH*, volume LII, 1877, 586.

⁷⁵ Letter by Miguel Luis Amunátegui giving thanks for the letter sent by Sociedad Colón de Zapateros, February 24th 1877, publisher in *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, February 25th 1877, 2 and in *El Ferrocarril*, Santiago, Tuesday February 27th 1877, 2.

⁷⁶ Letter by Miguel Luis Amunátegui giving thanks for the letter sent by Comisión Central de Industriales de Santiago, February 20th 1877, published in *El Ferrocarril*, Santiago, February 22nd 1877, 2-3.

⁷⁷ Crescente Errázuriz, "Cuál debe ser la conducta de los católicos respecto del proyecto de ensanchar el Estado docente con la institución de liceos para mujeres", in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 2nd 1877, 2.

daughter”⁷⁸. Besides, this position – that woman should receive a lesser amount of instruction – was founded, according to the catholic newspaper, on her physical weakness that prevented her from acquiring more knowledge and that was congruent with her less robust body. That is why, if fathers sent their daughters to schools where humanities were taught it was only for the desire to “loose their daughters’s health”. The catholic newspaper regretted those who decided to follow secondary studies seriously: “Pity the poor young woman that decides to take on thirty or forty courses of humanities!”⁷⁹.

In the face of the controversy about the need to instruct women, and the amount of education they should receive, it is important to point out that woman was generally perceived as the one who forms future citizens, which means that she has an extremely relevant role in society, even if she doesn’t occupy public space. It is a duty, a mission that is carried out inside the home, a private space. And this stands out because of what Athos says in *El Mercurio*: “she can do or prevent anything – through men – but she can not do nor prevent anything by herself”⁸⁰. In other words, she influences the public space even if she is outside of it by law, and even if she does it indirectly. The issue was that the Catholic Church considered this to be alright, while the liberal press did not.

3. Female liberal professions as a way to acquire fortune.

According to the liberal press, scientific professions would bring money to women that were not well-of or that had suffered some unlucky accident in life. A profession would be a means for them to carry on: “we want woman to have the necessary means, through instruction, to face poverty, orphanage, widowhood, disgrace”⁸¹. However, again *El Estandarte Católico* anticipated itself to the Amunátegui decree and refuted the expectations of wealth that professions would offer women: “Let women not have illusions about the profit they can make with scientific professions. Presently we have an abundance of lawyers, physicians, engineers, and the most part of them would gladly give up their titles for a destiny that allowed them to eat”⁸².

On February 8th, while praising the ministerial measure, *El Mercurio* replied to the statements of the Catholic newspaper stating that the practice of a profession would protect women “from hunger, which is a dishonor, as honor is work”. It said that “for the daughter in a family without possessions of wealth, there is no [other salvation] than a professional career”⁸³. Meanwhile, *La Patria* goes further, stating that the fortune women could attain with the practice of a profession, would allow them to defend themselves better of the dangers they are exposed to in life, considering the inferior position society has placed them in. With a profession “they secure their independence, have the possibility to survive for themselves, and they are protected from the deceits and seductions of the stronger sex”⁸⁴. *La República*, on the other hand, confronted *El Estandarte Católico* that, according to the liberal’s point of view, denied them an instruction to survive:

⁷⁸ Alejandro Echeverría, “Después de los decretos del señor Amunátegui acerca de la instrucción de la mujer. II”, in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 16th 1877, 2.

⁷⁹ Alejandro Echeverría, “Después de los decretos del señor Amunátegui acerca de la instrucción de la mujer. III”, in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 17th 1877, 2. Vicente Grez, writer for section “El Día” of *La República*, where he analyzes current topics in quite a funny manner, referred to the supposed weakness of woman as follows: “When it refers to female education, *El Estandarte [Católico]* doesn’t understand a thing. It says woman must not have an education because she is weak. Well then, priests, in that case only the robust ones will get an education. In every secondary school there will be a boxing device to measure the strength of every girl; will your reverences be satisfied with this system?”, *La República*, Santiago, February 24th 1877, 3.

⁸⁰ *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, February 3rd 1877, 2.

⁸¹ *La República*, Santiago, February 24th 1877, 2.

⁸² Rodolfo Vergara Antúnez, “Otros inconvenientes de la instrucción profesional de la mujer. IV”, in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 5th 1877, 2.

⁸³ *El Mercurio*, Valparaíso, February 8th 1877, 2.

⁸⁴ *La Patria*, Valparaíso, February 10th 1877, 2.

So it is useless and detrimental for the girl that doesn't marry to have a profession to earn her living in an honest way? It is useless for a widow loaded with children to practice a career that will feed them? Is it detrimental for an orphan to have the means to live decently? Then, is misery and prostitution useful and profitable; is shame or living from public charity useful and profitable?⁸⁵

But *El Estandarte Católico* didn't stay behind, and on February 24th Vergara Antúnez argued in the editorial of the ecclesiastic newspaper why "the professional instruction of woman isn't a resource for her subsistence". The possibilities to earn money as a professional diminish by her female condition:

The litigant, the sick, the farmer trust their interests of fortune and health only to the ones that offer them the greatest guarantees of success. And we are certain that there would be very few who, because of gallantry, would choose woman over man to place such valued interests in her care⁸⁶.

Woman would only have a possibility to earn her living in this way if "there was a lack of men capable of practicing those professions", or if the demand surpassed the supply of professionals. According to *El Estandarte Católico*, "it is well known that presently this is not so and there is no reason to believe this order of things will change in the future"⁸⁷. The only career *El Estandarte Católico* considers apt for female subsistence is teaching, as it is directly related to their motherly duties, their "natural mission". Teaching primary and secondary school wouldn't require "a PhD in law or medicine; it would be enough to have done humanities". And there was no use thinking about teaching on a superior level, because "if a woman was to obtain a cathedra in university she would have to be a prodigy in the knowledge of those courses. If there is someone like that, she will be an exception"⁸⁸.

However, *La República* gives an argument that touches a very important issue: the social role woman would fulfill if she practiced a profession, for instance medicine:

In Chile medicine will no doubt be more profitable for woman than for man: we know of young women who have found themselves with the terrible alternative of dying with their secret illness or calling a physician that terrorizes them or calling him too late, when her disease is so desperate that there is no cure⁸⁹.

These assertions are important, because they recognize that a woman with a university title can fulfill a social function. Besides, this would imply something even more relevant. If a woman develops a task that benefits others and gives her gain, it means that she is starting to spend time in an activity that gets her out of her house, the private sphere, and that she could slowly enter the public sphere. So this train of thought shows the change some sectors of public opinion are experimenting in regard to woman's role in society. However, before reaching some kind of agreement on this idea, female instruction would encounter another obstacle. If woman acquired greater knowledge, she was in danger of losing her faith. Could Chilean society face up to this cataclysm?

3. Female professional: would she fall into atheism or be saved from the claws of fanaticism?

⁸⁵ *La República*, Santiago, February 20th 1877, 2.

⁸⁶ Rodolfo Vergara Antúnez, "La Instrucción profesional de la mujer no es un recurso para su subsistencia", in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 24th 1877, 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibíd.*

⁸⁸ *Ibíd.*

⁸⁹ *La República*, Santiago, March 1st 1877, 3.

The clash between the catholic and liberal presses was patent and translated into almost personal attacks when *El Estandarte Católico* stated that superior instruction would make women loose their faith, while the liberal newspapers replied that it only said this out of personal convenience. The encounter of these two positions is an example of a conflict of ideologies, as we have already seen. As Ricardo Krebs states, in this period there were no mayor writings about this conflict, but “it expressed occasionally as interests related to specific problems”⁹⁰. This explains the importance of analyzing the stances of Catholics and liberals in relation with the Amunátegui decree. *El Estandarte Católico* was again the one to start the controversy. On February 2nd, it published a real declaration of war:

We Catholics cannot see in the projects [of Minister Amunátegui] something other than a threat to our beliefs and therefore we will combat them with all the licit means we have on hand, unless we receive guarantees that destroy our just fears⁹¹.

Two days later, *El Ferrocarril* retorted that the fears of the catholic newspaper are only a “partial fear” and that they are based on “the credulity of ignorance”⁹². This is repeated in all the liberal presses: the claim that it is in the Church’s interests to maintain women ignorant to manipulate them to its will. *La República* does so, when it reveals the true reasons of the Church’s opposition to female instruction:

Woman learning world history! Woman learning languages to read foreign books! Woman learning natural sciences, medicine, astronomy! Jesus! What will be of those poor priests? [...] What fate will befall the water of Lourdes, analyzed in the laboratories of the future female chemists? [...] Some chaps, who with babbling a kitchen’s Latin give themselves the airs of wise men, will have to uncover their ears to any daughter of Eve that gives them conversation. It could not be a sorrier sight! The priests are right. Woman must not become illustrated; because many men will be uncovered; because they will all receive less tips of ignorance and fanaticism; because, at last, the influence of miracles will fall to earth before the exam of an illustrated mind⁹³.

El Estandarte Católico did not sit back and answered in biting terms too, complaining that some defend any idea, even a pernicious one, in the name of “progress”:

[The defenders of woman’s instruction] proclaim to the four winds that *progress* drags them to this enterprise and that it is demanded by modern civilization. But, just as with religion, they lead us to atheism in the name of *progress* and throw God and the Church under the wheels of civilization; in the same way, in the name of *progress* and on the chariot of civilization, we are brought to the Babel confusion of the natural destinies of man and woman⁹⁴.

The controversy intensified when *La Patria* joined the debate, a newspaper that just like *La República* claims that the fears of the Church are only explained by the benefit it gains by its domain of the weaker sex:

⁹⁰ Ricardo Krebs (ed.), *Catolicismo y Laicismo. Las bases doctrinarias del conflicto entre la Iglesia y el Estado en Chile. 1875-1885*, Santiago, Ediciones Nueva Universidad, 1981, 5.

⁹¹ Rodolfo Vergara Antúnez, “Cuál debe ser la conducta de los católicos respecto del proyecto de ensanchar el Estado docente con la institución de los liceos para mujeres”, in *El Estandarte Católico*, February 2nd 1877, 2.

⁹² *El Ferrocarril*, Santiago, February 4th 1877, 2.

⁹³ *La República*, Santiago, February 9th 1877, 2.

⁹⁴ Rodolfo Vergara Antúnez, “Otros inconvenientes de la instrucción profesional de la mujer. IV”, in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 5th 1877, p. 2. Emphasized by this author.

With its religiousness that borders fanaticism and its current ignorance, woman is without a doubt an excellent medium for the political religious propaganda the genuine representatives of the Church perform, the writers of the ultraconservative press. [...] This only proves that, for them, the issue is only one of convenience⁹⁵.

However, for *El Estandarte Católico*, its fear had only one and forceful name: masonry.

Masonry wants to influence the lower sectors of society through charity and wants to seize the sons of the common people through obligatory and laic primary instruction. Now it also wants to influence women [...] through professional instruction⁹⁶.

However, for the liberal press there was no danger of women losing their faith, as science was indissolubly linked to God, that is to say, knowledge wasn't only obtainable through faith, but also through reason. In *Revista Chilena*, the magazine founded by Miguel Luis Amunátegui and Diego Barros Arana (staunch anticlericals, especially the latter), Florencio Moreyra states:

El Estandarte Católico, without a doubt, wants science for woman, science that sublimates, that rises everything to the eternal and infinite, not the materialistic and atheist science that knocks down humanity, leaving it at the level of the miserable little worm that creeps through the mud. Now, do *El Ferrocarril*, *El Independiente*, *El Deber*, *El Mercurio*, *La República* and *La Patria*, want the science that has God as beginning and end, the science that doesn't disdain the healthy and sacred practices of religion, for women? Undoubtedly, yes⁹⁷.

So, Moreyra went on, woman should not fear that her approach to science would move her away from God, but she should be afraid

Of the mists of ignorance she currently vegetates in; she should be afraid of those dark dens in which she breathes a rotten smell. There she will be constantly pestered by that blind mosquito called *Fanaticism*; there she will be attacked without pause by that filthy reptile called *Atheism*⁹⁸.

However, for *El Estandarte Católico* there was no approach possible. There was a science that would without a doubt "uncatholicize" women. The effects of that instruction would result in a completely "incredulous and impious" female professional, which was depicted in women's passing through university:

"Miss," they will say to one of the medicine students, "what have you learned in theology class today?"

"That miracles, sir, prove the divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ," the brand new humanist will say. "Bah, nonsense!" her teacher will answer, "Look, here the spiritualists perform miracles every day that cause bigger surprises yet in this century of lights"⁹⁹.

The conflict between the Catholic and liberal presses was turning into a spiral in which every idea published in *El Estandarte Católico* was refuted by *La Patria* or *La República* as a

⁹⁵ *La Patria*, Valparaíso, February 10th 1877, 2.

⁹⁶ Rodolfo Vergara Antúnez, "La razón de nuestros temores", in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 14th 1877, 2.

⁹⁷ Florencio Moreyra, "Ligeras observaciones al proyecto de educar científicamente a la mujer", *Revista Chilena*, volume VIII, Santiago, 1877, 605.

⁹⁸ *Ibíd.* 610. Emphasized in the original.

⁹⁹ Alejandro Echeverría, "Después de los decretos del señor Amunátegui acerca de la instrucción de la mujer. V", in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 20th 1877, 2.

matter of convenience for the Church¹⁰⁰. In the eyes of the historian, this “fight” isn’t between good and bad guys, despite what the quotes may say. The controversy between the loss or not of female religiousness is another indication of the clash between two positions that don’t accept renunciations. The different presses mentioned this, from their own point of view in every case, of course. *El Estandarte Católico* stated:

Opinion is divided in matters of education, since a while amongst us, in two schools that struggle side by side to death: that of liberals who want to secularize it at all cost and the big, the glorious, the legendary catholic school, which invigorates teaching, both in man as in woman, through education¹⁰¹.

Meanwhile, *La Patria* postulated:

It would be desirable that the challengers of the project of female instruction and more so as they are people of more or lesser importance between those of their fraction, lower the sarcastic, bitter and hurtful tone in the tuning fork of this controversy. In honor of their own prestige and self respect they should do it: a serene and severe discussion is the only way to reach a logical and natural conclusion: to take another road is to never arrive at the conclusion that good sense indicates and, on the other hand, it does little honor to the dialectic of writers that pride themselves so much on being wise¹⁰².

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Amunátegui decree can be seen, in a first interpretation, as a recognition to that half of society that was sometimes considered as marginal, but we think, as we have seen along these lines, that one can go more deeply into this topic. This decree is a clear example of the evolution of the Chilean nation in its process of construction. If the idea was to go forward in the democratization of society, the entry of woman to higher education means that the first step is taken for her to achieve active citizenship, that is to say, the right to vote. This process doesn’t happen from one moment to the other. It was four years after the signing of the ministerial measure before the first woman entered the Universidad de Chile¹⁰³. Doña Eloísa Díaz Insunza enrolled in Medicine in 1881 and obtained her title of medical surgeon in 1887. At her side, doña Ernestina Pérez Barahona obtained her title in 1887 too. However, women did not enter *en masse* in the university lecture rooms. There were years when none did (1882, 1884, 1888). Only in 1892 doña Matilde Throup received her lawyer’s diploma, becoming the third Chilean female professional. In short, the process was slow, but it never decayed. In 1919, doña Justicia Acuña Mena received her title of engineer¹⁰⁴.

Perhaps, this slow process is corollary of the controversy the Amunátegui decree caused in public opinion. On other occasions, other situations caused the same effect or perhaps a stronger

¹⁰⁰ Even so, there were also voices that tried to reconcile both postures. Ernesto Turenne, el author of the book-pamphlet *Profesiones científicas para la mujer*, published on occasion of the Amunátegui decree, hoped that the instruction woman would receive thanks to the new measure, would “safe” her from the “vicious practices of fanaticism”, but at the same time “that their virtues and devout Catholicism would not be diminished”. Ernesto Turenne, *Profesiones científicas para la mujer*, Santiago, Imprenta de la República, 1877, 4.

¹⁰¹ Alejandro Echeverría. “Después de los decretos del señor Amunátegui acerca de la instrucción de la mujer. V”, in *El Estandarte Católico*, Santiago, February 20th 1877, 2.

¹⁰² *La Patria*, Valparaíso, February 17 1877, 2.

¹⁰³ In march 1877, the press informed of the exams before university commissions of Beatriz Villalón, to apply for the degree of baccalaureate in Philosophy and Humanities. With this, she would become the first woman to pursue university studies. However, we don’t know why, as the press never mentioned her again, and there are no signs of her intents in the *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, Beatriz did not obtain this academic degree and much less became a pharmacist as she wanted to.

¹⁰⁴ For a total statistic of female university graduates from 1881 to 1919, see the attachment at the end of this article.

one¹⁰⁵. Every one of the quotes in this paper show the conflict that ran through Chilean society, that of secularization, and how the Church responded to it. Besides, the quotes of the catholic press demonstrate that the Church used modern communication techniques¹⁰⁶. This is proof of the fact that the Church did not retreat as secularism advanced, but had a “readjustment” in society. It had to leave the State, but not the people. Suddenly, it found itself thrown into the public sphere and thought that if it wasn’t a part of the State, chaos, anarchy and incredulity would overtake all. This didn’t happen, in part because the Church itself made sure to maintain and increase its network of expansion in some sectors of civil society¹⁰⁷.

On the other hand, the Amunátegui decree seems to show the importance the subject of female secondary and higher instruction had for the State. Although the declarations of minister Amunátegui we saw in this work seem to reaffirm this, it is interesting to notice that the definitive impulse of the State towards female secondary instruction came only in 1895 with the creation of the Liceo N°1 in Santiago. That was 18 years after the Amunátegui decree! Besides the controversy over the entry of women in university, in 1877 the press also pointed out the intents of fathers to create schools where their daughters could receive secondary instruction. While they had the support of the State, these schools would be exclusively administrated by these parents. It is convenient to consider the words of historian Sol Serrano about this:

The creators of the Teaching State, progressive *pelucones* like Andrés Bello or Manuel Montt and later doctrinary liberals like Miguel Luis Amunátegui or Diego Barros Arana, understood public education as the forming of citizens in secondary schools and the extension of citizenship in schools. Therefore, the first was strictly masculine, while the second, oriented to popular sectors, was mixed¹⁰⁸.

The fact that female secondary education was in charge of privates during these 18 years, besides showing that female instruction was driven “from below” as we have already seen, shows that the State didn’t consider it possible to include the female element in the political arena, as it would have to take charge of new citizens, and thus, of possible new demands of these new citizens. This is a field to study: what was really the role of the State in the origin of female secondary education and what made it decide to create the first female secondary school in 1895? Could one see it as a not so progressive posture of the precisely progressive sector of the directing class of the 19th century (it is a conditional affirmation, a mere supposition)? Only future studies will be able to unravel this question¹⁰⁹.

At this point it is interesting to establish that the 29 women that obtained the degree of baccalaureate in Philosophy and Humanities between 1881 and 1895, must have pursued their university studies with private financing. This shows the pressure “from below” for education. A complete knowledge of these facts would help to understand the process of national construction better and the actors that took a part in it.

¹⁰⁵ Some examples are the discussions on the reinterpretation of the 5th article of the Constitution, on the abolition of the ecclesiastic legal privileges and the conflict about the freedom of exams surrounding the decree by Abdón Cifuentes in 1872, among others.

¹⁰⁶ Sol Serrano states that “Chilean catholic conservativeness, in its fight against secularization of State and society, used the instruments and rights of the liberal order, contributing to the consolidation of that same order”. This statement refers, according to Serrano, to the fight for the freedoms the Church gave in the face of secularization, like the freedom of education and association. We think that in this strategy Serrano points out, press can also be included, a body especially representative of modernity, but wonderfully used by the Church to expose its ideas. Sol Serrano, “La estrategia conservadora y la consolidación del orden liberal en Chile, 1860-1890”, in Marcello Carmagnani (ed), *Constitucionalismo y orden liberal. América Latina, 1850-1920*, Torino, Otto Editores, 2000, 125-126.

¹⁰⁷ Serrano, “Espacio público”, 349-354.

¹⁰⁸ Serrano, “La estrategia conservadora”, 139-140.

¹⁰⁹ We have found an approach to this interesting subject in María Ester Ojeda Laso, *La fundación de los primeros liceos femeninos en Chile (1891-1912)*, thesis to apply to the degree of graduate in History, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, 1993, 177 pages.

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APPENDIX

WOMEN GRADUATED FROM THE UNIVERSIDAD DE CHILE BETWEEN 1881 AND 1919^a

	BPH ^b	BMP	LMP	SD	BL	LL	Pharm.	BMat	Eng.	Dent. ^c
1881	2 (90) ^d									
1882										
1883	2 (194)									
1884										
1885		2 (51)								
1886			1 (32)							
1887	2 (190)		1 (43)	2 (39)						
1888										
1889	5 (209)									
1890	3 (200)									
1891	2 (146)				1 (69)					
1892	7 (219)	1 (28)				1 (79)				
1893	2 (150)									
1894	2 (153)		1 (29)	1 (42)						
1895	2 (154)									
1896	4 (107)	2 (28)								
1897		1 (22)			1 (83)					
1898	5 (152)		2 (26)	1 (30)		1 (89)				
1899	4 (143)			1 (25)			1 (13)			
1900	3 (111)		1 (29)							
1901	6 (177)									
1902	4 (184)	1 (15)								
1903	7 (204)	3 (21)					2 (11)			
1904	2 (225)		1 (20)				3 (14)			
1905	19 (246)		1 (19)				1 (12)			
1906	7 (205)		2 (13)	1 (9)			2 (18)			
1907	14 (244)			2 (23)			2 (21)	3 (69)		
1908	34 (226)	4 (22)					1 (21)	1 (66)		
1909					1 (116)		2 (13)			
1910	39 (267)		4 (23)	3 (29)		1 (116)	2 (15)			
1911	37 (314)	1 (26)					5 (17)			
1912	58 (387)	1 (26)		1 (36)			6 (38)			
1913	61 (350)	4 (33)					10 (34)	2 (55)		3 (20)
1914	71 (464)	1 (25)	2 (26)				10 (39)	2 (57)		1 (35)
1915	107 (542)	4 (37)	3 (20)	4 (27)			10 (23)	2 (66)		1 (12)
1916	72 (642)	4 (44)	2 (24)	1 (18)	1 (180)		6 (14)	2 (52)		1 (17)
1917	166 (733)	2 (40)	3 (34)	3 (35)	2 (231)		16 (28)	1 (64)		
1918	144 (724)	2 (57)	4 (45)	6 (48)	1 (184)	1 (78)				3 (23)
1919	223 (849)	6 (98)			1 (173)			3 (41)	1 (24)	13 (45)
Total women	1116	39	28	26	8	4	79	16	1	22

Source: *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, 1881-1919

^a All professions that had one or more female graduates between 1881 and 1919 are included, except teaching, because as this is divided by assignment, a larger space would be needed than the one in this table. Also, while the Pedagogical Institute was founded in 1889, it only admitted women from 1893, thanks to the petition of a group of women who had received the degree of Baccalaureate in Philosophy and Humanities.

^b	BPH: Baccalaureate in Philosophy and Humanities	LL: Licence in Law
	BMP: Baccalaureate in Medicine and Pharmacology	Pharm.: Pharmaceutic degree
	LMP: Licence in Medicine and Pharmacology	BMat: Baccalaureate in Mathematics
	SD: Surgeon Degree	Eng.: Engineering degree
	BL: Baccalaureate in Law	Dent.: Dentist degree

^cThe profession of dentist became a university study as from 1912.

^dIn parentheses is the total of graduates.

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