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LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

## Modern Women Intellectuals and the Sandino Rebellion: Carmen Sobalvarro and Aura Rostand

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Achieving global fame in 1927, Nicaragua's General Augusto César Sandino came to symbolize and unite international solidarity movements against US imperialism by cultivating a sophisticated transnational intellectual network that encompassed communications, public relations, intelligence, provisions, volunteers, and fundraising. The participation of male public intellectuals in Sandino's strategic communications is well documented, but the roles of intellectual women in the rebellion have not been appreciably explored to date. Bringing to light new archival research on the Nicaraguan poets and journalists Carmen Sobalvarro and Aura Rostand, this article examines how their gendered writing and public personae propagated both Sandino's war and his legacy after his 1934 assassination. As part of an informal network of women intellectuals, Sobalvarro and Rostand played integral roles in Sandino's public relations in Nicaragua and abroad. As Sandino has once again become a contested figure in light of Nicaragua's oppressive Ortega-Murillo government, this recuperative cultural study also bears on present-day Nicaraguan political discourse.

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Logrando fama global en 1927, el General Augusto César Sandino de Nicaragua llegó a simbolizar y unir los movimientos internacionales de solidaridad contra el imperialismo norteamericano por medio de cultivar una sofisticada red intelectual que cruzaba fronteras e incluía los medios comunicativos, las relaciones públicas, la inteligencia, las provisiones, los voluntarios y la recaudación de fondos. La participación de los hombres intelectuales en la lucha de Sandino se ha documentado bien, pero los papeles de las mujeres intelectuales todavía no se ha explorado suficientemente. Revelando investigaciones archivísticas nuevas sobre Carmen Sobalvarro y Aura Rostand, poetas y periodistas nicaragüenses, este artículo examina cómo sus escrituras e imágenes públicas propagaron tanto la guerra de Sandino como su legado después de su asesinato en 1934. Formando parte de una red informal de mujeres intelectuales, Sobalvarro y Rostand hicieron papeles íntegros en las relaciones públicas sandinistas a través de las Américas. Puesto que Sandino se ha convertido otra vez en una figura contestada con respecto al gobierno opresivo Ortega-Murillo, este estudio cultural recuperativo también pesa sobre el discurso político actual en Nicaragua.

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The revolutionary Augusto César Sandino captivated worldwide attention in 1927 as his peasant army launched a guerrilla war against Nicaragua's conservative government, the Guardia Nacional and the US Marines. The Marines, who had occupied Nicaragua from 1912 to 1925 to protect economic and geopolitical interests, returned to Nicaragua in late 1926 to back Conservative forces in a civil war against Mexican-funded Liberals. General Sandino quickly came to symbolize and unite both national and international movements for hemispheric solidarity against US imperialism. Sandino relied on an informal intellectual network that crossed borders and encompassed communications, public relations, intelligence, provisions, volunteers, and fundraising. The participation of male public intellectuals, especially the Honduran Froylán Turcios, in Sandino's strategic communications is well documented, but the roles that intellectual women played in the Sandino rebellion have not yet been appreciably explored. This article examines the significant roles of two forgotten Nicaraguan women poets—Carmen Sobalvarro and Aura Rostand—in Sandino's solidarity network during the six-year war in Nicaragua's Segovia Mountains and after Sandino's

assassination in 1934. Inserting themselves in public discourse, Sobalvarro and Rostand both challenged and participated in Nicaragua's conservative social mores.<sup>1</sup> Writing strategically as *poetisas*, these women lyrically promoted early Sandinista ideology and give public voice to the cosmopolitan women in Nicaragua and beyond who supported the general.<sup>2</sup>

Women's participation in the Sandino rebellion has received intermittent attention by scholars since the 1979 Sandinista triumph, which included broad participation and leadership by women, many of whom, like Rostand and Sobalvarro, were also poets. Margaret Randall (1992, 1995) and Daisy Zamora (1991) recall the forgotten heroism of women like Teresa Villatoro, Sandino's Salvadoran lover. Blanca Aráuz, Sandino's wife, who died in childbirth, is essentially canonized with her historic house museum and youthful sculptures with Sandino throughout Nicaragua.<sup>3</sup> In a recent book, the historian Alejandro Bendaña (2019) researches women's roles in the war in the Segovias, as well as Sandino's philosophies on free love and the empowerment of women. New discoveries in Sobalvarro's writings and biography offer more politically radical interpretations of her poetry.<sup>4</sup> This updated reading of Sobalvarro in tandem with Rostand's political poetry documents for the first time the very public role of Nicaraguan women intellectuals during Sandino's war. These cosmopolitan women stood in contrast to the scores of peasant women who joined Sandino's army in support roles and are described by Bendaña as giving their lives, but not their faces, to Sandino's rebellion (2019, 66). Indeed, Sobalvarro and Rostand gave their faces, but not their lives, to the Sandinista cause. Their public agency also conflicted with early Sandinismo's peasant nationalism, which the historian Richard Grossman (2008, 88) explains was informed by a Segovian value system of traditional family and gender roles, wherein honorable, self-reliant men provided for and defended their families, land, and a passive, loving motherland. Despite this patriarchal ideology, Sandino strategically leveraged cosmopolitan women who waged an informal public relations campaign both in Nicaragua and abroad. Citing Sandino's correspondence with Berta Munguía and María Cristina Zapata, as well as Sandino's appreciation for the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral, Bendaña (2019, 242) asserts that "Sandino contemplated the possibility of creating a political network of influential city women."<sup>5</sup> Supporting this assertion is my work on the gendered diplomacy of poet Carmen Sobalvarro throughout Central America (Finzer 2012) and the contributions of the historians Jaime Quezada (2011) and Barry Carr (2014) on Mistral's role in generating a transnational solidarity movement.

Mistral's almost ubiquitous presence in women's Pan-American intellectual circles has been well cited, and it is likely that women involved in pro-Sandinista activities across the Americas intersected with these networks, both formally and informally.<sup>6</sup> A significant number of middle- and upper-class Central American women, many of whom were teachers, journalists, and poets, participated in international organizations as they traveled, mingled, worked, spoke, and published throughout the Americas. As the critic Francesca Miller (1991, 12) writes, early twentieth-century international women's organizations afforded Latin American women a space of relative freedom and autonomy precisely because they operated outside of traditional, patriarchal national arenas that had not yet granted suffrage to women. These transnational networks extended to women's journals that circulated throughout Latin America, such as Argentina's *El Hogar* (1904–1961), Guatemala's *Nosotras* (1932–1942), and Nicaragua's *Mujer Nicaragüense* (1929–1930).<sup>7</sup> By taking part in these networks, Sobalvarro and Rostand were also participants in an early de facto Central American feminism that intermingled discursively with Unionism, Pan-Americanism, anti-imperialism,

<sup>1</sup> As Gobat (2005) and Gómez (2016) have shown, conservative Nicaraguan discourse conflated nationalism with traditional gender roles by deploring the ways of the modern woman, embodied by the flapper.

<sup>2</sup> Bendaña (2019, 239–243, 253) documents Sandino's apparent interest in leveraging support from women in the cities, such as María Cristina Zapata, Berta Munguía, and Dolores "Lola" Matamoros. Other Latin American women, such as the Guatemalan Luz Valle, the Salvadoran María Loucel, the Chilean Gabriela Mistral, and the Uruguayan Juana de Ibarbourou, also published pro-Sandinista poems and essays.

<sup>3</sup> In 2017 the historic house museum was closed and in bad disrepair, and there were rumors that first lady and vice president Rosario Murillo had looted Blanca's relics for her own collection.

<sup>4</sup> I am deeply indebted to Helena Ramos, who shared Sobalvarro's "Derecho de propiedad," as well as transcribed poetry from Armando Ocón's scrapbook, with me. Ramos also shared her biographical notes from interviews with family members of Aura Rostand, which I quote from here. Ramos's work and achievements in recuperating Central American women's literary histories is unparalleled, and her generous collaboration reflects her commitment to feminist praxis. This article has also benefited from the kind collaboration of the historians Bendaña, Michael Schroeder, and Jorge Eduardo Arellano.

<sup>5</sup> All translations are mine.

<sup>6</sup> Mistral's leadership in Pan-American women's networks is discussed by Miller (1991), Threlkeld (2014), Pratt (1990), Masiello and Bergmann (1990), and Finzer (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Sobalvarro collaborated in the founding of *Mujer Nicaragüense* with feminist Josefa Toledo de Aguerri (Bendaña 2019, 244).

*indigenismo*, and campaigns for improved living and working conditions for disenfranchised women and children (Finzer 2012, 143).

The critic Vicky Unruh (2006, 15) writes about this generation of Latin American writers as “performing women” whose “constant body movement and urban mobility through multiple cultural sites” gave them numerous flexible points of entry into literary culture, once largely foreclosed to women performing anything beyond the diminutively prescribed role of *poetisa*.<sup>8</sup> Sobalvarro and Rostand certainly qualify as “performing women,” whose work as poets, radio hosts, activists, declaimers, and diplomats allowed these women to develop compelling public personae beyond their verse.<sup>9</sup> The cosmopolitan biographies of Carmen Sobalvarro and Aura Rostand are also highlighted with travel, publications, and political activity abroad, where their work resonated with larger transnational, progressive and pro-Sandino movements. The placement of their poems in international women’s magazines, such as *Nosotras* and *El Hogar*, and Rostand’s production of Mexican radio show *Hora Internacional* demonstrate that they formed an active part in public discourse. I have documented (2012) how Sobalvarro’s romantic elegy to Sandino, “Toda estoy triste,” was beloved by Central American women who were grieving Sandino’s death, thereby achieving a deliberately gendered public relations feat on behalf of early Sandinismo.

Beyond poetry, Rostand and Sobalvarro also wrote journalistic prose. In the 1930s, Rostand began publishing political and women’s interest essays in Mexico’s *El Libertador*, *Hoy*, and *Nosotros*, as well as Costa Rica’s *Repertorio Americano*. The journalist Carlos Tünnermann Bernheim (1981, 74) remembers Sobalvarro as one of four pioneering women journalists who impacted twentieth-century Nicaraguan journalism. The journalist Ignacio Briones Torres also recalls Sobalvarro among the first group of national intellectuals—which included Salomón de la Selva, Sofonías Salvatierra, and Salvador Buitrago Díaz—who, backing Sandino, denounced the 1927 Espino Negro Accord meant to resolve the 1926–1927 civil war (in Ramos 2010). Despite these references to Sobalvarro’s participation in Nicaraguan journalism, to date no prose—journalistic or otherwise—attributed to Sobalvarro has been found. As poets and journalists, Rostand and Sobalvarro participated in a pivotal moment in Latin American letters in which vanguard poetry and journalism modernized and democratized the lettered city. Writing about the Peruvian poet and journalist César Vallejo, the critic Michelle Clayton (2011, 32) states that the essay and the lyric were the most significant genres of early twentieth-century Latin America: “The entanglement of poetry and prose becomes central to engagements with the national and the international, mapped out in a debate over respective lyric and journalistic capacities to capture the contemporary.” Although an analysis of Rostand and Sobalvarro’s essays is beyond the scope of this article (and, to date, impossible for Sobalvarro), the interplay of their poetry and prose—especially with respect to the conventions, content and codes recumbent to each genre—deserves future critical attention.

As with Sobalvarro, Rostand’s anti-imperialist poetry likely resonated most readily with women readers. Like her contemporaries Mistral and the Salvadoran Claudia Lars, Rostand tended to trade on postmodernist, mystical, and maternal themes in a gendered gesture of strategic essentialism, but protests in the form of social criticism, frustration, and grief keep her otherwise conventional “feminine” lyricism fresh and unpredictable. Both Rostand’s poetry and later political essays reached an international audience, even resulting in a brief 1938 correspondence with Peru’s Raúl Haya de la Torre in the pages of the *Repertorio Americano*.<sup>10</sup> Although Rostand was known among her contemporaries as one of Nicaragua’s most talented *poetisas*, she was essentially forgotten in literary scholarship until Helena Ramos published a comprehensive anthology of her poetry in 2013 (Ramos 2013b).

<sup>8</sup> Rita Felski (1995, 21) also writes, “Such an understanding of history as enactment situates femininity in its multiple, diverse, but determinate articulations, which are themselves crisscrossed by other cultural logics and hierarchies of power. Gender is continually in process, an identity that is performed and actualized over time within given social constraints.”

<sup>9</sup> According to *La Prensa*, Rostand gained notoriety for her poetry declamation: “Aura Rostand, who knows how not only to pull the chords of the magic lyre, but also, like Berta Singermann, to say the melodious word of both verse and idea, will be seen and heard by all Managua in the González Theatre.” “El recital de Aura Rostand en el Teatro González,” *La Prensa* (Managua), October 20, 1934.

<sup>10</sup> See Rostand’s “La patria mexicana es más grande que México,” *Repertorio Americano*, January 8, 1938. Arguing that Mexico and Central America share culture and politics, she suggested that Revolutionary Mexico annex Central America to save its republics from political tyranny. Haya de la Torre responded with enthusiasm to her revolutionary ideas. In “La admonición de la Venús de Milo” (*Repertorio Americano*, April 1938, 212), Rostand addresses Haya de la Torre: “Mexico can, and should, take advantage of this situation to recuperate its sovereignty, its territorial extensions, its grandeur of the past. Mexico can, and should, unify itself with the States of Central America.” Haya de la Torre and Rostand later corresponded on anti-interventionism (Rostand, “Peligra la política del buen vecino,” *Repertorio Americano*, May 28, 1938).

Significantly, although the biographies of Rostand and Sobalvarro were distinct, the two were connected by the writer Salomón de la Selva, whose role in Sandinista propaganda throughout the Americas has yet to be fully examined (see Molina Jiménez 1999, 2002). Rostand, born María de la Selva in León, Nicaragua, was Salomón's sister, and in her undated research notes, Ramos documents the extent to which the siblings, suspected of an incestuous relationship, collaborated in literary and political circles.

In his 1934 novel *La guerra de Sandino, o pueblo desnudo*, published posthumously in 1985, de la Selva places Sobalvarro in El Chipotón—Sandino's quasi-mythical, itinerant, jungle headquarters—shortly after Moncada's January 1929 inauguration. De la Selva describes himself and Sobalvarro as the only two writers publishing the "truth" about Sandino in Managua: "Only in one publication, *La Tribuna* of Managua, in the articles that Salomón de la Selva wrote every day, and in the incendiary epigrams that Carmen Sobalvarro sent clandestinely from El Chipotón and that appeared on Sundays, was Sandino's attitude endorsed, Moncada classified as a traitor, the outrages of the Yankee Marines documented. Sobalvarro and de la Selva spoke a language that their compatriots did not understand" (de la Selva 1985, 116).

Although *La guerra de Sandino* is fiction, in reality the author de la Selva contributed extensively to *La Tribuna*, a Managua daily published by Buitrago Díaz, until his exile to Costa Rica in November 1929. The testimonial narrative's mention of the author's historical journalism has an effect of veracity, thus making Sobalvarro's incendiary verses dispatched from El Chipotón a historical possibility.

The year 1929 posed challenges for Sandino. Moncada's democratic election eroded the rationale for a continued rebellion, which led to waning international support and Sandino's trip to Mexico. De la Selva responded with lonely pro-Sandinista invectives and daily reports of violence and terror wrought by the US Marines, the Nicaraguan Guardia Civil, and Sandino's army. Sobalvarro's role in this turbulent period remains uncertain, but a page dedicated to Sobalvarro in *El Gráfico* from November 3, 1929, places her in Honduras in July 1929. In a reprint of this page from the Honduran press titled "Juicio sobre Carmen Sobalvarro," *El Gráfico* reports, "The distinguished and cultured señorita Carmen Sobalvarro, our collaborator in the offices of the Central Republican Committee pro-Tosta, put a final point yesterday, on the Feast Day of Saint Carmen, to one of her radiant springs."<sup>11</sup> Taking advantage of the fluid Segovian border between Nicaragua and Honduras, the nomadic Sobalvarro could have easily traveled and worked among Ocotál, Danlí, Tegucigalpa, and El Chipotón (wherever it was then located) in support, intelligence, or propaganda roles. Indeed, Bendaña asserts that Sobalvarro would have known fellow ocotaleña Lola Matamoros. A wealthy and fashionable Sandino collaborator, Matamoros gained national attention when she surrendered herself spectacularly to the Marines by arriving at their headquarters on her mule in full makeup, high heels, colorful mantilla, and matching parasol (Bendaña 2019, 256). Like Sobalvarro, Matamoros traded on fashion and beauty—visible markers of femininity and social class—as she transgressed gendered lines in a public act of political resistance.

As no other historical documents exist to place Sobalvarro elsewhere in 1928–1929, it is not impossible that she lent her coveted literary and potential telegraph skills to the Sandino campaign from various locations after the 1927 battle of Ocotál. To be sure, there is no archival evidence on her whereabouts before de la Selva's mention, except for a birth registry from 1902, which indicates that her parents were well-respected telegraph operators.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, two of her poems, "La indita de Nicaragua" and "Derecho de propiedad," both published in March 1934 just after Sandino's assassination, fit the description of "incendiary epigrams," yet there is no trace of Sobalvarro or such poems in the Library of Congress's 1929 archives of *La Tribuna*. It

<sup>11</sup> "Juicio sobre Carmen Sobalvarro," *El Gráfico*, November 3, 1929. Notably, the Central Republican Committee was directed by Turcios.

<sup>12</sup> Although Arellano (1994), Pablo Antonio Cuadra (1986) and other biographers list Sobalvarro's birth year as 1908, she was in fact born on Nicaraguan Independence Day in 1902. (It was common practice in the early twentieth century for single women to claim a younger age.) Entry 525 of Ocotál's Civil Registry lists birth 34 of 1902: "In Ocotál on the twenty-sixth of Sept., nineteen hundred and two, at ten a.m. the functionary of the Civil Registry certifies that on the sixteenth of the current month at two in the morning, Amada del Carmen, legitimate daughter, was born without any particular marking to Don Pánfilo J. Sobalvarro and his wife Doña Mónica Toledo, older than twenty-five years, telegraphers, from this town." "Parto 34 de Amada del Carmen Sobalvarro, h.l.," Registro Civil de Ocotál, September 26, 1902.

Sobalvarro's maternal last name, Toledo, begs the question of whether or not she could have been related to another renowned woman journalist, educator and feminist pioneer, Josefa Toledo de Aguerri (1866–1962). Another link to Toledo, possibly coincidental, is Sobalvarro's collaboration on Toledo's *Mujer Nicaragüense*. No Sobalvarros seem to remain in Ocotál or surrounding towns in the Segovias, but Sobalvarro is a common last name in the departments of Boaco and Chontales (Toledo de Aguerri was born in Juigalpa, Chontales, and lived there most of her life). The fact that no other Sobalvarro births or deaths are listed in the Ocotál Civil Registry between the years of 1879 and 1912 suggests that the Sobalvarros were not originally from Ocotál. (Civil registry searches in the surrounding towns El Jícaro, Jalapa, and Pueblo Nuevo also produced no Sobalvarros.)



is possible, however, that Sobalvarro penned some of the numerous pseudonymous reports and editorials in *La Tribuna* or that she appeared named in numbers missing from the incomplete archive.

Beyond 1929, Sobalvarro gained notoriety in Nicaragua as part of the Conservative Granadan literary group, the Anti-Academia. When she signed their 1931 poetic manifesto, “Prólogo solo,” the group regarded Sobalvarro for being not only talented but also beautiful and the “novia platónica” (platonic girlfriend) of Sandino. Sobalvarro’s presence in Granada and her collaboration with these writers—among them Pablo Antonio Cuadra, Manolo Cuadra, and José Colonel Urtecho—remain an enigma. Her signing a vanguard manifesto is noteworthy in comparative literary history, as the critic Susan Suleiman (1990, 29) documents that vanguard groups were largely closed off to women unless they performed the role of muse. Moreover, in 1931 a young woman’s traveling alone from Ocotal to reside in very conservative Granada would have been scandalous unless she had been staying with family or another suitable chaperone. The extraordinariness of this modern woman’s participation in the Anti-Academia begs the question of whether Sobalvarro could have been sent to Granada by Sandino in a propagandist or intelligence role to influence or glean information from the young men of this literary circle whose families held considerable power and wealth in the Conservative Party. With the exception of Manolo Cuadra, the members of the Anti-Academia joined ranks with Somoza in the 1930s and participated in a patriarchal conservative nationalist discourse that, according to historians Michel Gobat (2005) and Juan Pablo Gómez (2016), particularly deplored the modern woman.

Zamora (1991, 938) writes that, among the members of the Anti-Academia, Sobalvarro’s romantic relationship with Sandino lent her “an air of courage and uncommon prohibition: fame, aura that quickly burned out, along with her voice, despite the fact that her name continued to be cited in anthologies and notes.” She quotes Pablo Antonio Cuadra: “Suddenly a girl with the most beautiful eyes and peasant mystique appeared. She brought us some ballads that were so beautiful and fresh like the pine trees of the north. It was Carmen Sobalvarro (1908), the melancholic lover of Augusto César Sandino. ... Carmen Sobalvarro, the poetess who joined our group during those years, gave us her sandinista ballads and *sometimes showed us letters from the guerrillero* ... and we added chapters of legend and love to the flight of the quetzal” (Zamora 1991, 936, 938; my emphasis).

Although a 1934 *Nosotras* editorial about Sobalvarro cites a letter she sent to Sandino warning him of his imminent assassination, no letters between Sandino and Sobalvarro are known to exist, and Sandino never references Sobalvarro in what remains of his papers.<sup>13</sup> With these archival lacunae in mind, it is possible that Sobalvarro exaggerated her correspondence with the hero in search of personal fame or, as I have argued previously (Finzer 2012), a successful pro-Sandinista public relations ploy that played on gender and romance.

Poetry from a scrapbook compiled by Armando Ocón of León in the 1920s and 1930s support an intimate, spiritual relationship between the poet and the hero.<sup>14</sup> The prose poem “Silenciosamente” describes a transmitter of purest affects (“trasmisor de purísimos afectos”) that connects the souls of the poetic “I” and “you”: “eres libre como el aire y como el pajarito de la selva, sin embargo, estás cautivo en una cárcel de adoración y caricias ingenuas. ... yo puedo medir el inmenso dolor de tus heridas, nunca me has sentido ni visto, pero siempre me he asomado a tu alma, y mi espíritu sentimental ha penetrado tus hondos secretos.”

The captive “you” of the poem is ambiguously trapped in a jail of fame (“adoración”) or an unsatisfactory relationship (“adoración y caricias ingenuas”), both of which could refer to Sandino’s sentimental situation. The poem’s connotations of physical distance and assertion that the lovers have neither felt nor seen one another highlights a spiritual intimacy and supports biographical details of letter writing and a “platonic” relationship. The prose poem “Un hombre raro” describes a military hero who commands the poem’s speaker to love him: “Un hombre raro, pálido el rostro y de mirada triste y ardiente como el sol toda la sangre, se

<sup>13</sup> “Sandino el romántico de la libertad,” *Nosotras*, March 1934.

<sup>14</sup> Armando Ocón, “Álbum de recortes: Poesía de Delmira Agustini, Juana de Ibarbourou, Magdalena Spínola y Carmen Sobalvarro,” 1933–1937, library of Jorge Eduardo Arellano. Ramos (email message to author, November 9, 2018) describes this scrapbook, now among the personal archives of Jorge Eduardo Arellano, as originally being some kind of economic report (origin undetectable) that was published in 1933 on very good paper. Taking advantage of the sturdiness of the edition, Ocón pasted clippings of poetry from four Latin American women poets: Agustini, Ibarbourou, Spínola, and Sobalvarro. The titles and dates of the newspapers from which the poems were clipped are not included. Among the clippings that happen to have dates, the oldest poem is dated 1903 and the most recent is 1937. The scrapbook contains ten poems by Sobalvarro and an article about her. Two poems included a note that the poet had sent the poems from Tegucigalpa. Several poems are about or are directed to children (“Un niño,” “Porque se fue”), and two of these (“Después del aguacero,” “A un niño”) bear witness to the extreme poverty experienced by children. The poem “Desarrollo” compassionately describes a young girl’s menarche as a rite of initiation (a revolutionary feminist theme for the 1930s!). Four poems have themes of passion and love (“Cantos de amor,” “Revelación,” “Silenciosamente,” “Un hombre raro”).

cruzó militarmente en mi sendero, armado de una espada luminosa y bravura de tigres en el pecho." The poem's romantic imagery could place the poem in the world of fantasy (Sobalvarro's poems often contain escapist imagery, such as swans, fairies, and little helper animals), but in the context of Sobalvarro's known biography and other poems explicitly directed to Sandino, this rare military leader must also be Sobalvarro's beloved.

After Sandino's death, we know that Sobalvarro continued to participate in pro-Sandino activity. Zamora (1991, 938) documents that Sobalvarro maintained active correspondence with Manolo Cuadra, who was exiled and imprisoned repeatedly for his protests against Somoza. Zamora (1991, 937) also reprints Sobalvarro's elegy to Sandino, "Cantar de ánimas," from a mimeographed original dated May 1934, just three months after Sandino's death. Like "Toda estoy triste," which earned Sobalvarro fame after the hero's assassination, "Cantar de ánimas" resonates with the intimate, spiritual relationship between the poet and the hero that is seen in "Silenciosamente":

Son dos luces amigas:  
él, varón; ella, novia.  
Dos luces amigas  
en los caminos de la Segovia.

Further testifying to Sobalvarro's undying dedication to Sandino, poet and publisher María Teresa Sánchez surmised in 1948 that Sobalvarro retreated to Honduras, where she continued writing pro-Sandino "poetry of revindication" until her death in the late 1940s (Arellano 1994, 99). The date and circumstances of her death remain unknown, although the fact that her death does not appear in Nicaragua's national civil registry supports Sánchez's supposition that she died in Honduras.

Published several years after Sobalvarro's participation in Granada's Anti-Academia, "La indita de Nicaragua" and "Derecho de propiedad" offer new insight into Sobalvarro's poetics.<sup>15</sup> I have described Sobalvarro's strategically effeminate writing as "steeped in sentimentalism and old-fashioned imagery. ... Her poetry offers none of the irreverent innovation in imagery and form that made her colleagues in the Anti-Academia so infamous" (Finzer 2012, 147). Zamora (1991, 936) describes Sobalvarro's poetry as "spontaneous, primitivist and with a free verse so natural that it seems antiquated." Standing alone, however, "La indita de Nicaragua" presents playful verse whose heavy, consonant rhyme is consistent with Sobalvarro's poem "A Joaquín Zavala Urtecho (improvisación)" and the ludic nationalism of the Anti-Academia's *poesía chinfónica*:<sup>16</sup>

Yankecito de buen color,  
no me pidas amor ...  
Porque con un indio me voy  
al verdecito maizal  
porque soy flor tropical.  
Tu país es muy hermoso  
y dicen ... que es muy lujoso  
y que hay muy ricas manzanas;  
pero a mí me dan más ganas  
de andar descalza en mis llanos  
comiendo dulces bananos ...

Sobalvarro's mastery of chinfonía here and in the poem examined below speaks to her lyric command of *el habla nicaragüense* and the popular genres of her day. Pivoting from strategically sentimental verse to acerbic social critiques, she establishes herself as an accomplished and complex poet.

<sup>15</sup> "La indita de Nicaragua," *El Imparcial* (Guatemala), April 18, 1934; "Derecho de propiedad," *Suplemento 1* (21), March 18, 1934.

<sup>16</sup> Zamora (1991, 938) reprints "A Joaquín Zavala Urtecho" from an October 1931 *Rincón de Vanguardia*. First conceptualized with "La chinfonía burguesa," a 1931 lyric and theatrical farce by Joaquín Pasos and José Colonel Urtecho (1975), *chinfonía* characterized much of the Nicaraguan vanguard through ludic, ironic language that mocked the decadent *modernista* poetic from the generation before. Praising Nicaragua's unique Spanish dialect and popular culture, chinfonic poetry tended to be sing-songy and tongue-in-cheek to the point of absurdity. Unruh (1994, 228–229) has analyzed "La chinfonía burguesa" as a poetic manifesto in and of itself, which criticized conventional, bourgeois literature by visualizing a new, remarkably nationalist, poetics that reveled in popular speech and culture.

“La indita de Nicaragua” also promotes Sandino’s creed of *indohispanismo* in gendered terms, as the speaker defiantly affirms her indigenous race through descriptions of traditional dress, food, and love for the Segovias.<sup>17</sup> Interrupting a purely biographical interpretation of the poem, a 1929 photo of Sobalvarro published in *El Gráfico* presents Sobalvarro as a strikingly attractive, nonindigenous, modern woman with bobbed hair and makeup. Nonetheless, the juxtaposition between the proudly indigenous speaker and the modern Sobalvarro can be reconciled in gendered terms: linking the feminist and indigenist projects of Mexican writer Rosario Castellanos, the critic Joanna O’Connell (1995, viii) explains that both women and indigenous people are interpellated by patriarchal colonizers as subordinate subjects.

Flouting the advances of a US Marine, the speaker asserts her right to choose her own lover, an *indio* (likely Sandino). This dynamic resonates with Sandino’s sexual ethic, which did not tolerate rape but accepted consensual heterosexual relations among members of his camp. The rejection of the Marine also participates in the pervasive and gendered nationalist rhetoric of the day, which cast Nicaraguan men as defenders of the motherland against the Marines, cast as terrorizing *machos* (mules) who raped and killed women and children.

Like “La indita de Nicaragua,” the chinfonic poem “Derecho de propiedad” humorously engages Nicaraguan nationalism through recounting the drama of two indios:

Una vaca indómita  
se metió a la huerta  
de ñor Aniceto;  
Claro está que el indio  
se llenó de cólera;  
y en lo más carnudo  
de la vaca indómita,  
hundió su machete.  
[...]  
Los indios se agarran  
Machete a machete ...  
Y al fin de todo  
fué ñor Aniceto  
quien despachó a Juan  
con todo y sus caites.

Originally appearing in *Suplemento* (1934, 13), the italicized description “regional poetry” follows the poem’s title and highlights the oral aesthetic of a peasant ballad, as if the poet were recording an overheard song for posterity.

In the context of *indohispanismo*, the poem was likely read as both a celebration and condemnation of indigenous culture. On the one hand, the poem jubilates in peasant vernacular; on the other hand, its pejorative caricatures of ñor Aniceto and Juan el sordo cannot be divorced from their racist overtones. Likewise, although Sandino promoted autochthonous indigenous culture, he also consistently called for civilizing the peasantry through education (Bendaña 2016). The poem’s title also reinforces early Sandinismo through the Marxist-Leninist frame that the institution of private property—condemned in Sandino’s call for a cooperativist workers’ society—is the root of senseless violence.<sup>18</sup>

New evidence of Sobalvarro’s later political activity further shrouds the poet in mystery. On December 6, 1942, the *Diario de Costa Rica* reported the arrest of Sandino’s “ex-novia” in San José for Nazi collaboration: “Being good-looking, with exquisite manners and well-spoken, she had achieved an estimable position in Sandino’s circle of Friends, but investigations realized by the police authorities pointed to señorita Sobalvarro Toledo as a Nazi agent and one of the most fervent propagandists of totalitarian ideology.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Bendaña (2016, 47–50) writes that Sandino’s *indohispanismo*, influenced by José Vasconcelos’s concept of *la raza cósmica*, combined *mestizaje* and spiritualism to evoke a national identity around the fiercely self-determined figure of the indigenous Segovian peasant. This divine, utopic, indigenous orientation would redeem Central America from the colonizing influences of the United States.

<sup>18</sup> Bendaña (2016, 467) writes, “In his personal life, Sandino was averse to large private property, and he repeated once and again that ‘property is theft’ and ensured that he would never be a property owner.”

<sup>19</sup> “Será expulsada del país,” *Diario de Costa Rica*, December 6, 1942. Thank you to Bendaña and Arellano, who shared these articles with me.

The article describes the Nazi propaganda found in the poet's house on the *avenida central*. It reports that Sobalvarro told officials that she came to Costa Rica because the Nicaraguan Guardia had threatened to kill her and that "if the price of her life was what she would be charged for her admiration toward Hitler, it didn't bother her at all to die." As her investigation came to a close, she allegedly professed and passionately defended the Nazi creed. A very brief report of the incident appeared in the *New York Times* on December 12.<sup>20</sup> On December 16, Managua's *La Noticia* published that the "Sandino's girlfriend" had arrived in the city and that "yesterday she passed by *La Noticia* and left us some verses among which it said: 'Today Costa Rica expelled me on a Taca airplane.'"<sup>21</sup>

Three articles from three different countries document Sobalvarro's international incident. But was she a Nazi sympathizer? How could Sandino's girlfriend, who had once propagated Sandinista ideology, convert to Nazism? Perhaps, like poets Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats, she was attracted to Fascism's spiritual nationalism or theories on social credit, which echoed with anti-capitalism, anti-globalism, an emphasis on individual freedom, and a preoccupation with underpaid workers.

Another plausible explanation is that the Nicaraguan government colluded with Costa Rican authorities to plant the propaganda, obtaining Sobalvarro's return to Nicaragua and further denigrating Sandino within its new context of war. (In solidarity with Uncle Sam, Nicaragua declared war against Germany on December 11.) The fact that Sobalvarro was worthy of mention in the *New York Times* highlights continued US interest in Nicaragua and suggests that she and Sandino remained a threat to Somoza. Sobalvarro's mockery of the incident, first by saying that she didn't care if she died for Hitler and then sharing a poem about being deported on Taca Airlines, can be seen as a protest (not a confession) by implying her innocence in an absurd conspiracy.

Although she led a considerably different life from Sobalvarro, Rostand's biography is also marked by intrigue and exile. Ramos (2013a, 4) documents that she trained as a teacher and published her first poem at age eighteen under the pseudonym Aura Rostand, which she retained throughout her life. During the 1920s and 1930s, Rostand traveled and published prolifically throughout Central America, Mexico, Cuba, and the United States. According to a 1928 *Bulletin of the Pan-American Union*, Rostand was appointed Nicaraguan consul to Detroit in 1927. Was this appointment a polite way to exile the poet, who was from a prominent León family, for political activity? (Her brother Salomón frequented the North American press at this time with pro-labor agitation and protests against the Monroe Doctrine and US intervention in Nicaragua.) The fact that the *Detroit Free Press* makes no mention of her presence begs the question of whether or not she really spent time in Detroit. Although Rostand may have been the first woman consul ever to be appointed to the United States, when Nicaragua appointed Berta de la Selva (likely related to Rostand) consul to Los Angeles in 1930, she made national headlines as the first woman consul.<sup>22</sup> The lack of press on Rostand's appointment, which would have been newsworthy, undermines the legitimacy of her post.

In July 1927 Rostand arrived in New York with sister Mélida, and the sisters possibly stayed in New York with Salomón and Rostand's husband, never reaching Detroit. It is also plausible that Rostand joined her brother in pro-Sandinista activities while she was there. Rostand allegedly miscarried while in Detroit, and Salomón had a son in November, prompting the literary historian Steven White (2016, 76) to question whether or not Salomón was really the child of Salomón and Rostand. In light of this question, as well as inconsistencies with Mélida's travel documents and a close reading of a number of poems exchanged between Salomón and Rostand, White (2016, 80–92) makes a compelling case for an ongoing incestuous affair.<sup>23</sup> Following in this vein, Rostand's diplomatic appointment may also have been a strategic way for the de la Selva family to hide an inconvenient birth. By August 1928 Rostand returned to Nicaragua, taking up residence in Bluefields until she divorced her dentist husband in 1939 and moved to Mexico City. In 1929 a relative of Rostand's husband attempted to defame Salomón (recently deported from Nicaragua) and Rostand by sending incomplete, slanderous information about them to *La Noticia* (Paíz Fonseca 1929). Before and after her divorce, Rostand traveled extensively, often with Salomón and Mélida.

When Rostand returned to Managua in 1928, she published several poems in *La Noticia Ilustrada* that overtly sympathize with the anti-imperialist cause. Although these poems do not explicitly name Sandino, a close reading of their feminist and social justice themes and their uniquely Nicaraguan imagery reveals a Sandinista ideology. Two poems from September 1928 show Rostand's dedication to Nicaragua by featuring

<sup>20</sup> "Nicaraguan Poetess Returns," *New York Times*, December 12, 1942.

<sup>21</sup> "Ya está en Managua la poetisa Sobalvarro, expulsada de Costa Rica," *La Noticia*, December 16, 1942.

<sup>22</sup> "First Woman Consul," *Detroit Free Press*, July 17, 1930.

<sup>23</sup> Hulme's (2019) readings of Rostand and de la Selva support White's theory. Ramos disputes the assertion, stating that eyewitness gossip maintains that it was Salomón and Mélida who were lovers (email message to author, October 15, 2019).



a speaker who feels marginalized and out of place, thinking only of her homeland. In “Cantar II” she writes of her girlfriends, who enjoy telling trivial stories of love and other happy pastimes:

Margarita, Carmen, Ana  
me cantaron sus conquistas,  
mi cariño, ya lo dije,  
es solo para mi patria.

...

Pero por más que es agrio  
este amor para mi patria,  
me tiene el sueño acabado  
mi pensar en Nicaragua.  
(in Ramos 2013b, 138)

The speaker’s preoccupation for the liberty of her country, personified as “una madre,” “hermana” and “hijita chiquita,” prevents her from sharing the frivolities of her peers. This feminine depiction of Nicaragua also resonates with Sandino’s patriarchal peasant nationalism that urged protection of the motherland.

In “Ruidos de cadena” the speaker is nostalgic and worried for Nicaragua. Suffering the noisy chains of exile, she is pained that she cannot return to the happy, beautiful country of her youth. Either she cannot conjure her happy homeland, or the political situation has erased the cheerful beauty of Nicaragua:

Y no están los campos  
verdes de maíz  
ni alegres las indicias  
luciendo el huipil,  
y la luna llena  
llorará este abril  
sobre aquellos campos  
que no han de lucir.  
(in Ramos 2013b, 140)

Together, “Cantar II” and “Ruidos de cadena” demonstrate that Rostand remained affectively—if not actively—involved in Nicaraguan politics while she lived abroad. Publishing these poems in Managua inserted her in the national conversation about Nicaragua’s future during the months leading up to the presidential election of the Liberal Juan María Moncada (an enemy to Sandino after he refused to join his rebel forces), a pivotal time in Sandino’s campaign for a cosmopolitan woman to promote a nationalist, indohispanist sentiment in her poetry.

Three Rostand poems first published in the 1938 anthology *Cantos a Nicaragua* also bear mention as political interventions: “Despertarás un día ...,” “Niñita de mujer pobre,” and “Otra canción de cuna” (in Ramos 2013b, 118–119, 125, 128). In “Despertarás un día ...,” the speaker fiercely reproaches Nicaraguan men as *vendepatrias* (traitors, or literally “homeland sellers”) who have betrayed the country:

¡Desperterás un día, Nicaragua dormida!  
Y el grito que te aliente dándote nueva vida  
no será de tus hombres que ambiciosos pelean,  
o se duermen, y nada en tus entrañas crean ...  
Tus hombres ya no te aman, se van al Norte y buscan  
tratar con tu belleza. Se trastornan, se ofuscan ...

After berating Nicaraguan men, the speaker proclaims that it will be *women* who save Nicaragua:

Será de tus mujeres ese cantar glorioso [...]  
Tus mujeres son fuertes, y de sus senos nobles  
hoy se vierte futuro: ¡tus hombres serán robles! [...]  
Despertarás un día, Nicaragua dormida,  
Y serán tus mujeres las que te den la vida!

Although the poem's vision of the motherland, complete with "senos nobles" (noble breasts), echoes Sandinista nationalist discourse, Rostand's Nicaragua and her women exert power and agency. This feminist nationalism resounds with Rostand's 1937 prose piece "La espada de Damocles" (*Repertorio Americano*, October 16). Here she calls attention to herself as a Central American woman whose defense of the isthmus from imperialism merits attention: "I want to settle—as a feminine and Central American voice—the issue of my articles. ... Although they are written by a woman, perhaps the alarm we're sounding here will succeed in waking up our sleepwalking people." Rostand's own writing was the "cantar glorioso" (glorious song) that sought to awaken her sleeping nation.

Like many Latin American women poets of her day—including Mistral, Lars, and Sobalvarro—Rostand wrote a number of children's poems, which played not only to gendered poetics but also to a republican motherhood that aligned with Sandinista nationalism. I have written that this "strategic sentimentalism" is an attempt to "to mask or divert attention from ... more gender-transgressive activities, which challenged contemporary cultural politics" (2012, 144). Although most of Rostand's children's poems are fairly bland, some stand out by calling attention to issues of child welfare. "Otra canción de cuna" does this by playing on the genre of nursery songs. Structured with short verses, strong rhyme and heavy refrains, its disturbing content of a crying, orphaned baby in wet diapers make it more of an anti-lullaby:

Llora la nenita  
 porque está mojada,  
 ipañalitos tibios  
 de la madrugada!

In Rostand's poem "Niñita de mujer pobre," the maternal poetic speaker is moved to tenderly care for a poor little girl from Nicaragua with the verses "Te di calor en mis brazos" (line 11), "yo te regalé caricias" (line 25), and "Y se llenó mi ternura / y tú me diste tu olor" (lines 29–30). With its parallel structure, the "mujer pobre," who is the mother of the little girl, is also Nicaragua:

Niñita de mujer pobre,  
 Camisita colorada;  
 Niñita de mujer pobre,  
 Niñita de Nicaragua.

The gendered, nationalist, social justice overtones of the poem bring to mind Salomón's famous 1928 article "Sandino" in the *Nation*. Here he recounts a story of General Moncada's gifting a young virgin to Sandino as a token of peace. Sandino rebuked, "This girl is the embodiment of Nicaragua," and chivalrously took her away to safety (de la Selva 1928, 64). The speaker of "Niñita de mujer pobre," like Sandino, honorably cares for and defends Nicaragua—embodied in poor women and girls—from the endemic poverty and violence perpetuated by treacherous imperialists and *vendepatrias*. Unlike Sandino, however, the poem's speaker is a *woman* who cares for her country.

In the late 1930s, corresponding with her move to Mexico, Rostand began to trade publishing poetry for political essays and journalistic prose. In 1938 she appeared heavily in *Repertorio Americano*, weighing in on such topics as why Mexico and Central America should unite against US imperialism ("La admonición de la Venus de Milo," April; "La patria Mexicana es más grande que México," January 8), the problematics of the Good Neighbor policy ("Peligra la política del buen vecino," May 28), the irrelevance of the Pan-American Conference in Peru ("La Conferencia Panamericana: Si no se va a discutir nada, ¿para qué reunirse?," December 31), her brother's journalistic exposé ("El caso hondureño-nicaragüense," January 15), and a hagiographic piece on Sandino that was repeated later that year in *El Libertador* ("Las Euménides de Sandino: Relato de la vida, hazañas y muerte del caudillo," February 19). In 1939 Rostand published another Sandino hagiography, "Vida, muerte y gloria de Sandino," in Mexico's magazine *TODO*. As with Sobalvarro, Rostand's continued support for Sandino is significant, in that—although written safely from exile—she published within a context of continued transnational resistance to the accretion of Somoza García's presidential power, which was extended in 1938, along with his term in office, by a specially formed constitutional assembly.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Rostand's fiery political writings waned, replaced by regular contributions (perhaps out of economic necessity) to the Mexican women's magazine *Hoy*. These writings included her

esoteric views on women and politics.<sup>24</sup> Ramos (2013a, 5) writes that Rostand was friends with Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and María Félix, taking part in the subversive activities and wild parties for which this set of revolutionary artists and intellectuals were known. Rostand died bedridden, after a long illness, in 1957.

Ramos's pioneering biographic work has recuperated both Sobalvarro and Rostand to the Nicaraguan literary canon, but the lamentable lack of historical archives on these remarkable women leave as many questions as clues with respect to their political activities. The archive constructed to date reveals their extraordinary intervention in public life through the written word, but the lacunae in this archive leave much of their biographies open to interpretation and mystery. In this sense, it is as if the historical silences ask to be read as a sort of vanguard poetry, calling the critic to pay equal attention to what is and is not there.<sup>25</sup> Clayton (2011, 27) so captures the tension between poetry and history, allowing for the comparison of these women's lives to lyric texts: "A lyric voice is constitutively caught between the public and the private, between an utterance that captures the internal or intimate and one that reaches out to a community; the challenge of the lyric ... is therefore to think subjectivity and objectivity simultaneously. Poetry's codes are structured in large measure by the possibilities of a historical moment, inflected by a sense of local urgencies; but the lyric also aims to reach beyond them, ... unfurling through history."

In fact, the lack of archival material on these women may stem from the fact that their strident, radical politics inhibited their publishing opportunities or, as may be the case for Sobalvarro, caused them to publish anonymously or under pseudonyms, thus making their work untraceable. After Sandino's death, the reign of terror instilled by Somoza meant that taking a public stand within Nicaragua was dangerous and largely foreclosed, and the literary establishment became increasingly conservative and male. Intellectuals like Salomón and Manolo Cuadra paid the price of their written opposition to Somoza through repeated incarcerations and exiles. Subsequent decades of political oppression and misogynist literary scholarship—not to mention the effects on public archives of a tropical climate, natural disasters, and revolutions—further contributed to their practical erasure from the historical record.

In her reflections on working the police archives of eighteenth-century France, the historian Arlette Farge (2013, 33–34) writes about the unexpected presence of a woman:

The archives, through glimpses, reveal a lively sketch of her as she lived, juggling the many uncertainties of social and political life. ... The archives find her not just caught in these circumstances, but also in motion as she sought to find fulfillment. Thanks to the archives, she is not just an isolated object, with her manners and customs on display, but a being immersed in specific ways into the social and political life of the time, immersed in the masculine world, and taking part in it every day.

Farge explains that, although women are often omitted from official histories or marginalized in separate "women's history," the archives document that women were woven in the fabric of social, cultural, and political events. Sobalvarro and Rostand's surprising pro-Sandinista appearances in the poetic and journalistic archives—not to mention the appearances of other women Sandinista collaborators who are the subjects of Bendaña's recent book—support the facts not only that women were everyday participants in the Sandino conflict but that they also assumed visible, potentially dangerous roles as public intellectuals in propagating Sandinista ideology to national and international audiences. As Bendaña (2019, 68) writes, these "first sandinistas ... exposed themselves twice over, first for being women and second for being sandinistas." Although we may never know the extent or details of their suggested subversive political activities, their writings stand as testament to their involvement in the Sandinista cause. With Munguía, Zapata, Matamoros, and Mistral, Sobalvarro and Rostand also represent a network, however uncoordinated

<sup>24</sup> Monica Rankin (2011, 83) cites Rostand's 1946 piece in *Hoy* on why women should shave their legs and use cosmetics to enhance their feminine beauty for beguiling men to make proper political decisions. On Rostand's idiosyncratic feminism, Ramos (2013a, 5) writes, "Indifferent to many aspects of the struggle of women of her time—for example, she could have cared less about the right to suffrage—and almost retrograde in various facets of her vision of the role of the feminine sex in society, Aura Rostand nevertheless believed in the intellectual potential of women and even came to proclaim that precisely women would be the redemption of Nicaragua." In her biographic notes on Rostand, Ramos writes that Rostand "confesses that she is not feminist, but feminine. In writings published in Mexico she says that woman's best weapon is lipstick and always being well-dressed."

<sup>25</sup> Many Latin American vanguard and neovanguard poets (e.g., César Vallejo, Tamara Kamenszain, Coral Bracho, and Alexandra Pizarnik) are noted for the semiological silences in their poetry.

and informal, of modern women who extended Sandino's public relations campaign to Nicaragua's cities and beyond, appealing especially to women in the lettered class.

The erasure of early Sandinista women from official national histories continues to haunt Nicaragua's political struggles today, as the 2018 Nicaraguan spring has become an ongoing winter of oppression at the hands of the Ortega-Murillo government. The historian Charles Hale (2017) documents the Sandinista failure to achieve gender equality as a contributing factor to Nicaragua's present political dystopia. In a 2018 editorial, the global health scholar Mary Ellsburg (2018, n.p.) recounts how advances made by the Nicaraguan women's movement—once the largest in the world—have been “systematically dismantled” by the Ortega regime. Citing Ortega's impunity for sexually assaulting his stepdaughter, as well as the regime's complicity with the global gag rule and its repeal of services for victims of gender violence, she writes, “Murillo has explicitly promoted ‘family values’ over women's rights.” On November 23, 2018, Murillo and other women government officials denounced the Nicaraguan feminist movement for sowing terror (EFE 2018, n.p.). Police blocked feminists from marching in Managua and Matagalpa on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and the feminist leader Ana Quiros was arrested and deported the following day (Bow 2018, n.p.). In a June 2018 editorial, the poet and former Sandinista militant Gioconda Belli (2018, n.p.) states, “Histories repeat themselves. ... I believe that all revolutions are called to fail if they are not accompanied by those revolutions we have to make in human relationships, against exploitation. And this is where the inexcusable struggle of women comes in.”<sup>26</sup> Belli's declaration recalls Randall's compelling words in 1992: “If revolution incorporates feminism, it will transform itself. I believe that only through such a transformation will revolutionary change be capable of meeting the broadest range of people's needs” (1992, 22).

Bendaña reminds us that recuperating the historical role of women in Sandino's wars and beyond remains both urgent and relevant as Nicaragua continues to determine its future free from political tyranny (2018, n.p.). Detained in 2018 by the Nicaraguan military for leading a ceremony commemorating Sandino's San Albino uprising, Bendaña sees Sandino as both subversive to Ortegismo and critical in determining a national path forward (López 2018, n.p.). At stake in reaffirming the radical inclusiveness and egalitarianism of early Sandinismo are evolving representations of Sandino with respect to the present conflict. Although the opposition movement has separated its identity from the Frente Sandinista and the Ortega government by replacing the iconic red and black colors of Sandinismo with blue and white (the colors of the Nicaraguan flag), the student movement seems to have retained Sandino as a symbol of liberty against state oppression. But what Sandino will represent in the future and how his image will be used remains to be seen.

Illustrating Sandino's rhetorical velocity is a vibrantly colored meme of Sandino from April 2018. It depicts the iconic hero walking through a burning Plaza de la Revolución with military helicopters flying anachronistically overhead. In his hands, he carries the heads of Ortega and Murillo by the hair. Initially appearing with no caption, the meme evolves over the next few months with different banners. In August the head of Sandino is replaced with that of Lesther Alemán, the leader of the student movement.<sup>27</sup> As the meaning and uses of Sandino continue to be contested, Bendaña's (2016, 2019) histories of Sandino and the first Sandinistas insert themselves in the cultural and political deliberations unfolding in Nicaragua. In this same way, the multivalent roles through which Rostand and Sobalvarro inscribed themselves and their politics into public life further enact the momentum of national liberation, autonomy, and self-determination embodied by Sandino and the legions of women who have historically defended and will continue to negotiate the Sandinista legacy.

<sup>26</sup> Not all Nicaraguan women, including feminists and public intellectuals, are taking sides in the public debate between the Ortega regime and the Nicaraguan feminist movement. Calling attention to the complexities of negotiating political alliance and identity in the present crisis, Ramos (email message to author, November 11, 2018) has indicated a sense of alienation from feminist activists and literary leaders, such as Belli, based on personal experience.

<sup>27</sup> It is impossible to determine where the meme first appeared. On April 22, Pinolillo tweeted the meme with the banners, “Los Ortega Murillo y familia pagarán hasta la última gota de sangre derramada. Los Rotonderos CP Sapos y Juventud Sandirrata se arrepentirán de haber nacido.” Pinolillo (@pinnolillo8), “Los delincuentes Ortega Murillo y chupabolas MIGAJEROS pagarán lo que han hecho,” *Twitter*, April 22, 2018, <https://twitter.com/shababaty/status/9881350817840865290>. In May an Italian Facebook post featured the meme with the banner, “¡Sandino solo uno ... no tres!” Potere al Popolo Livorno, “Non si puo continuare a nascondere la testa,” *Facebook*, May 4, 2018. The Alemán iteration appeared in August on Instagram with hashtag #lestheraleman. Fritanga y Raspadería Nica (@fritanga\_nica), “Nicaragua Libre! #Nicaragua #NicaraguaLibre #Libre#LestherAleman #Nicoyalifestyle #Nicoya #FueraDanielYRosario,” *Instagram*, May 4, 2018. Thank you to my research assistant, Ross Bradley, who assisted me with tracing this meme's evolution.

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