Working-Class Masculinity, Middle-Class Morality, and Labor Politics in the Chilean Copper Mines

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Miners around the world are renowned for both their militancy and their intense masculinity. Studies of miners tend to celebrate and embrace miners’ manliness as central to their combative labor politics and to accept their particular formulations of manhood as natural. As Beatrix Campbell has noted for the case of England, “miners are men’s love object. . . . It is the nature of the work that produces a tendency among men to see it as essential and elemental.” In Chile, copper miners have been taken to be the embodiment of the revolutionary traditions of the Chilean working class; images of the strong and burly miner with his helmet and drill have stood as symbols of both the Chilean working class and working-class manhood. Copper miners themselves define their identity in terms of their powerful sense of masculinity. The history of miners thus reflects the masculinization of Chile’s industrial labor force and working-class political culture.

How and why miners developed their distinctive sense of manhood has yet to be explored. Similar to, few historians have looked at the ways in which miners’ experience of class and politics has shaped and, in turn, been informed by constructions of sexuality. Labor historians have tended to attribute miners’ combativeness to the essential nature of their work, ignoring the ways in which the labor process has been inscribed by ideologies of gender. In general, “gendered” Latin American labor histories have focused on the experiences of women workers, reproducing the assumption that men are “ungendered” historical subjects. This study locates the construction of working-class masculinity in the Chilean copper mines in the tensions and antagonisms produced by the transformation of a population of itinerant laborers into a semi-skilled industrial working class. Miners’ masculinized class identity emerged as industrial employers and the state sought to build a reliable and productive work force of married men who headed nuclear families. The process of proletarianization in the copper mining enclave involved the redefinition of miners’ work according to the new tenets of company social welfare and paternalism and the gender ideology of domesticity.

Working-class masculinity thus became a field upon which managerial strategies of labor control and workers’ practices of contestation and accommodation were played out. Copper miners elaborated a complex and contradictory sense of masculinity that both contributed to the copper company’s and the state’s reorganization of gender relations and provided the basis for workers’ resistance to the authority of the North American mine owners. However, as they undermined company authority and sought to overcome alienation at work by asserting an aggressive masculinity, miners also came into conflict with the strict moral codes that formed an important part of the ideology of the left and organized labor.
Workers who flaunted company control with a boastful manhood expressed in activities like fighting with bosses, stealing, moonshining, drinking, and gambling also frequently violated the strict discipline and moral codes insisted upon by organized labor and the left. Similarly, those workers who embodied the model of manhood based on the responsible and respectable head of household and who adhered to the company's paternalist recipes for social and cultural improvement often made militant union activists. Miners' constructions of masculinity, forged in the process of proletarianization, both reinforced and destabilized the mining company's and the state's efforts to reorganize working-class gender relations and discipline the emergent industrial labor force.

Company Paternalism, the State, and the Reorganization of Gender Relations in the El Teniente Copper Mine

During the 1920s, North American copper producers in Chile confronted a crisis. While world demand for copper was expanding at an unprecedented rate and new techniques and technologies for mining low-grade ore were being successfully applied in both open pit and underground mines, mining companies were unable to rely on a stable and productive labor force. Chilean workers, steeped in traditions of mobility and transience, deserted the copper mines after short stints to seek work in agriculture, burgeoning urban industries, ports, and even the northern nitrate mines. In Kennecott's El Teniente mine, the largest underground copper mine in the world, deplorable living conditions in camps located 8,000 feet above sea level in the Andes as well as the dangers and difficulties of labor in the mines made a career in copper mining an unattractive future for many workers.

El Teniente's North American proprietor, Kennecott's Braden Copper Company subsidiary, like mining companies and industrial employers around the world, implemented a set of paternalist social welfare policies, which complemented traditional coercive forms of labor control, to combat high levels of labor force turnover, the endemic lack of worker productivity, and the miners' unruly rebelliousness. The company began to pay workers high wages relative to other sectors of the economy, bonuses, work incentives, and a series of benefits. In addition, it constructed a social welfare apparatus, administered by the company welfare department and a team of social workers and teachers, that offered workers vocational schools, cultural activities like dances, theater, and cinema, and an extensive network of sports clubs. The company's welfare program aimed to reform workers' social and cultural lives and to train a permanent, reliable, and semi-skilled work force for labor in a modern industry.

As part of this program for restructuring working-class life and settling its labor force, the Braden Copper Company sought to reorganize and regulate the sexuality of both the men and the women who migrated to the mine in search of wage labor. The company viewed the informal, short-term, and non-monogamous sexual relationships established by men and women, who often migrated to the camps to find employment in the mine's cantinas, pensions, and clandestine bars, as both cause and symptom of a working-class culture ridden with vices like drinking, gambling, and frequenting brothels. The creation of nuclear families formed around a male wage earner and female housewife, based
on a middle-class ideal, served as part of a more general campaign of cultural reform. Workers with wives and children were perceived to be less likely to go on strike, to miss work on the notorious San Lunes (Saint Monday), or to engage in gambling and drinking activities which undermined productivity. Fathers and husbands would be tied down by family responsibilities, which would make them more disciplined workers. In addition, well-trained housewives would exercise a positive moral influence on their worker husbands. As the company offered male workers new opportunities for social mobility with vocational training, high wages, and work bonuses, and cultivated the images and ideals of a possible middle-class lifestyle in its schools and newspapers, it also redefined the meaning of masculinity, gender, and family. The company conflated its promises of social mobility and middle-class respectability with the ideal of the responsible father, husband, and head of household.

The copper company's overwhelming concern with gender and sexuality was expressed in a number of policies implemented during the 1920s. Along with regulations outlawing gambling and alcohol consumption in the camps, the company required all sexual relationships between men and women to be formalized in civil marriages. Workers discovered in extra-marital or non-marital sexual relations were given the choice of marrying or losing their jobs. The company's private police force, los serenos, began to patrol workers' barracks and to search their rooms and bunks both for contraband alcohol and for illicit female company. Braden also provided workers a number of material incentives to marry and have children. Workers with families received a family allowance and access to better housing. Vocational schools offered men industrial education and women classes in domestic science, and social workers began a campaign of home visits to teach women domestic skills so that they could efficiently administer the family wage.6

In its efforts to reorganize gender relations and form nuclear families in El Teniente the company received significant help from the state. During the 1920s, Chilean governments became increasingly involved in the establishment of what could be termed a proto-welfare state. This process accelerated under the governments of the Popular Front (1938–1948), which oversaw the process of import substitution industrialization and the implementation of social reforms that were intended to benefit the urban middle and working classes. While the state had evinced little interest in either labor or social relations in the copper-mining enclave and had left the administration of life and work in the mine largely to the company, beginning in 1939 with the election of Radical party leader Pedro Aguirre Cerda, it began to involve itself in the regulation of both labor relations in the mine and gender relations in the camps. After 1939, labor inspectors, the minister of labor, and even the president entered El Teniente's camps to review work and living conditions and to enforce labor and social legislation. Correspondingly, the local court began to play a more interventionist role in working-class family and domestic life.7

Reformist politicians from Chile's Radical Party and heads of Chilean industry had expressed a great deal of interest in the Braden Copper Company's social welfare programs since the early 1920s. In 1921, for example, deputy Briones Luco wrote to request information about the company's dry law and new industrial policies and was informed by Braden of social welfare's many advantages:
increased savings by workers, involvement in social works and patriotic activities, better appearance, the elimination of criminality, more “robust” and stable families based on the foundation of civil marriage, participation in social clubs and sports teams, and attendance at vocational schools. This transformation of workers’ social and cultural lives, according to the company, resulted in increased work attendance and efficiency “since the worker stops celebrating Saint Monday.” And, most importantly, Briones was informed that “the social question” in the mine was absent “except for and owing to the influence of foreign organizations and professional agitators.”

The copper company itself advocated the adoption of its social welfare policies at a national level and the construction of a state welfare system. In 1922, for example, the company commented favorably on deputy Emilio Tizani’s visit to the mine and to the Academia de Extensión Cultural de Teniente “C” as an important step in winning politicians’ support for state welfare programs and for state intervention in labor-capital relations. El Teniente argued for the need for legislation to regulate and harmonize labor relations: “state intervention is absolutely indispensable to solve [strikes]. The absence of special laws about these matters means that in our country strikes are an endemic and national evil.” State intervention in labor-capital relations and social legislation was the solution to worker conflicts. Thus the company proposed that the state establish new programs to “inculcate in the citizens the habit of cleanliness, provide hygienic and cheap housing, control the quality of food, combat alcoholism . . . legislate and regulate prostitution and prevent syphilis.” As part of its general campaign to implement a welfare system, Braden sought a new role for the state in administering workers’ lives, in labor-capital relations, and in legislation on housing, alcoholism, sanitation, and matrimony.

Braden’s complex set of welfare policies served as a model for the social and labor reforms implemented by the state and employers during the 1930s and 1940s. In 1936, for example, Stella Joanne Seibert Alphand published a thesis at the Universidad de Chile on “Labor Legislation and Social Welfare in El Teniente” in which she argued that the Chilean government had to learn from the company’s welfare program and begin to construct a similar system nationally, “a system based on ideas put in practice in the United States.” The company’s emphasis on family life, cultural uplift, and the improvement of living conditions in working-class neighborhoods resonated to the impulses of the Radical Party politicians who took power after 1938 and to the new industrial employers who emerged during the accelerated industrial growth of the 1930s and 1940s. They confronted the daunting challenge of forming a stable work force out of the large population of rural migrants who inhabited Chile’s urban working-class neighborhoods.

In practice, the local representatives of the Chilean state in the El Teniente mining enclave were the local court, municipal authorities, and labor inspectors. After 1938, with the election of the center-left Popular Front coalition, aldermen from the neighboring town of Machalí, regional senators and congressmen from leftist parties, and labor inspectors performed a number of investigations of living and working conditions in the mining camps. While the ministry of labor and its inspectors began to break down the walls of the North American feudo (fiefdom) in El Teniente by requiring the Braden Copper Company to adhere to national
legislation governing living and working conditions, labor relations, and the cost of living, the local court concerned itself with the policing and administration of workers' everyday lives and with the state's new interest in combating alcoholism, prostitution, and gambling and inculcating and reforming working-class culture to prepare workers for citizenship in the modern industrial economy.

While the North American company opposed the new intrusions of the ministry of labor and the enforcement of the Chilean labor code, the local court in the camps provided important support for the company's policies on gender and family life. The court collaborated with the company welfare department and police in trying workers for crimes like drinking and gambling. In addition, the court would often require negligent husbands to hand over wages to their wives and thus fulfill their duties as heads of household. The court's efforts were particularly aimed at policing women's sexuality. For example, in the late 1930s, the court began for the first time to hear cases of women accused of provoking illegal abortions. While before 1930 the court docket registered no abortion cases, by the late 1930s abortion had become a significant legal and social transgression for single women, who were punished by arrest, dismissal, and eviction from the camps. At the same time, women who left their husbands began to be arrested and prosecuted for the crime of "abandoning the home." Clandestine abortions and leaving husbands were ways in which women might exercise some control over their sexuality and their lives: the company and the state perceived these expressions of independence as threats to the community of working-class families they hoped to build.

For the first time, too, domestic violence became an important concern of the company and of the local court. While almost no domestic violence cases appear on the court record before the late 1930s, a large number appear after this time. Domestic violence was not a new legal category. Rather, traditional assault cases or cases of injuries (lesiones) now came to be composed frequently of incidents of conjugal violence. The appearance of domestic violence cases reflected the company's and the state's new interest in regulating gender relations and the new social realities of the increasing population of married workers. Thus company social workers and the court began to receive women's complaints about their male partners' or husbands' abuses and began to step in to try to restore harmony to miners' households. Concern with domestic violence became an ideological tool in the company's war against "working-class vice" and the "irregularity" of workers' sexual relations. The court also began to hear cases brought by women who demanded that their husbands hand over a portion of their wages and the family allowance to maintain their families. As they sought to stamp out the consumption of alcohol, informal sexual practices, and gambling, so, too, the company and the state began to clamp down on husbands' abuse of wives. The policing of domestic violence represented a new front in the larger campaign to regulate and administer working-class men's and women's domestic lives and to shape men into "responsible" heads of households and women into model housewives.

The North American copper company's and the state's attempts to reorganize family structures in El Teniente were largely successful. Miners increasingly married and formed families in the mining camps. By the late 1930s the company could depend on a permanent and stable community of workers who planned
to live out their lives in the mine and whose children would provide the mine’s future labor force. The company’s efforts to reform the camps’ tumultuous working-class culture, redefine working-class definitions of femininity and masculinity, and quell endemic labor conflicts were less successful. Miners continued to drink, smuggle alcohol into the camps, gamble. They built a challenging and rebellious sense of masculine pride that found expression in their rejection of the company’s policies on marriage and family. At the same time, many miners did imbibe the company’s messages of social mobility and the gender ideology which defined men as heads of nuclear families. Rather than produce quiescence, however, the ideal of masculinity based on middle-class respectability and masculine responsibility often fueled labor conflicts, as workers fought to fulfill the promises of paternalism. In addition, workers redefined the meaning of middle-class manhood and morality by rearticulating a notion of working-class masculine honor shaped by the informal and turbulent culture of the mine and its camps. A complex and contradictory language of class and masculinity emerged in the mining camps out of the process of conflict and negotiation between managerial initiatives and workers’ strategies of resistance.

Work and Manhood in the Mine

Inside the mine, the company’s paternalist policies successfully created a stable and productive work force that labored to fulfill work quotas and earn bonuses. Workers developed a sense of masculine pride that was rooted in their physical strength, capacity for hard labor, and work skills. At the same time, miners also expressed their sense of dignity in a rebellious culture of insubordination that often led to fights with foremen, wildcat work stoppages, and strikes. Workers articulated a form of self-assertion in what David Montgomery has called “a manly bearing toward the boss.” The miners affirmed their manly bearing both in their domination and mastery of their work and in conflicts with the company and foremen. Miners’ intense masculinity at once coincided with the company’s goals of tying workers to their jobs and increasing production and contributed to the construction of a combative workplace culture.

Within the mine, miners competed among themselves to prove their strength and skill. The mining company fostered competition between cuadrillas (work groups) and offered prizes and bonuses to the groups with the highest production. Symbolic of this competition was a board placed at the entrance of the mine and divided into sections, with a little wooden horse representing each cuadrilla. The horses advanced in a simulated race to the finish with progress measured in terms of accident-free production. Miners also competed within the cuadrilla to demonstrate who was the strongest, who had the most force, or who could perform a difficult job more ably. A worker won a large measure of respect from his fellow workers and from foremen for his capacity to work hard. The company helped to promote this cult of physical strength by implementing a system of competitions and contests among workers “of perfectly useful works, competitions stimulated and awarded by the company.” The company also provided a system of bonuses and incentives for workers who exceeded their daily production quotas.
To work inside the mine implied a stature and status in El Teniente's internal hierarchy. Miners took great pride in their capacity to work hard and in their skills in negotiating and managing the difficult terrain of work in the mine. High productivity became a marker of manliness. As one oral source remembers, "among the workers there was a certain competitiveness that made them, well, 'I'm agallado (strong, brave, clever, enterprising) because I can carry so much, I worked this much, I advanced that much . . . ' there are workers . . . who are truly animals for work." In his stories of life in the mining camps, the writer and former El Teniente miner Baltazar Castro remembers that "I never looked down upon my compañeros in the mills and the workshop, nor at the others who worked above ground, but I can't deny that my aspiration was always to be transferred to the mine, to feel that I was a miner in every sense of the word." True manhood and respect from one's comrades could only be won by demonstrating one's strength in the mine. Oral histories and miners' life stories frequently refer to the ways in which workers "made themselves men in the mine." For Castro, the prospect of working in the mine inspired the desire to prove himself by mastering the miners' work. He writes that, "the incentive to penetrate and remove what was inside grew every day."

As in other countries, proletarianization in the Chilean copper industry was accompanied by increasingly masculinized representations of labor, the worker, and the working class. El Teniente's popular lore and literature constructed an iconography of miners' bodies. For example, Castro's stories of the mine repeatedly celebrated miners' physicality with constant references to their "wide hands," "wide shoulders," "firm arms like two hammers," and "impressive moustaches." In one Castro story a miner is described as a "mountain of tight muscles" and as "massive, robust." The tough jobs in the mine won miners' respect, and they derived a sense of dignity from their ability to dominate work in the mine. As Castro writes, they "knew that sensation of triumph, that action as victors, when the minero de avance (lead miner) thunders the twenty-five explosions and the enmaderadores (timbermen) hurry to extend the tunnel." Castro writes appreciatively of a "skilled miner who knows the effects of the explosion in all its details, who had located the perforations in such a way that . . . the explosion blew the rock away in an extensive stretch: each explosion supporting the other successively until all twenty or twenty-five had thundered." Similarly, he describes a miner "who enjoyed fame as a true enmaderador, capable of stepping on the heels of the explosions as he advanced into the mountain." Skill and strength became the pillars of the miners' sense of masculine dignity.

The miners expressed their special "manera de ser" as a form of masculine self-assertion and pride that differentiated them from workers in other industries. Store owners in the camps or in Rancagua could instantly recognize a miner for his bearing and for his "pinta" (look). Outside the mine, miners dressed sharply with suits, hats, and scarves composing the basis of their style. Castro describes one El Teniente miner out on the town in Rancagua: "his clothes showed clearly that he had recently come down from the mine: a felt hat, black suit, scarf around the neck and loudly colored shoes." And the company Welfare Department reported that: "it is a well known fact and has been commented on by people who are far from friendly, that the Teniente workmen dress as well as the average
employee of the middle class in Santiago. The El Teniente workers also usually had a lot of available cash and an arrogant and overbearing attitude, according to those bar or store owners who had to serve them. To be a miner was to be something more than an ordinary worker.

Miners' style and assertions of manliness laid claim to a middle-class norm of respectability and status. At the same time, as the company's comments indicate, the miners' employment of middle-class styles transgressed the symbolic boundaries of class and sparked criticism. As Dick Hebdige has argued, commodities like clothes are signs that "can be symbolically repossessed in everyday life, and endowed with implicitly oppositional meanings." Miners' fine clothes, arrogant attitude, and spending habits constituted both an assertion of equality and inclusion and "a symbolic violation of the social order." Their "manera de ser," their swagger and exalted sense of self, both asserted middle-class respectability and symbolically challenged middle-class authority.

The miners backed up their claims to middle-class status with high wages. As one oral source notes, the miners' distinctive identity was rooted in their economic power. Their overbearing attitude was both a rejection of the traditional pejorative elite designation of miners, peasants, and workers as rotos (literally "broken ones") and a claim to dignity based in their high wages and masculine work culture:

That's what makes the miners different, you see? For their form of being at work, for their system of work and what the atmosphere there is like. Traditionally the miner has always distinguished himself for being a roto chorro (a cool roto), like we say, un roto macanudo (a first-rate roto) ... un hombre sobresaliente (a distinctive man who stands out) because ... earning money at work makes him different, makes him be seen in a different way."

The use of roto in an affirmative rather than pejorative way in this passage, and its coupling with positive attributes like chorro, macanudo, and sobresaliente, transform the meaning of the word. Rather than broken ones, the miners bore their roto status with pride and lent it self-esteem and self-respect. The very use of miners' slang in this passage and the more general celebration of miners' language in oral history interviews reflects a sense of cultural distinctiveness and pride. Rather than claiming to be middle class, the miners affirmed their position of workers as rotos and invested it with dignity by appropriating the badges of middle-class respectability—high wages, an arrogant manner, and fine clothes. Their imperious bearing and swagger expressed a dignity based on their sense of masculinity and violated the norms of middle-class morality and manhood.

Like miners all over the world the El Teniente workers constructed a class identity based on an intensely masculinized understanding of their work. The miners expressed their overcoming of alienation inside the mine in the language of sexualized conquest. In myths and lore the miners sexualized their labor and figured the mine as feminine, further deepening their definition of work as a source of masculine affirmation. The miners defined the exercise of strength and skill at their jobs as a sexualized domination of the female mine. One popular verse described, for example, how "el pico del minero es el mas duro que hay parte a pedazos la roca y le saca el mineral." Miners' pride in the control they exercised over their labor within the mine and inside the sphere of the respectable nuclear
family was thus conflated with and represented by the symbols of control over female sexuality.

Labor in the mines provided, however, an uneasy basis for self-assertion and dignity. The constant danger of accidents and the more gradual but equally devastating effects of silicosis rendered life and work in El Teniente fragile. The company's rigid regime of discipline in the mines and camps exacerbated the erosion of miners' control over their daily lives and labor. As they settled in El Teniente and committed themselves to a future in the mine, workers expressed their sense of loss of control by depicting the mine as a threatening, consuming, and vengeful female presence. While they might assert dignity in the mastery of their work and domination of the mine, ultimately the mine governed workers' lives. As a miner in one of Castro's stories declares, "the mine is that way, you enter her and you can't leave no matter how hard you work. She's a very vexing and chastising woman."35 One miner's story describes how "the mountain, alive, wounded, bloody revenged itself against those miserable men for the desecration of its millinery bowels."36 The miners' masculine pride rested on precarious foundations.

Anxieties about women permeated miners' language and revealed the ways in which the miners understood their own lives and labor to be consumed inside the mine. Miners to this day maintain the belief that a woman entering the mine provokes accidents and speak of the mine as a jealous and punishing woman. The miners invoked the female figure of the virgin Mary (la viejita linda), alternately begging her for aid and cursing her for misfortune. They attributed accidents to female spirits ("animitas") or to the ghost of a woman, "la llorona" (the crier). Other miners' tales describe the activities of the ghost of a woman who was executed for killing her miner husband and chopping him to pieces. Similarly, miners believed in a spirit called the la lola (the girl), who dwelled in the mine and did away with workers. One miner's story describes la lola as "a horrible and disheveled woman whose cries drive the listener insane" or as "a strange monster, mixture of monkey and woman, who guards a secret treasure in the mine."37

The miners' definition of the mine as a threatening female presence was also expressed in the prevalent fear of adultery. Many miners attributed the distinctiveness of their identity as miners to turbulent marital lives. Inside the mine, workers constructed a lexicon of sexual unfaithfulness. They employed the phrase "hacer las diez ultima" ("to do the last ten") to mean to be unfaithful to a husband.38 The miners also had a name for the man who slept with miners' wives, "Jorge." Miners joked around by referring to unfaithful miners as "Jorge" or telling other miners that their wives had been seen with "Jorge."39 Similarly, miners sang a little refrain about adultery to taunt and torment the many miners who had left their wives behind and gone up to the mine alone: "El minero en las minus 'ta crabajandoly la mujer abajo lo esta goweando."40

For one miner and union leader, the miners' work hours, the dehumanizing and consuming quality of the work, the exhaustion, sickness, and the little time spent with families led to constant family problems, adultery, and alcoholism. This fact, he believed, helped shape miners' particular identity, their sense of being different, of hardship and sacrifice, and ultimately explained their discontent, combativeness and machismo.41 At the same time as the miners asserted an intense masculine pride in their work, their work culture also expressed an
abiding anxiety about the mine's consumption of their lives and labor that was signified in an equally acute uneasiness about their masculinity.

Miners figured racial and class domination of Chilean workers by North American supervisors as sexual control and exploitation. Tales of North American bosses raping or forcing Chilean women (particularly miners' wives) to have sex demonstrated the sexual basis of both miners' sense of self and their consciousness of their own subordination. Domination involved not just the alienation of their labor, but the alienation of their selves understood in terms of their manhood and control of women's sexuality. Similarly, tales of Chilean workers sleeping with North American technicians' or supervisors' wives represented a means of asserting workers' manhood and reaffirming their own manliness against the company.42

Gonzalo Drago, like Baltazar Castro a miner and short story writer during the 1940s and 1950s, devotes one of his "miners' stories" to the tale of a white North American supervisor, Jack Morgan, who is married to "an Englishwoman, skinny and flat like a board... she was only good for folding his socks and emptying his pockets."43 The story holds up the beautiful and sexual Chilean women, particularly the worker Ramiro's wife, Berta, in contrast to the unfeminine and desexualized white/European woman. Morgan desires Berta and eventually rapes her, threatening her with her husband's dismissal and the entire family's eviction from the camps. Upon discovering the rape, Ramiro, who is described as the embodiment of miner manhood ("a strong and rigorous boy who knows his job of mechanic well and never has problems with his compañeros. He is straight and works hard.") feels "humiliated, mocked, and ashamed," runs out to kill the "gringo canalla" (gringo bastard), and is himself beaten by Morgan and arrested by the serenos. The collapse of racial, sexual, and class subordination/domination in the story is revealed when the supervisor responds to Ramiro's fury by asking him provocatively, "Who's your woman, you dirty Indian?"44

This story demonstrates the ways in which manhood and sexuality were at stake in the miners' subordination to company authority. Two narrative tendencies indicate the ways in which class/race relations in the mine were sexualized. First, domination of the workers is expressed in terms of the rape of Chilean workers' wives and the workers' subsequent humiliation and shame. At the same time, however, the story upholds the manliness of the Chilean worker Ramiro against the sexually degenerate and corrupt North American supervisor Morgan, and asserts the femininity of the "hembra" (woman) Berta, whose beauty, sexuality, and loyalty embody the ideal of domesticated womanhood, against the asexual and unfeminine wife of Morgan. The story ascribes respectability to the worker and derides the boss's failure to live up to an accepted ideal of middle-class morality. The sexual degeneracy and immorality of the boss inflects his racial (and class) identity and contrasts with the respectability and honor of Ramiro and Berta, hardworking and "straight" Chilean worker and model housewife. The story thus appropriates the ideals and symbols of middle-class respectability to assert the value of working-class experience.

In this story and others like it the miners' alienation in their labor and subordination to the company as they became fully proletarianized was expressed in the language of sexuality. Thus Drago describes the miner Gregorios's reflections on his wife and family:
He sees his wife curved over the sink, always silent, without complaining about the poverty that beats her without mercy. He sees her cook, wash, sweep, and sow with mechanical gestures, losing all femininity in the squalor that surrounds her. She is no longer a *hembra*. She is a domestic machine. A piece of furniture. A thing. He also is no longer a man. He's an extension of the drill. An object. A beast.45

This passage portrays alienated labor in the mine and the poverty of miners' households in terms of the loss of masculinity and femininity. Miners' stories at once described loss of self, dignity, and manhood and reaffirmed their masculinity and respectability in opposition to the authority of the North American company.

The miners' masculine work culture served the company's interests in increasing production. The work system in the mine tied miners to their jobs as they sought to increase their earnings through high wages, bonuses, and incentives and as they struggled to achieve social mobility and the badges of social prestige claimed by the middle class. The miners' code that dictated that one prove one's manhood through struggle with the mine, competition, skill, and capacity for work contributed to the company's efforts to extract increased productivity from its labor force. At the same time, however, miners' masculinized self-assertion and pride in their labor and economic power operated as a means of overcoming alienation at work and constituted an affirmation and valorization of working-class culture and experience and a transgressive violation of the symbolic hierarchy of social class.

Miners' intensely masculinized forms of self-assertion also produced an unruly and rebellious work culture that conflicted with the company's efforts to transform them into reliable heads of households and make them responsible husbands and fathers. Although miners worked hard to dominate the mine and show off their courage, physical strength, and skill, they also resisted the control exercised by their foremen and the regimes of discipline imposed by the company in the mine. Throughout the 1940s, a lack of labor discipline continued to plague the company. Each month North American supervisors fired or suspended numerous workers for disobedience, insolence, and fighting. Reports from the mine record hundreds of workers dismissed or suspended every month for abandoning work, failing to fulfill the required production levels, laziness, fudging their production figures, insolence, violating the camps' dry law, missing entire workdays, immorality, and dishonesty. Absenteeism was rampant. Workers tended not to show up to work a number of days every month, particularly for "San Lunes."46 These numerous cases of disobedience reveal workers' resistance to the strict labor discipline demanded by the company and their efforts to carve out space in the regimented regime of production in the mine.

Miners articulated their workplace culture of defiance in an idiom impenetrable even to other Chileans, and produced a set of common terms and references to express the bonds that tied them together in the mine. The shared danger of work in the mine and the mutual dependence of workteam members for safety and survival created profound solidarities among miners. The world of the mine had its own language. Each miner had his own nickname and among themselves miners called themselves "*gancho*" (hook) or "*ganchito*," (little hook) signifying the close ties that "hooked" them together.47 The miners' lexicon created a com-
mon work culture and emphasized the differences which separated workers from their North American bosses. The miners often made fun of and mocked the North Americans’ way of speaking. For example, they referred to the hotel for supervisors, the “Staff House,” as the “casa de estafa” (“the swindle house”). The Welfare Department or Departamento de Bienestar received the name “Departamento de Bienfregar” (“the Molest Well Department”). The miners had various Spanish nicknames for their bosses which the North Americans could not understand. Workers also used a code to communicate among themselves. When they were slacking off in the mine, for example, and a jefe arrived unexpectedly, they shouted “loro” (parrot) or “fuego” (fire) as warning signals.48 In one case, the miners named a jefe who severely punished workers “El Gringo Malo.” One day, when this jefe was descending the tunnel in the mine, a miner took a “purgante” and dumped it on him while the miners, in mockery, claimed that it was raining. Not one of the miners in the work gang denounced the perpetrator.49

Miners frequently responded to jefes with what the company called “insolence and vulgarity.” In one of many cases in 1943, a boss transferred a worker to a new job. The worker refused to do the work and “answered the Jefe Sr. I. Contreras with insolence and insults.”50 That same year the enmaderador (timberman) Luis Miranda Garcia was ordered by his capataz to clean up the area he was working. Miranda, like many workers, answered what he believed to be an unreasonable demand with insults. At the end of the shift the capataz returned to find the area completely dirty and a number of cars overturned. He yelled at the worker, who again responded with “insolence and threats not only for Valenzuela [the capataz] but also for the other capataces and jefes, inciting the other workers to attack the jefes and capataces.”51

This work culture of insubordination and disrespect for company authority was expressed in a mocking humor that united the miners in opposition to foremen in the mine. Baltazar Castro describes one incident in which a group of miners taking “the cage” up to a mine shaft began to make fun of the serenos who accompanied them and who were there to guarantee work discipline. “Lowering their voices, the most daring spoke: —’wow, what a terrible smell there is here . . . ’—it’s because there’s some serenos here . . . ’—’we’re going to have a bad day of it. There’s nothing worse than going up to the mine in the same car with maricones (fags).’”52 These expressions of disrespect toward foremen and supervisors are also recalled by Gonzalo Drago, who describes how at times after blasts in the mine, “lamps were extinguished because of the vibrations from the explosion, giving the workers the opportunity to mumble lewd and vulgar insults against their bosses.”53

Verbal conflicts and jousting with jefes often turned into physical fights. In 1940, for example, a mechanic in the mine workshop, Juan Fernández Videl, was arrested by police for injuring the face of the second jefe of the workshop. In a similar case, Ernesto Bernal Orellano punched his boss, Eliseo Naranjo Rojas, because “I was up to here with him hurrying me on the job, a job I couldn’t have done faster, and threatening to fire me.”54 Conflicts in the mine were so frequent that in 1947 the Sewell court noted a plethora of cases of fights between foremen and workers and stated that “there exist continual conflicts and tyrannies in the relations between obreros and capataces.”55 In 1944, one of these fights ended
in the murder of a supervisor by the worker Manuel Castillo, "desperate from suffering so much abuse."56

Fights and skirmishes and the informal forms of resistance and disobedience established bonds of solidarity and helped workers maintain a sense of self and dignity, as they carved out a space within the company's regime of discipline.57 Fights, as well as expressing the antagonism between foremen and miners, served as an assertion of the workers' will, a means of winning time, and a method for controlling foremen's demands. Fights broke up the exhausting constancy of labor and, with activities like drinking on the job, "altering the mark" on the scale to increase production figures, and stealing copper ore, tools, and materials, fostered an independent workplace culture.

Most fights among workers in the mine dealt with violations of the codes of honor, solidarity, and manhood that shaped miners' work culture. Workers fought over accusations of strike breaking or "sucking up to" the boss or the company. To be called a "krumiro" (scab) or "chupa de la compañía" (suck up to the company) was not a matter to be taken lightly in El Teniente. As a miner who had punched one of his workmates because the man had called him "chupa de la compañía" explained, "the imputation of 'chupa' is an insult; because it is a derogatory term that means traitor of the workers, I became indignant and punched him."58 The weight of the insult was exacerbated by the sexualized intonations of the word "chupar." In another case, a worker and his brother-in-law provoked a fight with a worker on their shift because he had insulted them and "attacked their honor." The worker had called them "chupas de los jefes," words that, as one of the brothers-in-law testified, "injured me deeply."59 Fights were thus signified with the miners' codes of manliness based on physical strength, independence, and a challenging attitude toward company authority.

The miners sustained an alternative sense of honor, respectability, and manhood based on class solidarity that supplied the basis for a strong militancy during labor actions. Wildcat work section stoppages and organized legal strikes were defined by the miners' codes of masculinity. During a strike in 1942, for example, a strike brigade guarding the mine came upon a scab. The workers abducted the krumiro and took him to the union hall, where he was submitted to an impromptu trial. The workers' court found the man guilty and sentenced him to dress as a woman. The workers' brigade then took the scab, dressed in women's clothes, around the camp as a form of public humiliation.60 The strike breaker was figured as female or unmanly since scabs not only crossed picket lines, they violated the carefully defined rules and codes of masculinity that shaped miners' work culture and informed their bonds of solidarity.61

Forms of Sociability in the Camps

Miners' efforts to exercise control over their labor and resist the disciplinary regime in the mine produced an unruly sense of masculinity that also conflicted with the company's efforts to transform them into reliable and responsible heads of household. The copper company's regulation of sexual relations and family life in the camps was greeted with frequent rejection by the workers who, one study reported, often lied about their marital status or purchased false marriage
licenses in Rancagua. To curtail such practices the company fired workers who misrepresented their civil states. In 1939, the head of the Welfare Department wrote to a social worker that “there exist families without legal status and many children, the products of such unions, do not have legal status; there have even arisen cases of the complete falsification of the civil marriage license book, of the union and of the registration of the children. We have also seen cases where the license of a legitimate marriage is presented in order to cover up another illegitimate union.” In 1946, the company rejected the miners' union's demand that it rescind the regulation that required dismissal and expulsion from the camps for workers found living with women outside of civil marriage.

El Teniente workers often fell short of their assigned responsibilities as husbands and fathers. In these cases, the victims of miners' resistance to company authority were miners' wives and children, who suffered from the poverty of their households and a lack of financial support that was exacerbated by their complete dependence on male workers' wages. The Welfare Department reported many cases of families neglected by workers. In 1939, company social workers reported that many miners were using the family allowance as a form of work bonus, giving limited funds to their wives for their families' sustenance. The social workers found that “in general the amounts given by the married workmen to their wives for the weekly food bill is far below what they could allow.” The report condemned workers for forcing their wives to take in laundry, boarders, and sewing while they spent their wages and family allowance on “wine, women, and song, ... while their wives and children are underfed and worse clothed.” In one case, the company fired a miner because “he fraudulently received the family allowance for his wife and children for years and neither gave it to his family nor helped them in any form.” The company welfare department also received complaints from miners' wives that they received only the family allowance from their husbands, who spent their wages themselves. The company noted that “there has been deception by workers who registered their women and children as dependents to obtain the family allowance and then only contribute this to the family sustenance ... the Company doesn’t want to have workers who do not fulfill their duties as husbands and fathers and who, while they leave their families with a starvation ration, spend on themselves ten times the sum they concede to their families to maintain themselves.”

Miners' resistance to the norms of the nuclear family and women's vulnerability and dependent position were also revealed in frequent abandonments of wives by their husbands. Many women complained to the courts in Rancagua and in Santiago of abandonment, asking that they be awarded a portion of their spouses' salaries. According to one social worker's study in 1936, “cases of abandoned women with families present themselves with enormous frequency.” El Teniente workers were also notorious for their bigamous practices. Many miners had two wives, or at least one wife and a serious lover, one in the mine's camps and one outside the mine. Bigamy was a luxury that only male workers could enjoy, since their comparatively high wages allowed them to establish more than one relationship at a time.

In addition to resisting pressures to reshape their sexual lives, miners also sustained clandestine and illicit leisure activities like drinking and gambling. Conflicts with the company over alcohol consumption and gambling formed part
of miners' private, everyday struggle to express their control over their nonwork lives in the camps' barracks and passageways. In gambling and drinking workers reproduced workplace solidarities and codes of masculinity and subverted the company's efforts to regulate and administer their cultural practices. As in the rejection of the company's marriage regulations, women often bore the cost of male workers' subversive activities.

Despite regulations prohibiting alcohol consumption and gambling and the constant vigilance of the company police and carabineros, workers continued to play cards and drink. Violation of the company's dry law was a frequent cause of arrest and resulted in dismissal, fine, or suspension. The miners enjoyed a steady supply of smuggled moonshine and alcohol as they engaged in a constant struggle with the company over the enforcement of the dry law. On days off every month miners descended to Rancagua to drink themselves into oblivion in brothels and bars, returning to work the next day or even a few days later half-drunk or hungover. Often carabineros and company police threw miners off the train and prohibited them from returning to work because they were inebriated. In addition, workers were often fired for being drunk on the job. Miners were also often apprehended and fined for gambling, a popular pastime in the camps. Groups of workers would get together in the barracks with a bottle of aguardiente and play cards. During the 1930s and 1940s the Sewell Court was flooded with cases of workers arrested for gambling.

Conflicts over alcohol and gambling further reinforced cultural differences and social resentment in the camps and in the mine. Both gambling and drinking were collective activities which helped to bind male workers together. Bottles were shared and work comrades invited to partake of a recently scored stash of illegal aguardiente. Similarly, gambling, more than an activity aimed at winning money, was a way to pass the long hours between work shifts together. It was a collective form of recreation and ritual that brought workers together as a group, while excluding women and contributing to the hardships experienced by miners' families. While for the company drinking and gambling were socially disintegrative, disruptive of disciplined work habits and the nuclear family, both activities helped to forge a collective form of identity shaped in opposition to company authority and programs of social control and cultural reform. In these cases, miners' wives and children saw in the company welfare department and social workers important allies in their struggles to gain access to male workers' wages.

The legendary status of moonshiners in the camps' folklore reflected the significance of alcohol as a symbol of subversion of the company's regulation of workers' lives and space in the camps. The smugglers (guachucheros) who did battle with the company security forces in order to provide the miners with contraband alcohol enjoyed mythic status among miners. One writer described the guachuchero as: "the furtive salesman of liquor that plots to mock the careful vigilance that the serenos exercise at all hours, day and night, in the streets and the pathways, in the lodgings and in the work place, in the train and in the hills." Miners' stories about guachucheros represent a cultural celebration of the resistance to the regime of discipline exercised by the company and endow the guachuchero with the mythical characteristics of Hobsbawm's social bandits.

The guachucheros earned their reputation among miners by violating the dry
law and standing up to company authority, often in gun battles and shootouts with carabineros and serenos. In the early 1920s, for example, the company reported to the intendancy that three guachucheros had killed a sereno in a shootout as he had patrolled the outskirts of the camps. In 1917, despite their losses in confrontations with the smugglers, the company's security force succeeded in capturing sixty-three moonshiners and in 1918, seventy-three. In the miners' memories and the popular literature of the 1940s the guachucheros emerge as folk heroes. In his novel of life in the camps Baltazar Castro describes one famous guachuchero who, like many real guachucheros, had begun his career smuggling a dozen bottles of pisco hidden under packages of cigarettes and cologne in the carts that brought goods to the company and the camps. He scaled the mountains, sneaking into the camps on foot or on horseback, avoiding other guachucheros who controlled the area. At times he confronted bands of his rivals and engaged in wild-west type shootouts. After growing success, he formed his own gang that controlled the agricultural towns around the mine. He then invested in a number of bars and brothels in Rancagua.

The guachuchero enjoyed considerable status among the miners because he embodied their own hopes and desires. He was "audacious, an enemy of all established law and order, blaspheming against the police, the serenos, and the gringos; confronting danger with an open profusion of courage. Thus they loved him and had raised him up on a kind of pedestal." The guachuchero's independence, strength, and courage exemplified the miners' codes of manhood and honor. Physical descriptions of guachucheros often resembled the celebrations of mine workers' physical power and masculinity. One El Teniente story by Gonzalo Drago, for example, depicts the hero who is a guachuchero as a "primitive and lustful macho always ready to jump on his female prey." At the same time, the story romanticizes the moonshiner's adventurous life and the deep solidarities and friendships that the dangerous profession forged among men. The story, entitled "Camaradas" deals with the friendships among guachucheros and describes how "shared danger brought the men together," not unlike the shared danger of the mine.

Miners saw in the guachuchero's dangerous, rebellious, and independent life both what they saw in themselves and what they aspired to. Like the miner, the moonshiner in one tale "was full of pride and hardheaded;" "he believed that he dominated the mountain;" he was "young and robust." In another, "his solitude of the free man, free of feminine chains, allowed him to be a rebel and a vagabond." Like many miners, he had travelled and labored in the northern nitrate pampa and had "shared his life with the hardened and vigorous men that cities and countryside threw deep into the mine."

The guachuchero's fame among the miners came, however, not only from his defiance of the company's authority, independence, and masculine honor, but also from his economic success. The guachuchero represented what all miners hoped for when they came to the mine in search of high wages: he had made it. He exemplified a form of social and economic mobility to which most miners aspired, but which few could hope to emulate. The popular mythology surrounding the guachuchero expresses a "hidden transcript" of resistance to domination and a tacit critique of the company's power. However, the independence, courage, and prosperity of the guachuchero did not have obvious implications for class
or gender solidarity. Like many of the social bandits described by Hobsbawm, the alcohol smugglers represented a route of social mobility and an escape from poverty that did not necessarily coincide with collective action. Moonshiners provided a possible alternative to labor organization and mobilization. As instances of individual economic entrepreneurship they implicitly contradicted both the company's ideology of middle-class morality and cultural reform and the efforts of labor and the left to organize the miners in collective struggle. Similarly, as celebrations of a masculinity rooted in independence, male friendship, and physical strength, moonshining and alcohol consumption, like the tales of the guachuchero, expressed ties among men that excluded and were antagonistic toward women.

Masculinity, Morality, and Labor Politics

Workers' rejection of middle-class norms of respectability based on the ideal of the male head of household and the turbulent masculine culture of the mine often conflicted with the politics of the union and the leftist parties which sought to organize workers into a disciplined movement. The insubordination and rebelliousness expressed in fights inside the mine, absenteeism, gambling, and the fables of the moonshiners reflected an everyday politics separate from and, at times, inimical to the more formal ideological expressions of organized labor and the left. Both the left and organized labor produced their own versions of the company's ideology of middle-class morality and cultural reform and embarked on similar campaigns to transform miners' lifestyles.

The miners' union, led by militants of the Communist party after 1938, insisted upon a particular form of moral improvement that echoed the company's own ideological prescriptions. It regularly condemned excessive alcohol consumption and prostitution and called for discipline from its members based on solidarity and sacrifice in the name of a common struggle. During the 1940s, both the Confederación de Trabajadores de Chile (CTCh) and the Federación Nacional Minera (FNM), the miners' national union, crusaded against alcoholism and gambling, and advocated the education and cultural uplift of workers. In 1938, the CTCh initiated a campaign against gambling, and in a national miners' congress held in Rancagua the FNM made alcoholism a central theme.

The El Teniente miners' union participated vigorously in proselitization against games of chance. In 1941, Despertar Minero editorialized that the union's efforts to educate and raise the cultural level of the workers were failing. One of the principal reasons was the prevalence of gambling, which "destroys our consciousness and morality." The paper assailed the "clandestine gambling tables that exist in abundance in this camp" and suggested that workers leave this "unlucky vice" aside and spend their time instead working on "social problems that confront us, adding their grain of sand to solve them, rather than becoming pitilessly brutish." Similarly, in a column entitled "A Shame That We Must Avoid," Despertar Minero railed against the prevalence of gambling among the camp's youth and young people's "shameful laziness." The paper, echoing the company's own rhetoric, suggested that "once and for all we put an end to this evil so that our youth dedicate themselves to study or work, dignifying their modest homes with strict proletarian morality."
The unions often coincided with the company and the government on recipes for social betterment. Education and cultural improvement were among its major goals. In a column entitled "Struggle and Study, Study and Struggle" the union paper equated education and study with the "proletarian morality" necessary to pursue class struggle effectively. The paper editorialized upon the inauguration of the union's first primary school for adults: "all the workers of Sewell should go to the school to receive the necessary preparation that will place them at the same level of those workers that thanks to tenacity and constancy today are in the vanguard of the Chilean union movement." For the union, culture, intelligence, and education meant "more class consciousness" and provided the means by which workers could "become the teachers and guides of the laboring masses of our country." "Proletarian morality," like middle-class morality, meant the eradication of miners' most commonly practiced cultural activities.

The union encountered the same resistance to its strategies of cultural uplift as did the company. The union paper frequently complained of workers' lack of attendance at night schools and schools for adults and their failure to use the union library. Despertar Minero noted, for example, that "looking around us we note that rarely do compañeros interest themselves in world events, and especially in local and national events. There is a lack of interest in reading the newspapers that defend the people and in discussing social problems. The workers frequent the libraries very little, not knowing that healthy reading orients us and instructs us in the duties that we have and the obligations to our class." The conflict between workers' masculinized work culture of intractable insubordination and the morality of labor and the left crystallized during wildcat work stoppages in the mine. Throughout the 1940s, during the years of the Popular Front governments in Chile, union leaders and Communist party activists had to work hard to reign in miners' constant spontaneous revolts and conflicts. Often union leaders were placed in the position of mediating between groups of insurgent workers and the company in an effort to restore labor peace and maintain productivity in the mine. Miners frequently established their own strike committees to lead wildcat stoppages since union leaders could not legally negotiate or bargain with the company. Similarly, during two major strikes in 1942 and 1946, union leaders and representatives of the leftist parties urged miners to accept government arbitration and intervention. Labor peace and copper production were crucial to the Popular Front's economic and political programs. In assemblies attended by thousands of workers, union leaders and leftist politicians were booed, whistled, and spit at as they attempted to convince the miners to accept government intervention in the strikes.

When workers did absorb the company's messages of cultural uplift and middle-class morality they did not mute their militancy. Instead, workers appropriated the symbols and ideals of middle-class respectability and constructed their own codes of honor, pride, and self-assertion that valorized working-class experience. El Teniente workers affirmed their own dignity in the masculinized vernacular of the mine's tumultuous work culture. In addition, workers' struggles to attain respectability often led them to militant collective action as they pursued the promises of the company's paternalism. Workers who most fully identified with the ideal of the middle-class head of household and who imbibed the company's messages of moral and cultural reform maintained no sense of loyalty to the
company. Instead, the frustration of their aspirations to middle-class status and the constant and deeply felt expressions of racial and class discrimination in the mine and the camps turned these workers to the union and leftist politics. The miners’ union, for example, frequently invoked the figure of the father and husband and the company’s language of responsibility to argue that workers’ movements aimed to enable the miners to fulfill their duties to their families.

Many union leaders were trained in company schools and participated in the company’s network of social and recreational clubs. In these clubs they proved their capacity for leadership and earned workers’ support precisely because of their respectability. Workers who attended schools, be they the company’s or the union’s, became union leaders because workers understood them to be capable. The cultural training offered by the company and its social institutions often prepared workers to participate in the camps’ other major social institution: the union. Union leaders were the workers who most exemplified middle-class morality, as well as the proletarian morality of labor and the left.

A useful example of the contradictory results of the company’s paternalist policies is the life history of the El Teniente worker Eduardo Pérez. Pérez was seventeen when he left the village of Machali to look for work in the neighboring El Teniente copper mine in the 1940s. After five years of working in the mine, during which time he followed a correspondence course with a “US university” offered by the company, he moved to a better job in the construction department, and finally to a series of skilled jobs as a carpenter, electrician, and mechanic in El Teniente’s electrical plant, fulfilling the company’s model of social mobility. During his many years in El Teniente he participated actively in various social clubs and starred on the Sewell soccer team. In many ways Pérez appears to be a company loyalist. He was also, however, a leader of the Sindicato Industrial Coya y Pangal from 1964 to 1968 and a militant of the Socialist party. He proudly claims to have received Socialist Party leader Salvador Allende in his home. Pérez also attended and participated in the founding congress of the Confederación de Trabajadores del Cobre (CTC), the national copper workers’ federation, held in his home town of Machali in 1951.

Pérez tells a wide variety of stories and anecdotes which slip continually between the discourses of an obrero apatronado and of a militant socialist and unionist. He describes with great pride, for example, his good relations with North American jefes, and the way in which he even saved the life of one supervisor, Mr. Turner. He praises the system of American administration that allowed him to rise from a mere laborer to a master carpenter, as well as the opportunities for education offered by the Braden Copper Company. This education, he believes, was far better than Chilean education. He proudly displays his old workbooks, “all with the North American system and form,” and shows off the furniture in his house, “all constructed according to North American principles.” “The United States has been better, has a better cultural level and a better technological level,” he says. He speaks highly of the company administration, which supplied workers with sports and social clubs.

Pérez’s admiration for North American accomplishments and culture seems, however, only to reinforce his nationalism. His notion of Chilean cultural inferiority has radical implications. Discussing the nationalization of the copper mine, Pérez argues that nationalization was necessary in order to allow Chileans
workers’ cultural and social lives and to obtain “what the gringos already had.”

The hardship of work and life in the camps had an important effect on Pérez. He recalls, for example, that life in the camps and the mine was extremely difficult, and contrasts the poverty of workers’ lives with the luxury of the North Americans’ homes. He notes that “in cultural and social life the gringos lived in a form very distinct [from the workers] which made many people dislike the gringos…. If you even looked at the gringo camp they would haul you up to Bienestar to be disciplined, and if you went near it or tried to enter, they would fire you.” These deeply felt inequalities and discriminations, recalled in many oral histories, undermined the efficacy of Braden’s paternalism. Even a worker as enthusiastic about the North American administration as Pérez was could not but feel the hardship of his material situation, the blatant inequalities that he confronted every day in the mine, and the ultimate inaccessibility of the middle-class lifestyle embodied in the lawns, houses, and golf course of the North American managers’ camp. It was, in part, Pérez’s desire to eliminate these inequalities and to emulate North Americans’ perceived social and cultural superiority and middle-class respectability that led to his participation in union activities, his militancy in the Socialist party, and his support for the nationalization of the mine.

Workers like Pérez did participate in “legitimate” cultural and social activities sanctioned by the company. Many joined the recreational clubs that the company established in order to offer alternatives to drinking and gambling. For the company, soccer, boxing, and basketball constituted “hygienic” activities that would contribute to workers’ health and regulate and reorganize their non-work lives. Sports were intended to provide a definition of the uses of the body that was attached to the morality of disciplined work and respectable family life. The meaning sports held for the miners, however, was quite different. In sports, the miners reproduced the combative work culture of the mine and reaffirmed the sense of masculine self-assertion that found expression in other less disciplined pastimes—gambling, drinking, and fighting. In addition, workers who played on soccer teams were often militant unionists and members of leftist parties. Sports clubs created an important solidarity among workers and became a natural seedbed of union leaders. A number of union leaders made their careers in the mine’s sports leagues. As soccer players, they won fame and respect and extended their reputations among other workers. Sports and recreational clubs in the mining camps were spaces in which the two models of masculinity in the camps, the rebellious, challenging, and insubordinate miner and the responsible and respectable breadwinner, coincided.

The overlapping of sports activities with the politics of the union was revealed in a fight that broke out at a soccer game when fans of one team began to hurl insults at one of the players on the opposing team, calling him “scab” and “suck up to the company.” Recreational space and activity could be quickly politicized. Loyalties to a soccer club frequently reinforced miners’ work identity. Workers tended to support the teams that represented their work sections. Baltazar Castro describes how “I and my father were fans of the ‘Abraham Lincoln,’
a club formed by workers from the mine." Another sector belonged to the 'In-
dependiente Mina,' organized by Chilean white-collar workers, crew chiefs, and foremen. And, "the workers of the workshop above ground formed the 'democ-
racia,' ... the empleados (white-collar workers) of the Time Office came together in 'Deportivo Andes.'" The separation of foremen's clubs and workers' clubs reinforced the divisions and antagonisms that prevailed within the mine. As Castro writes, "the workers disrespectfully called the empleados' soccer club the 'pije de sociedad' " and drew a clear distinction between their institutions and the "Andes," rejecting and mocking the middle-class pretensions and status of El Teniente's white-collar workers. The masculinized forms of behavior within the mine and their implications for miners' militancy were strengthened, rather than blunted, in soccer clubs.

Sports clubs, like most social clubs in the mine, helped to weld informal social networks and alliances among workers and to reinforce their masculine identity. The competitions between sports clubs reproduced the competition between cuadrillas and workers within the mine and contributed to the general construction of a masculine identity based on a sense of physical strength and resilience. And, like the other forms of miners' informal culture, sports also excluded women. While miners' participation in soccer clubs may have served the company's purposes by substituting organized recreation for drinking and gambling and by fueling the masculine pride that led workers to produce more in the mine, a good soccer player could become a successful union leader because, like the guachuchero, he exemplified the codes of manhood, the physical strength, courage, and honor that ruled miners' behavior inside and outside the mine. Soccer players who became union leaders embodied the overlapping middle-class and "proletarian" moralities of the company and the union, as well as the miners' workplace codes of undomesticated masculinity.

Conclusion

The mining company's efforts to establish a disciplined and reliable work force and to reform workers' cultural lives were only partially successful. Like any exercise of hegemony, the company's control over workers' labor and everyday lives was, in Raymond Williams' words, "continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressure not all its own." Workers settled in El Teniente, embarked on careers as miners, and formed families, drawn by high wages, work incentives, and the promise of social mobility. In doing so they conformed in some ways to the ideal of the male wage earner and head of household. At the same time, however, they contested the company's efforts to control their labor and lives and built an oppositional culture expressed in a number of overlapping, competing, and contradictory languages of masculinity and class.

Miners' intense sense of masculine pride was rooted in their labor and their capacity to earn high wages. Their affirmations of masculine dignity and respectability emerged as they became fully proletarianized and as wage labor increasingly became a masculine domain with the implementation of the gender ideology of domesticity, and coincided with the company's efforts to establish a permanent and productive labor force. At the same time, the miners' masculinized "manera de ser" represented an appropriation and transgression of
middle-class symbols of manhood and respectability. Miners’ claims to equality and dignity violated the cultural hierarchy of class and valorized working-class experience and status. The potentially subversive aspects of their affirmations of respectability and honor were revealed in the mine’s tumultuous work culture that emphasized a challenging attitude toward supervisors and foremen, independence, and solidarity among workmates. Outside the mine, the miners created forms of social and cultural life that built on and reaffirmed the mine’s codes of manhood. They asserted manliness in activities like drinking and gambling that directly defied the company’s regime of discipline and cultural campaigns in the camps and refused to conform to the company’s ideal of the responsible head of household, causing constant consternation among the company’s social workers.

These constructions of working-class masculinity both contradicted and coincided with labor’s and the efforts of labor on the left to organize workers in a disciplined movement. Workers’ exaltation of independence, appropriation of middle-class symbols, and affirmation of social status won through high wages conflicted with the union’s emphasis on collective action and “proletarian morality.” In the mine, the conflict between miners’ masculine work culture and the programs of labor and the left was expressed in endemic wildcat strikes that challenged both company and union control. Workers’ conflictive work culture and bonds of solidarity did, however, provide the basis for a powerful labor movement in the mine.

The different languages of class and masculinity in El Teniente converged in the sphere of labor politics. Union leaders and leftist militants embodied both the company’s ideology of middle-class morality and the workers’ codes of defiant masculinity. They represented the ways in which workers took seriously the promises of social mobility broadcast by the company and turned to the left and labor to satisfy their aspirations for middle-class status and respectability. Labor and the left’s assertion of a “proletarian morality,” while it conflicted with miners’ informal forms of sociability, resonated to miners’ assertions of working-class masculine dignity. While they conformed to the pressures of proletarianization, the copper miners drew on, refashioned, and contested the company’s ideology of middle-class respectability and social mobility to fashion a notoriously militant labor politics and class identity.

The miners’ two models of manhood, the insubordinate drinker, gambler, and womanizer and the respectable head of household, also coincided in defining masculinity in terms of control over women’s sexuality. As they struggled to assert dignity in their labor and lives in the mining camps either by resisting company authority or by invoking their own respectability, they continued to express the overcoming of alienation in the modern industrial economy in the language of masculine pride. They described their subordination at work and in the camps as loss of control over female sexuality, while asserting their own dignity in terms of both masculine respectability and domination of women, represented by the feminized mine. Expressions of intense masculinity became a means to transcending alienation and expressing class pride and resistance to company authority. Miners who worked to fulfill the ideal of the responsible husband and father also defined masculinity in terms of their capacity to control women’s sexuality and labor within the nuclear family. Their masculine self-respect rested
on their capacity to provide for their families and fulfill the middle-class ideal of the successful patriarch. When they went on strike they phrased their demands in terms of their rights, duties, and necessities as heads of households. These two languages of masculinity overlapped to produce a militant labor politics and political culture in Chile that was based on the exclusion of women from the public sphere and the labor market and on the sexual subordination of women within the nuclear family. The result was a labor movement that reproduced the efforts of the North American company and the state to transform working-class gender relations according to the ideology of domesticity after the 1920s.

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ENDNOTES

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2. See, for example, Hernán Ramírez Necochea, Historia del Movimiento Obrero en Chile: Siglo XIX (Santiago, 1956); James Petras and Maurice Zeitlin, El Radicalismo Político de la Clase Trabajadora Chilena (Buenos Aires, 1969); Jorge Barria, El Movimiento Obrero en Chile (Santiago, 1971); Charles Bergquist, Labor in Latin America (Stanford, 1986). For a critique of the traditional Chilean labor historiography's emphasis on miners see Peter de Shazo, Urban Workers and Labor Unions in Chile, 1902–1927 (Madison, 1983).


4. In 1917, only 22.4% of the El Teniente work force was permanent, and in 1918, 23.8%, according to a study by Alejandro Fuenzalida Grandon, La vida y el trabajo en el Mineral “El Teniente” [Santiago, 1919]. In 1922, of the two-thousand workers hired by the infamous enganche, only 9% stayed on in El Teniente to work. (H. Mackenzie Walker to L.E. Grant, 2 May 1923, Archive of the Braden Copper Company, hitherto referred to as ABCC). The transience of the copper labor force was consistent with Chilean workers’ long history of migrations. Since the nineteenth century laborers had traveled the country from the agricultural regions of the southern and central valleys to the northern nitrate fields, through ports like Valparaiso and Antofagasta, and to urban centers like Santiago in search of work opportunities. Most workers spent time at a number of different jobs in different sectors of the economy. For studies of the nineteenth and early twentieth century work force and migration see: Gabriel Salazar, Labradores, Peones, y Proletarios (Santiago, 1985) and Arnold Bauer, Chilean Rural Society from the Spanish Conquest to 1930 (Cambridge, 1975).
5. See the company paper, *El Teniente*, 1920–24, for descriptions of the company welfare program.

6. June Nash notes a similar attempt to build stable nuclear families in the Bolivian tin mines, where “the beneficial effects of a stable family life in creating a more dependable work force were recognized by the administration of the mines after nationalization.” June Nash, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines* (New York, 1979), p.59.


8. L. E. Grant to Carlos Briones Luco, 6 December 1921, ABCC.


11. For cases of women arrested for illegal abortions see *Juzgado de Letras de Menor Cuantía*, Sewell, Causa No.9926, 23 March 1945, *Juzgado de Letras de Menor Cuantía*, Sewell, Causa No. 6049, 14 July 1940 in Conservador de Bienes y Raíces, Rancagua, hitherto referred to as CBRR.

12. For women arrested for abandoning their husbands see *Juzgado de Letras de Menor Cuantía*, Sewell, Causa No.5458, 5 November 1940, CBRR.

13. For examples of cases of domestic violence see *Juzgado de Letras de Menor Cuantía*, Sewell, Causas No.12047 (13 July 1948), Causa No.6266 (14 November 1941), Causa No.8344 (15 September 1942), Causa No.6146 (1 February 1941), Causa No. 4742 (21 November 1938), Causa No.10.955 (2 September 1946), CBRR.

14. In 1937, almost half of El Teniente miners were married (3503) and 3000 women lived in the camps. *Census de la Braden Copper Company, 1937*, ABCC.


17. Yonne de Souza Grossi describes a similar masculine work culture among Brazilian gold miners, where the company also promoted competitions among workers and work groups. The miners’ discourse of virility promoted by competition divided the miners and stimulated individualist tendencies. At the same time, however, de Souza Grossi argues that this same sense of virility based on hard physical labor created the potential for militant collective action. *Mina de Morro Velho: A Extração do Homen* (Rio de Janeiro, 1981).

18. Oral sources.


20. See, for example, interviews with old miners in the company paper, *Semanario de "El Teniente,"* August 1962.

21. Ibid., pp.11–18.

body is startlingly similar to George Orwell's fascination with British coal miners' physical strength. Writing around the same time as Castro, Orwell described coal miners as "hammered iron statues... splendid men... most of them have the most noble bodies; wide shoulders tapering to slender supple waists, and small pronounced buttocks and sinewy thighs." *The Road To Wigan Pier* (New York, 1958) p.23. A study of British coal miners during the 1950s commented on the ways in which "in the pit itself, among his workmates, the miner is proud of doing his job as a good man should... pride in work is a very important part of the miner's life. Old men delight in stories of their strength and skill in youth." Norman Dennis, Fernando Henriques, Clifford Slaughter, *Coal is Our Life: An Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community* (London, 1956), p.73. Similarly, Michelle Perot notes that with industrialization and proletarianization in France "the symbols of the working class... became more and more masculine: it has been represented by the barrel-chested male worker with broad shoulders, swollen biceps, and powerful muscles." Michelle Perot, "On the Formation of the French Working Class" in Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg eds., *Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton 1986), p.99. Similarly, Eric Hobsbawm has noted that by the 1930s in most of the industrial world the dominant symbol of the working class was a "masculine laborer... naked to the waist." Eric Hobsbawm, *Workers: Worlds of Labor* (New York, 1984), p.90. Also see Joshua B. Freeman, "Hardhats: Construction Workers, Manliness, and the 1970 Pro-War Demonstrations." *Journal of Social History*, vol.26, #4, 725-744, for a discussion of this point in the context of North American construction workers.


24. Ibid., p.39.

25. Ibid., p.89. This miners' pride based on a sense of physical power, work skill, sacrifice, and danger was found in other mining areas around the globe. In the case of North American coal miners, David Corbin notes that "the coal miner was not alienated from his work or product. He took pride in his career—once a miner, always a miner. He possessed a 'proud sense of occupational identity,' that... helped him to define himself and gave him an identity that seemed to be lacking among other industrial workers." *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners 1880-1922* (Urbana, 1981), pp.39-40.


28. Welfare Department, "Indices on Costs of Living with Special Reference to Clothing," 17 May 1940, ABCC.


31. The significance of clothing and appearance to both working-class masculinity and militancy has also been underlined in Michelle Perot's description of class formation in France. She notes that working-class aspirations "crystallize around clothing, which is laden with symbols; it was the most rapidly expanding item within the working-class budget." Perot, "On the Formation of the French Working Class," p.104.
32. Oral sources.

33. Here the direct analogy would be to Peronist culture in Argentina and the celebration of the *descamisados* and *cabecitas negras* in Peronist rhetoric. For a discussion of Peronism's appropriation and inversion of these traditionally pejorative terms for workers see Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946–1976* (Cambridge, 1988), chapter 1.

34. “The miner’s ‘pick’ is the hardest that there is; it breaks the rock to pieces and extracts the [copper] ore.” Quoted in *Pagina Abierta*, 12–25 October 1992.


36. Gonzalo Drago, *Cuentos Mineros* (Santiago, 1941), p.82.

37. Ibid., p. 18. These El Teniente mining tales resemble the mythologies of miners around the world. The superstition regarding a woman entering an underground mine seems to have been shared almost universally. More specifically, the El Teniente miners’ myths are similar to Bolivian tin miners’ belief in the mine spirit, the *tío*, with the crucial difference that the Chilean miners’ spirit is a woman. June Nash has described how Bolivian miners enter into contracts or agreements with the *tío*. In order to seek protection from mine accidents or access to the mine’s riches (depending upon the historical conjuncture), the tin miners engage in various ritual offerings to the *tío*. Like the Bolivian *tío*, El Teniente’s female spirits represented both danger and protection. They punished with accidents, but could be supplicated for protection. Similarly, like the *tío*, they guarded the treasure the miners sought to discover and extract and thus had to be dealt with delicately. Death in the mine could result from crossing the female spirits who guarded a secret treasure.


41. “You see, the worker arrives tired . . . from work and sleeps, gets up, drinks, arrives home drunk . . . he doesn’t have a good relationship with his family, he doesn’t have a good relationship with his wife. . . . Life in the camps is harder because there you noticed more those women that cheated on their husbands and everyone knew that the woman cheated on her husband . . . and we even had a name for this . . . *la boca del fiero.*” This is also the opinion of social workers interviewed during the 1960s who explained workers’ constant discontent with the company and militancy in terms of their anxieties about adultery. Manuel Barrera, “El Conflicto Obrero en el Enclave Cuprífero,” Instituto de Economía y Planificación, Universidad de Chile, 1973.

42. See, for example, Castro, Sewell.


44. Ibid., p.74.

45. Ibid., p.78.

46. See *Departamento de Bienestar Social, Oficina del Trabajo, Nomina de Obreros Despedidos Desde el 1 de Marzo al 31 de Mayo de 1940*, Braden Copper Company and other reports on dismissals for the 1940s, ABCC.
47. "Gancho" literally means "hook," but for the miners it means something like "compaño" or "comarada"—comrade or friend.

48. Fuenzalida, La Vida y el Trabajo en el Mineral "El Teniente" p.113. In interviews old miners also refer to the particular idiom of the mines which only they could understand.

49. Ibid., p.114.

50. For cases of disobedience see lists of firings and suspensions, Braden Copper Company, 1922-1946, ABCC.

51. Ibid.


53. Drago, Cuentos Mineros, p.11.

54. Juzgado de Letras de Menor Cuantía, Sewell, Causa No.6037, 11 December 1940, CBRR.

55. Juzgado de Letras de Menor Cuantía, Sewell, Causa No.11.280, 10 April 1947, CBRR.

56. Despertar Minero, Primera Quincena de Noviembre de 1944.

57. General Manager's Annual Report—1940, Braden Copper Company, ABCC. In his writing on Eigensinn or self-assertion, Alf Lüdtke describes how physical horseplay and practical jokes on the shop floor served German metal workers as a means to take informal breaks in the workday and a way to assert their "self-will" and establish forms of self-respect, as well as an informal collective resistance to the bosses' control. Alf Lüdtke, "Cash, Coffee Breaks, Horseplay: Eigensinn and Politics Among Factory Workers in Germany circa 1900," in Confrontation, Class Consciousness, and the Labour Process, ed. Michael Hanagan and Charles Stephenson (New York, 1986); also see Geoff Eley, "Labor History, Social History, Alltagsgeschichte: Experience, Culture, and Politics of the Everyday—a New Direction for German Social History?" Journal of Modern History 61 (June 1989) for a useful discussion of Lüdtke's work.

58. Juzgado de Letras de Menor Cuantía, Sewell, Causa No.6290, 29 April 1941, CBRR.

59. Juzgado de Letras de Menor Cuantía, Sewell, Causa No.5430, 15 January 1940, CBRR.

60. La Tribuna, 5 March 1942.

61. British coal miners sustained similar codes of honor and solidarity. As one study noted during the 1950s, "Solidarity ... is a very strongly developed characteristic of social relations in mining; it is a characteristic engendered by the nature and organization of coal mining.... A miner's first loyalty is to his 'mates.' To break this code can have serious consequences ... for a miner his whole life, not only his work, can be affected by the actions and words of his fellows. The 'blackleg' miner must be a social outcast in every way, and not just at work." Dennis, Henriques, Slaughter, Coal is Our Life, pp.79-80.


63. Letter to Ana Pino Santibañez, 3 February 1939, ABCC.

64. Braden Copper Company to Hernán Cousiño Tocornal, ABCC, op. cit.

65. H. Mackenzie Walker to W. J. Turner, 6 September 1939, ABCC.
66. Welfare Department, Confidential Memorandum, 28 July 1943, ABCC.

67. Letter to Ana Pinto Santibañez, 3 February 1939, op. cit.

68. Welfare Department, letter to Presidente, Sindicato Industrial Braden Copper Company, “Sewell y Mina,” 4 September 1943, ABCC.


70. Oral sources.

71. See, for example, Juzgado de Letras de Menor Cuantía, Sewell, Causa No.2823, 16 July 1935 and Causa No.2816, 15 July 1935, CBRR.

72. Fuenzalida, La Vida i el Trabajo en el Mineral “El Teniente,” p. 189.

73. Eric Hobsbawm, Bandidos (Barcelona, 1976). For anecdotes and stories of guachucheros in the Sewell popular literature see Castro, Un Hombre por el Camino and Drago, Cobre: Cuentos Mineros.

74. Intendencia de O'Higgins, Documentación Relativa a la Braden Copper Company, Archivo Nacional, Chile.

75. Fuenzalida, La Vida, p.88.

76. Castro, Un hombre por el Camino, p.34.

77. Ibid., p.98.

78. Drago, Cobre: Cuentos Mineros, p.57.


82. See La Hora, 9 March 1938, for a description of the campaign against gambling and La Opinión, 1 March 1938, for a description of the miners’ congress.

83. Despertar Minero, 16 August 1941.

84. Despertar Minero, 23 October 1941.

85. Despertar Minero, 4 September 1941.

86. Ibid.

87. Despertar Minero, 16 August 1941.

88. For accounts of the legal organized miners’ strikes of 1942 and 1946 and the many wildcat work stoppages and strikes during these years see Klubock, “Class, Community, and Gender in the Chilean Copper Mines: The El Teniente Miners and Working-Class Politics, 1904–1951.”
89. The following is based on an oral history interview. I have changed the source’s name.

90. Pierre Bourdieu has argued that it is necessary to examine the social conditions that structure the creation of a demand for sports and the “taste” for particular forms of sport. The social meaning and the actual function of sports are contested fields, related to a whole series of struggles over the legitimate uses of the body. Pierre Bourdieu, “Sport and Social Class,” in Rethinking Popular Culture, ed. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Berkeley, 1991).

91. A significant number of union leaders interviewed had played soccer in a serious way at some point in their lives. At least two former and current union leaders had played soccer professionally. Interestingly, June Nash also found that soccer clubs provided an important source for union leadership in the Bolivian tin mines. Nash argues that soccer players “gain industry-wide recognition for their feats on the soccer field, and this can contribute toward a political and union leadership position.” Juan Lechín Oquedano, the famous leader of the miners’ union, the Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia (FSTMB), and of the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR) was a well-known soccer player prior to his union and political career. Nash, We Eat the Mines, p.107.

92. Juzgado de Letras de Menor Cuantía, Sewell, Causa No.6134, 3 November 1941, CBRR.


94. Ibid.

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Endnotes

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