

Presentation

Dossier on Militancy and Everyday Life: the 60s and 70s in the Southern Cone

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This dossier is the result of the **Militancy and everyday life: the 60s and 70s in the Southern Cone** Symposium, held in Buenos Aires (Argentina) under the auspices of the *Instituto Interdisciplinario de Estudios de Género* (Interdisciplinary Institute of Gender Studies - IIEGE/FFyL/UBA) in September, 2012. The works that comprise it address the social and political militancy of the 1960s and 1970s and the resistance to dictatorships, using different perspectives and disciplines while focusing especially on the oftentimes tense relations between militancy and everyday life, militancy and gender, political violence and militant subjectivity.

The student, worker and youth rebellion dating back to the 1960s, and the forms of counter-culture and social resistance, whose global character is undeniable, were strongly related to the conviction that social and political transformation would have to be radical. This conviction gave shape to certain modes of action and political implication that defined themselves by the use of mass and territorialized public forms of expression, as well as by the gradual radicalization and militarization of social discourses and practices. The 1960s were also marked by a movement towards the centrality of personal experience, exemplified by the feminist movement slogan “the personal is political”.

The situation of women inside these political and social movements is one of the central concerns of the dossier. The works restore the women to the context of militancy so as to give account of their participation in a diversity of scopes and the gender inequalities present within organizations. The intention of the dossier, which focuses on politics based on the everyday, is to offer a view that takes a step back from the heroic figures and looks at the past using other coordinates. Although the militant women had been women of ample political activity, women combatants, women who joined in all of the militancy spaces and made important advances

relative to previous generations and their own peers, thinking of them based on the dimension of their everyday lives allows us to focus on the totality of their lives. In other words, it allows us to place the political character of the everyday at the center of the analysis. It deals with aspects that in the more traditional studies relating to the recent past were generally considered secondary to those that analyzed the political world in a more restrictive sense.

The works that comprise this dossier, on the other hand, pay special attention to the fact that on the horizons of expectations of those involved in militancy in the 60s and 70s there was a strong presence – with an important arc of variations in intensities and emphasis – radicalizing the transforming ideals that would include proposals for changes to subjectivity itself. An example of this is the case of the military-political organizations that worked with the idea of the advent of the *new man* to link the political with the spheres of everyday life and affection. And it must be stressed that the latter were also the object of particular attention.

The gender category constituted itself as an articulating key. Although each of the works evokes different theoretical contributions, providing evidence of the large gamut that now makes up gender studies and feminist theory, gender is present in that notion that 1) demonstrates that sexual identities are not reduced to biology but refer to the social construction of sexual difference; 2) provides evidence that gender identities are the product of representations and forms of power that impose themselves on bodies through social discourses; 3) questions the naturalization of the feminine as an essence or an idea of the woman that subjects her to homogenous and invariable content.

The methodological perspectives of the articles that were presented at the Symposium and are part of this dossier are diverse, forming an interdisciplinary framework with which to think on the recent past. They include tools for the analysis of documentary sources, discourse analysis, interpretation of witnesses, work on theoretical problems, social psychology and oral history.

In this general perspective, the works chosen for publishing in this dossier address the experiences of political militancy in the 1960s and 1970s, centered on specific topics that bring to light the overlap and tense relation of the personal with the political within the diverse leftist and resistance organizations in the Southern Cone. They also deal with the multiple forms of resistance to the repression instigated by the region's dictatorships, based on perspectives that cross over

disciplines and thematic lines, showing the productivity of new ways of looking at this period that stretched to the 1980s.

Alejandra Oberti's text "*As mulheres na política revolucionária. O caso do PRT-ERP na Argentina dos anos 70*" (Women in revolutionary politics. The case of the PRT-ERP in Argentina in the 70s) analyzes the militancy in this organization from a double perspective. On the one hand, the participation of women in the guerrilla, especially the interpellation that the organization carried out and, on the other hand, the preoccupation of the PRT-ERP in viewing revolutionary subjectivity intercrossing everyday life with the political, in a context of constructing a model of militancy in which all aspects of life were implicated.

Mariela Peller's article, "*Vida cotidiana e militância armada nos anos 70 na Argentina: problemas conceituais e hipóteses de leitura*" (Everyday life and armed militancy in 1970s Argentina: conceptual problems and reading hypotheses), examines the conceptualizations of authors who, based on diverse disciplines and perspectives (history, philosophy, Marxism, feminism, among others), raise questions related to the definitions and limits of the everyday in relation to other spheres of human existence. The theoretical path traveled aims at creating tools to reflect on the ties between everyday life and militancy in 1970s Argentina.

Brandi Townsend's work, "*A psique democrática. O gênero, a saúde mental e a militância sob a ditadura de Pinochet*" (The democratic psyche. Gender, mental health and militancy under the dictatorship of Pinochet), analyzes the task of mental health professionals associated with two Chilean NGOs that began at the end of the 1970s to fight against the dictatorship: *Vicaria de la Solidariedad* and *Fundación de Asistencia Social de las Iglesias Cristianas* (FASIC). Based on a perspective linked to a focus on the family, the professionals helped political prisoners and their families to "reconstruct subjectivity", recovering instances of social participation and political projects. Despite this, Townsend shows how the focus adopted resulted in a particular bias, visible in the reports of both teams, which centers principally on the men's problems (political militants who had suffered repression), and through which the similar experiences suffered by women were silenced or relegated.

Leandro Basanta Crespo and Claudia Adrea Bacci's article, "*Norma Arrostito. Mulher política. Sua construção subjetiva a partir da militância montonera*" (Norma Arrostito. Political woman. Her subjective construction based on Montoneran militancy) analyzes the figure of Arrostito on two levels. On the one hand, through the

testimony of her militant companions, it investigates how it was possible that having joined the Montoneros group (Argentine guerilla group) as a founder, she came to be gradually marginalized from its political wing, isolated from her family and in a situation of insecurity and solitude. On the other hand, articles from the favorable press (*La causa peronista* and *El descamisado*) describe the modes through which the organization built her up as a mythical figure for the rest of the militants, above all for the women. On both levels, the authors conclude that Arrostito's condition as woman had played a crucial role.

Silvia Nassif and Verónica Ovejero's "*Mulheres universitárias, militância e vida cotidiana em Tucumán (1969-1972)*" (University women, militancy and everyday life in Tucuman) addresses the student militancy of women in this Argentine province and the impact of this militancy on their daily lives. In a period where in Tucumán (Argentina) there were important popular sector demonstrations against the dictatorship, the women began to go to university and participate politically. By means of oral history techniques, the article analyzes the testimony of militants to understand how its political militancy produced transformations in their everyday lives, among which there is a marked perception of gender inequalities.

Javiera Robles Recabarren's work, "*Clandestinidade e luta armada: um olhar de gênero*" (Clandestinity and armed struggle: a look at gender), studies women's participation in the struggle against the Chilean military dictatorship (1973-1988) in order to understand how gender relations work within militancy, in a context of political violence. Based on the testimony of "Mery", a female militant from the Communist Party's armed wing, the article reflects on the forms through which memory and the story of their own lives configure the identity of the subjects.

Sol Glik presents the text "*À sombra do Condor: arte, resistência e movimentos alternativos transnacionais durante as recentes ditaduras latino-americana (1976-1983)*" (The shadow of Condor: art, resistance and alternative trans-national movements during recent Latin-American dictatorships (1976-1983) in which she investigates the everyday forms of individual and collective resistance developed through the clandestine network of alternative trans-national movements which connected, among others, the experiences of *T.I.T (Taller de Investigaciones Teatrales –Theater Investigation Workshops)* alternative arts groups in Argentina, and the Brazilian group *Viajou Sem Passaporte –Traveled Without a Passport*), both linked to leftist militancy. Based on a trans-disciplinary perspective, the work not only

broadens the geographical horizon of the study, but also its thematic possibilities, approaching them as transnational networks of cultural resistance, implanted within the complex, repressive scenario created by the 1970s dictatorships in the Southern Cone.

Ana Brancher's text "*Ser revolucionária e escritora no Cone Sul durante os últimos governos ditatoriais – o gênero nas letras*" (To be a revolutionary and writer in the Southern Cone during latter-day dictatorial governments – gender in literature) allies history to literature in a comparative analysis of the works and lives of women writers from the Southern Cone countries who were present as writers and militants in the leftist movements and, at the same time, as women, lived this moment in which the second wave of feminism began to appear on the scene in these countries. The text presents a panorama that shows the importance of women writers, so forgotten in literary annals, to that moment of confrontations.

Finally, in "*Movidas pelo afeto: três mulheres na resistência à ditadura no Brasil, Paraguai e Bolívia (1954-1989)*" (Driven by affection: three women in resistance to the dictatorship in Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia), Tamy Amorim da Silva and Cristina Scheibe Wolff discuss the trajectories of three human rights activists: Carmen Lara Castro, from Paraguay, Therezinha Zerbini, from Brazil and Loyola Guzmán Lara, from Bolivia. In spite of their different trajectories, these women's stories intersect at the moment they embrace the human rights cause and found different organizations which were fundamental in the reporting of human rights violations committed by the military regimes in the three countries and their subsequent recovery. Using gender as an awareness strategy, and often as a type of protection, these women turn their private pain into a public flag for struggle and resistance.

The debate generated in the Symposium held in September 2012 was merely a beginning for a wider discussion that the publication of this dossier in InterThesis makes possible and in which all of you are invited to participate.

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