

# VIII LATIN AMERICAN CONGRESS ON GENDER AND RELIGION

## ORGANIZATION

Daniéli Busanello Krob • Marli Brun • Sabrina Senger





VIII LATIN AMERICAN  
CONGRESS  
ON GENDER AND RELIGION



# VIII LATIN AMERICAN CONGRESS ON GENDER AND RELIGION

**Freedom – Identity – Criticality**

## ORGANIZATION

Daniéli Busanello Krob • Marli Brun • Sabrina Senger



São Paulo, 2025

Copyright © Recriar Publisher, 2025.  
All rights reserved and protected by Law No. 9,610, of February 19, 1998.

<b>General Management</b>	Iago Freitas Gonçalves
<b>Editorial Team</b>	André Yuri Abijaudi Flávio Santana Giovanna Sarto Iago Freitas Gonçalves Matheus Carmo
<b>Responsible Editor</b>	Giovanna Sarto
<b>Text Preparation</b>	Flávio Santana
<b>Layout and Graphic Design</b>	Talita Almeida

<b>Editorial Board</b>	Dr. Elisa Rodrigues (UFJF) Dr. Karen Colares (FAJE) Dr. Marina Correa (PUC-SP) Dr. Odja Barros (EST) Dr. Sandra Duarte (PUC Goiás)
------------------------	--

### International Cataloging in Publication Data (CIP)

B894l BRUN, Marli. VIII Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion / Daniéli Busanello Krob; Marli Brun; Sabrina Senger. São Paulo: Recriar Publisher, 2025.  244 p. 21 cm.  Include bibliographic references ISBN: 978-65-5372-172-2  1. Feminist theology 2. Gender studies 3. Latin America  I. Título  CDD: 260
--

# Sumário

<b>Presentation</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Sabrina Senger</i>	
<i>Marli Brun</i>	
<i>Daniéli Busanello Krob</i>	
<b>Chapter 1. Clandestine freedoms</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Marilú Rojas Salazar</i>	
<b>Chapter 2. The choice for criticality: “another world is possible”</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Rosângela Angelin</i>	
<b>Chapter 3. Gender and religion: freedom-identity-criticality</b>	<b>33</b>
<i>Silvia Regina de Lima Silva</i>	
<b>Chapter 4. Weaving existence with broken and burned threads in Abya Yala</b>	<b>41</b>
<i>Sofía Chipana Quispe</i>	
<b>Chapter 5. Some ecofeminist proposals for the construction of critical and change processes</b>	<b>57</b>
<i>Cinthia Méndez Motta</i>	
<b>Chapter 6. Orfa, the woman who returns to her ancestral tradition: a black and feminist hermeneutical reading of Ruth 1</b>	<b>69</b>
<i>Maricel Mena-López</i>	
<b>Chapter 7. The truth that bodies communicate</b>	<b>89</b>
<i>Angélica Bernate Rojas</i>	
<b>Chapter 8. The canaanite woman’s ministry that facilitated the understanding of salvation in Matthew (15.21-28)</b>	<b>99</b>
<i>Mercedes L. García Bachmann</i>	
<b>Chapter 9. Gender identities and sexual diversity: a genealogy on policies, rights and knowledge production</b>	<b>119</b>
<i>Andrea S. Musskopf</i>	
<b>Chapter 10. Women in the brazilian semi-arid region: Participation, autonomy and freedom in the construction of environmental justice</b>	<b>143</b>
<i>Waneska Bonfim</i>	

<b>Chapter 11. Mobility of brazilian women in the guianas: the connection between migration and domestic violence</b>	<b>155</b>
<i>Osvaldina dos Santos Araujo</i>	
<b>Chapter 12. "Free to come and go: migration, rights, and work" – a colombian perspective</b>	<b>169</b>
<i>Flor Esther Sánchez Murcia</i>	
<b>Chapter 13. Feminist theories, care practices and religion: an (im)possible meeting?</b>	<b>181</b>
<i>Liége Costa da Silva</i> <i>Manueli Tomasi</i> <i>Rosemarie Gartner Tschiedel</i>	
<b>Chapter 14. Identities, sociabilities and diversities in brazilian contemporaneity</b>	<b>191</b>
<i>Celso Gabatz</i> <i>Marcelo Ramos Saldanha</i>	
<b>Chapter 15. Gender, feminisms, religion and sustainability</b>	<b>205</b>
<i>Alvori Ahlert</i> <i>Graziela Rinaldi da Rosa</i>	
<b>Chapter 16. Yabás: the black and feminine sacred in dialogue with the epistemologies of macumbas</b>	<b>223</b>
<i>Indiara Tainan</i> <i>Lucilene Athaide</i> <i>Margarete Fagundes Nunes</i> <i>Yalorixá Isabel Cristina Passos (Mãe Bel de Oyá)</i>	
<b>About the Authors</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>Subject Index</b>	<b>241</b>

# Presentation

*Sabrina Senger  
Marli Brun  
Daniéli Busanello Krob*

With great joy we present the work that gathers memories and productions from participants of the VIII Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion of Faculdades EST, held from August 22 to 25, 2023, in the city of São Leopoldo (RS), Brazil. The event is promoted by the Gender and Religion Program (PGR-EST) and by the Gender and Religion Research Center (NPG), of the Graduate Program in Theology at Faculdades EST, and takes place every two years.

The Congress is part of the project “Dismantling Fundamentalisms: Gender Justice as a Path to a Dignified Life”, developed by the Gender and Religion Program at EST (PGR-EST) and supported by Act Church of Sweden. Furthermore, the eighth edition was funded in part by the Research Support Foundation of the State of Rio Grande do Sul – FAPERGS, and benefited from the mobilization of human resources through the Gender Justice and Women’s Empowerment Program – which is part of the Department for Theology, Mission, and Justice of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF); and through the Latin America Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

The realization of the Latin American Congresses on Gender and Religion has demonstrated with each edition its

relevance and expertise in articulating knowledge from the academic field – in its various areas, with the religious field, social and feminist movements and groups, fair and solidarity economy, and expressions of art and culture. In addition to fulfilling a role of bringing these areas of knowledge closer together, knowledge is also produced around the thematic axes, contributing to the discussion of gender, religion, justice, and rights in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The 2023 edition was marked by the face-to-face reunion after the pandemic period, and had as thematic axes: Freedom – Identity – Criticality. This conceptual triad organized the debates and proposed methodologies, provoking participants to critically reflect on theological practices and productions, systems of gender oppression, and contemporary challenges to social, environmental, and epistemic justice.

The axis of Freedom was discussed from the perspective of bodies and territories fighting for dignity and autonomy, emphasizing the tensions and violence imposed by religious and political fundamentalisms. The axis of Identity sought to understand identity diversities as forces of resistance, especially considering markers of race and ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and spiritualities. Finally, the axis of Criticality revisited the legacy of Freirean pedagogy and Southern epistemologies to reaffirm the collective construction of transformative knowledge and practices, from a place of dialogue, denunciation, and community reconstruction.

With the participation of approximately 350 people from various countries in Latin America, South Africa, Europe, and the United States, the congress promoted 16 Working Groups, as well as conferences, panels, artistic performances, and spiritual spaces. The collaborative methodology and the dialogue

between academic, popular, and theological knowledge constituted fundamental pillars of the event.

The texts gathered in this collection point to the diversity of voices, theoretical perspectives, and political engagements that characterized the VIII Congress. Among the topics addressed are ecofeminism and feminist theologies, environmental justice, Black and Indigenous epistemologies, migrations, gender diversity and sexual dissidences, and criticism of patriarchal structures present in all spheres of our social relations.

The contribution of Dr. Marilú Rojas Salazar, in *Libertades clandestinas*, proposes a theological-feminist critique of the normative power of religious discourses. Dr. Rosângela Angelin, in turn, reflects on the construction of criticality as a horizon for transformative praxis. In direct dialogue with the event's theme, Dr. Silvia Regina de Lima Silva proposes an intertwined reading of the categories freedom, identity, and criticality.

From an Andean and decolonial perspective, Sofia Chipana Quispe weaves Indigenous female resistance as a spiritual and political gesture. The text by Ma. Cinthia Méndez Motta proposes ecofeminist paths to confront the civilizational crisis, while Dr. Maricel Mena López carries out a Black and feminist hermeneutical reading of the narrative of Ruth, highlighting Orpah's role as a character who returns to her ancestral roots.

Pa. Angélica Bernate Rojas addresses the communicative dimension of bodies as a theological and political locus. Dr. Mercedes L. García Bachmann revisits the ministry of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15, as a hermeneutical key to understanding salvation. In a genealogical analysis, Dr. Andrea S. Musskopf traces the emergence of policies and rights related to sexual and gender diversity. The struggle of women in the

Brazilian semi-arid region is addressed by Ma. Waneska Bonfim, who articulates participation, autonomy, and environmental justice. Dr. Osvaldina dos Santos Araujo examines the intersections between migration and gender violence in the Guianas. Ma. Flor Esther Sánchez Murcia contributes a Colombian perspective on migration, labor, and rights through an intersectional approach.

The collective article by Liége Costa da Silva, Manuelli Tomasi, and Rosemarie Gartner Tschiedel investigates the tensions and convergences between feminist theories, practices of care, and religion. Drs. Celso Gabatz and Marcelo Ramos Saldanha explore identities and contemporary sociabilities in contexts marked by diversity and conflict. The text by Alvori Ahlert and Graziela Rinaldi da Rosa articulates the themes of gender, religion, and sustainability in a critical key. Finally, Indiara Tainan, Lucilene Athaide, Margarete Fagundes Nunes, and Isabel Cristina Passos present a reflection on the Yabás as expressions of the Black and feminine sacred, in dialogue with the epistemologies of the macumbas.

Together, these texts offer a diverse and powerful contribution to the transformation of the structures and relationships that produce exclusion, violence, and oppression. The work aims not only to record the congress debates, but also to contribute to strengthening research and action networks committed to gender justice and the construction of dignified, just, and diverse relationships.

This work is, thus, an invitation to critical deepening and intercultural dialogue. It is hoped that the reflections gathered here will inspire new pedagogical, political, and spiritual practices in favor of dignity, equity, and life in fullness.

**Faculdades EST – Gender and Religion Program  
São Leopoldo, April 2025.**

CHAPTER 1.

## Clandestine freedoms

*Marilú Rojas Salazar*

*“And I hope that at this very hour,  
which could very well be dawn,  
someone can continue talking – here and there,  
or anywhere else –  
about the birth of the idea of freedom”  
(María Zambrano).*

### Introduction

When I was asked to talk about *freedom*, I immediately became concerned – What could I say about freedom? If it is assumed to be an inherent characteristic of the beings that inhabit this world, however, freedom is a demand that is becoming increasingly latent in feminist movements and women’s movements in general: Freedom to walk the streets at any time, freedom to live, freedom to decide about my corporality, freedom to not be captive or harassed... As the days passed, a recurring thought came along with freedom, and it was clandestinity. Together with clandestinity, came to my mind-body-heart the bodies of the disappeared companions, the clandestine bodies of feminicidal violence, the bodies of trafficked girls, the bodies in clandestine graves that cry out for justice, and the fear

I have experienced walking alone along the streets at any time. The question that arises is: What does the debate about freedom represent in a country where more than 14 women are killed every day, in a country where women and girls are kidnapped and sold as merchandise? What does freedom mean for the trans women who are putting their bodies on the line to prevent mining and the exploitation of aquifers? What does freedom mean for a poor, black, indigenous woman who cannot provide for her family? There is no doubt that freedom has its privileges, I myself speak from them – and this is the limit of my discourse in the midst of a conference on religion and gender like the one we are now attending.

The times we live in now are times in which we are once again experiencing a kind of freedom in clandestinity, at least in my country, because political and religious systems are returning to politically and religiously correct fundamentalisms, and freedom has a price to be paid – or it is chosen to live in clandestinity. And the price is life, a body thrown into a dumpster, or forced disappearance. What are we willing to pay to be free?

There is talk of freedom of critical thought in feminism and queer/cuir theories. There is talk of freedom to make critical gender hermeneutics. There is talk of freedom of speech. Academic freedom. Sex-gender freedoms. Freedom in love. Freedom in desire. Freedom in relationships... but do we really have freedom? When our gender theologies and our feminist theologies are turned into “*agenda*” or they become categories that are saleable for the highest price, be it an agency that promises us subsidies, an NGO that offers funding, or a collective that, to be taken seriously, needs to include the gender category among its presentation cards and be politically correct? On the one hand, there is a process of political “institutionalization” of

gender theories, and on the other, there is a growing disdain within religious institutions for those who advocate them. Thus, clandestinity appears as the media space that cradles freedom.

## **Clandestine freedoms**

In the field of Private Law, clandestinity is especially related to possession; That is, one that cannot be known by the true owner, and with marriage, when it is not accompanied by the publicity formalities that the law requires or in the sense of a clan as an extended family. The marriage between capitalism and Christianity has engendered the most extreme forms of racist, sexist, and elitist violence, among many others, as states Claudia von Werlhof.<sup>1</sup> Clandestinity then emerges against the systemic nature of capitalist patriarchy and neo-fundamentalist Christianity to foster freedoms. Paraphrasing María Galindo who appeals to bastard feminism<sup>2</sup>, I dare to call freedom, which I prefer to call freedoms as bastard and clandestine, because it is in clandestinity that freedoms emerge, and not to remain hidden, but to fight for recognition in public spaces, even at the cost of the lives of bodies. The advantage of clandestinity is that it does not have an institutionalized citizenship card, but rather escapes malecratic structures<sup>3</sup> whether they are called churches, universities or political structures of government. Clandestinity does not allow the colonization of freedoms, and is on permanent alert against the domestication of critical thinking. Werlhof makes a sharp criticism of the Western concept of freedom, since this is based on the lack of freedom of someone for the freedom of someone else, and argues that Western freedom is

---

1. Von Werlhof, 2015, p. 65.

2. Galindo, 2022.

3. Galindo, 2022, p. 209.

not beneficial to women, to people of gender diversity, to people living with disabilities or racialized people, or to nature itself; not even to men.

To find our own freedom, we in the West would first have to give up our freedom of private property. Only then would there arise an opportunity for respect for the freedom of others, and for the world to be born without having to fight for it, without it needing to be artificially produced... What can you tell me about the state of freedom within your communities today?<sup>4</sup>

The artificial construction of freedom has led us to the structuring of free states and malecratics churches who now govern us for the sake of a colonial, gagged and whitewashed freedom. If we know that freedom is an artificial construct, then we need to reflect on a deconstructive proposal for freedoms from a feminist and gender perspective. But freedom has a place, which is not the state, nor the academy, and even less the institutions. Its place is clandestinity. And I'm not thinking of going back into the "closet", but rather of using clandestinity as a heuristic tool of subversion, as it has been used by epistemic revolutions throughout history.

The freedoms within feminism transcend, says Gisela Kosak, but include fully owning their own bodies – sexually diverse bodies, black bodies, racialized bodies, fat bodies, or bodies with disabilities – , central struggle of grassroots feminist activism focused on issues such as femicide, sexual and reproductive rights, rape and harassment. And these struggles emerge in the clandestine spaces of the margins, where they acquire identity and citizenship, a citizenship that is not official, but clandestine.

---

4. Von Werlhof, 2015, p. 185.

Love, desire, coexistence, having a place to sleep and something to eat are matters absolutely linked to freedom in everyday life decisions, which justifies the militant attention and passion they receive. However, freedom must necessarily be considered as a safe space for speech and writing, as an invention of reality from political and religious practice, as a space of solidarity in the midst of inevitable differences. However, these spaces or interstices are produced again in clandestinity, since it is there that they fail to be co-opted by neocolonial epistemologies. The reaffirmation of freedom through feminism is a priority in this era of political-religious extremism and the undermining of pluralism in the name of causes such as “the homeland”, “the poor”, “the true people”, “the true church”, and “legitimate governments”. Feminism without aesthetic, political, philosophical, theological and everyday freedom is degraded into fanatical militancy or bureaucratic exercise and is co-opted by authoritarian options.<sup>5</sup>

Sofía Mosqueda states in her reflection on freedom that: “The normative struggle for recognition and access to the full exercise of autonomy is a kind of paradox today. While most feminist movements are pushing for the legalization of abortion, there is disagreement when it comes to the commodification of female bodies: prostitution, pornography, surrogacy. Theoretical positions are divided between liberals and radicals, diverting attention only in discourse to the enormous wave of violence we are suffering in the country, and with it the automatic demand that is placed as urgent: do not kill us”<sup>6</sup>. So, for thousands of women in Mexico, as well as in Latin America

---

5. Kosak Rovero, 2021.

6. Mosqueda, 2019.

and the Caribbean, freedom means being alive. I'm here to talk about that freedom today, the right to live as a woman, a black woman, a fat woman, a lesbian, or a trans woman—simply a woman who is alive today. And being alive often means living in clandestinity.

### **The Ruâh has sent me to proclaim freedom to the captives (Is, 61.1)**

Freedom is held captive by our states and systems of government, captive by our own feminist currents of thought, and by our own gender theories. I confess that as I write these lines, my freedom is captive to what I'm saying. Freedom is captive to the market economy, and I recall Marcela Lagarde's quote: "Women's freedom begins with their pockets"<sup>7</sup> If we can pay our bills, we are free. Freedom is also held captive by language, we are increasingly restricted from speaking our words correctly without causing animosity among ourselves. And I wonder if it is freedom that is captive or are we the ones who are captive to our own theories and activism?

For freedom to be good news, it will have to be a nomadic figure, following Braidotti's proposal<sup>8</sup>, she raises "the categorization of the nomad in terms of figuration using a concept already defined by Haraway. In short, a figuration is nothing more than a conceptual character; it is neither an essence nor a transcendental, but rather multiple, changing entities... The nomad is, therefore, a figuration, a multiple, complex, contradictory conceptual character, similar to Haraway's cyborg, Anzaldúa's

---

7. Lagarde, 2001, p. 91-92.

8. Braidotti, 2000.

mestiza, Wittig's lesbian"<sup>9</sup>, to the bastard of Galindo or to the sore of Piedade<sup>10</sup> and the slunt and migrant of Carolina Meloni. Freedom as a clandestine figuration takes a political dimension against the fear imposed by neocolonization and becomes an epistemic category of subversion contrary to all captivity.

In this congress, where gender and religion clandestinely love each other, let us liberate the freedom that is built in the interstices of each discussion table, in every corner where we dialogue, in every space where our bodies come together to be politically incorrect, and let us build clandestine theologies, not colonized, not muzzled, nor domesticated. Freedom for the captives is the freedom to be who we are: feminists, lesbians, trans, queer, crip, gay, bisexual, weird, fat or black, slunt or mixed-race – that's who we are, and we who are, will proclaim with our bodies that we are news good, and good news for everyone.

## References

- ANZALDÚA, Gloria. *Light in the Dark*. Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality. USA: Durke University Press, 2015.
- BRAIDOTTI, Rosi. *Sujetos nómades*. Corporización y diferencia sexual en la teoría feminista contemporánea. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2000.
- GALINDO, María. *Feminismo Bastardo*. Ciudad de México: Editorial Mantis, 2022.
- HARAWAY, Donna. *Manifiesto Cíborg*. 3. ed. Madrid: Kaótica Libros, 2021.
- KOSAK ROVERO, Gisela. La libertad en el feminismo. *Letras Libres*, 30 mar. 2021. Available at: <https://letraslibres.com/politica/la-libertad-en-el-feminismo/>.

---

9. Meloni, 2022, p. 251-252.

10. Piedade, 2021

- LAGARDE, Marcela. *Claves feministas para la negociación en el amor*. Managua: Puntos de encuentro, 2001.
- MELONI, Carolina. *Feminismos Fronterizos*. Mestizas, Abyectas y Perras. 2. ed. Madrid: Kaótica Libros, 2022.
- MOSQUEDA, Sofía. Una reflexión feminista sobre la libertad. *Nexos*, 07 feb. 2019. Available at: <https://economia.nexos.com.mx/una-reflexion-feminista-sobre-la-libertad/>.
- PIEIDADE, Vilma. *Doloridad*. Buenos Aires: Mandacaru, 2021.
- VON WERLHOF, Claudia. *¡Madre Tierra o Muerte!* Reflexiones para una teoría crítica del patriarcado. México: El rebozo, 2015.

## CHAPTER 2.

# The choice for criticality: “another world is possible”<sup>1</sup>

*Rosângela Angelin*

### **Initial considerations**

The Latin American Congresses on Gender and Religion have been spaces for encounters, experiences, exchanges of experiences and significant awakenings in the lives of all people who, directly or indirectly, come into contact with the event. People from various parts of the world come together and create a true rainbow of diversity, colors, pain, dreams and concrete proposals of love and dignity for humanity. Through stories, sharing, laughter, tears, dances, songs, prayers and arts, it is

---

1. The phrase “another world is possible” was conceived at the 1st World Social Forum, held in the city of Porto Alegre/RS (Brazil), in 2001. The Forum was created by social movements and civil society organizations, in contrast to the World Economic Forum, held in Davos (Switzerland), which discusses issues related to globalized capitalism. “The World Social Forum expresses the fight against the neoliberal offensive, debating the impact of globalization on people’s lives. It was created as an environment for democratic convergence for reflections, analyses, formulation of proposals, exchange of experiences and articulation of social movements, networks and NGOs. The 1st World Social Forum was held in January 2001, in Porto Alegre (RS) with the participation of more than 20 thousand people from 117 countries, who spread out in self-organized workshops, seminars, conferences, testimony sessions, cultural activities and deliberative plenary sessions” (World Social Forum, [s./a.]).

possible to revive, perhaps, one of the most beautiful things that *co-move* the collective of human beings: the lucidity and hope that “another world is possible”, because, in these days, we live in “another possible world”.

The VIII Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion takes place after a time of severe hardship for humanity – and many of these hardships were especially worsened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is one of the first in-person events to take place in 2023. The feeling is one of great emotion in the (re)encounters and, at the same time, a unique joy in being able to look into the eyes of loved ones again and those who became loved after the Congress; being able to smile and hug was a moment of unique experience. The Congress was a (re)encounter of people who dream similar dreams, who are willing to truly stand by vulnerable groups; a meeting of people who believe – with responsibility and affection – that “another world is possible”.

The themes proposed by the Congress included: “freedom, identity and critical thinking” and served to permeate the exchanges and experiences of the congress participants. Therefore, the reflection that underpins this text encompasses “criticality” and is divided into two parts: Firstly, the importance of making choices that strengthen the journey in a society where chaos in the face of humanitarian values seems to take over is addressed, and secondly, the considerations focus on bringing elements about “criticality” to understand the processes of humanization of society and taking co-responsibility for them.

## Some possible choices

The people who participated in the Congress represented the most beautiful diversity of human, cultural and identity-based people. While this diversity differentiates them, there are many points of convergence of values and sharing among them, which are immediately evident: They all have an immeasurable love for humanity, for people made vulnerable by capitalist and patriarchal society; they all bring with them experiences to share and, at the same time, are open to listening to others. All these people make choices in their lives out of love and courage, but also out of resistance and fighting for “another possible world”.

The choice of “love” for humanity ends up also being reflected in the choice of “courage”. It takes courage to love. The love referred to here is not romantic love but love for humanity that inhabits the same planet and that has the right to live well without basic concerns about the minimum existential and/or fear of the most diverse forms of violence that may be exposed due to their condition of sex, gender, age or any other differences with the potential to transform into inequality. In this context, it is essential not to confuse differences with inequalities. Inequalities are generated by processes of stigmatization and disrespect for differences, on the threshold of disrespect and violence against people’s dignity<sup>2</sup>, as is the case with women, the LGBTIQ+ community and the black population. It is necessary that love for humanity be present to the point of providing identity recognition for these audiences, as well as the redistribution of income for those who are in a situation of vulnerability and/or economic and legal vulnerability.

---

2. Angelin; Hahn, 2019.

In this sense, the philosopher Axel Honneth, working on the need for identity recognition of people who, according to him, are part of the conflict – which announces problems of non-realization of rights – states that there are three dimensions of recognition towards the moral evolution of the individual: love – resulting from emotional connections that motivate self-confidence and friendship, that is, love promotes reciprocal recognition between individuals; the right – which represents legal relationships, originating from relationships permeated by love and which, in turn, remind everyone that they have an obligation towards each other; and solidarity – which involves social interaction, where people are reciprocally interested in different ways of life, being fundamental to social life.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, this “love” that permeates social relations requires a lot of “courage” to (re)construct ways of loving that are not oppressive, nor generate suffering. This courage, much more than a rhetoric of language, demands from each person changes that transcend the dominant culture. In the words of Renato Russo: “To have kindness is to have courage”<sup>4</sup>.

Another possible choice, made by each and every person present at the Congress, is the choice of “resistance”: Even though it is at different levels, each person present, every day, chooses to resist many forms of oppression, such as patriarchy, racism, xenophobia, fundamentalism, disrespect, veiled oppression, cursed words and an exclusionary economy. For women, for example, it is necessary to resist daily accusations that they are not good enough at what they do; that this or that is not a place where women can or should be; resist accusations that

---

3. Honneth, 2003.

4. *Há tempos*”, a song by Brazilian songwriter Renato Russo (Legião Urbana).

they are hysterical or exaggerated when they express their opinions, among many other naturalized situations.<sup>5</sup> It is important to highlight that the processes of “resistance” come in various forms, from individual and collective aspects of human resistance, always bearing in mind that “compassion is strength”<sup>6</sup>.

Finally, a third possible choice is to “fight”. Resisting is also fighting; fighting is exposing oneself, denouncing, having the courage to announce better days, to announce “another possible world,” all out of love and compassion for humanity. There are moments of individual resistance and, in turn, also moments of collective resistance. Thus, social struggles are part of the demands of collectives that, together, seek a place in society, be it spatial, identity recognition or income redistribution.

These struggles are configured as processes organized through social groups, among them, social movements that arise as a response to a central conflict that occurs in society. Alan Touraine, when discussing social movements, states that their function is to question social classes, abolish processes of domination, break with hierarchies and, furthermore, serve as a moral protest<sup>7</sup>. Alberto Melucci defines collective struggle actions as being a “sign”, indicating profound transformations in the logic of functioning of complex societies.<sup>8</sup> These actions and struggles of social movements announce possible changes within society and end up forcing power to become visible, to “see” and consider the needs of the people.

---

5. Resistance processes are more robust and effective when people are united in pursuit of similar goals, such as social movements and, in the case of women, feminist movements (Gohn, 2010).

6. Excerpt from the song ‘Há tempos’ by Renato Russo.

7. Touraine, 1999.

8. Melucci, 2001.

It can be said that the main advances in rights in society were born from organized struggles by the people who, in search of dignity, demanded and continue to demand rights and guarantees. Thus, social movements were and are largely responsible for influencing the creation and expansion of human rights. This shows that, without social movements, there is no democracy. Democratic regimes presuppose structural transformations in society in favor of equality among human beings. Building democratic societies without listening to the parties affected by their dignity, due to the lack of rights and conditions that generate dignity, does not produce the results of real social change.<sup>9</sup>

In the Brazilian case, theoretically the 1988 Federal Constitution announces the goals of the democratic rule of law – the political regime adopted by Brazil – and will announce four major blocks of actions that must be undertaken by the government and the people, as set out in article 3:

Art. 3º The fundamental objectives of the Federative Republic of Brazil are: I – to build a free, fair and supportive society; II – to ensure national development; III – to eradicate poverty and social marginalization and reduce social and regional inequalities; IV – to promote the well-being of all, without prejudice based on origin, race, sex, color, age or any other forms of discrimination.<sup>10</sup>

As seen above, these actions corroborate the main objectives of the struggles waged by social movements in Brazil and in various parts of the world. It is necessary to continue fighting for human rights, as these are important contributions to the realization of human dignity. However, it is necessary to keep

---

9. Angelin; Hahn, 2019.

10. Brasil, 1988.

in mind the temporal, local, cultural and economic context that surrounds such rights, so as not to fall into the fallacious trap of merely affirming or recognizing them. More is needed: they need to be made effective.

The responsibility of building “another possible world,” assumed by the people who are part of the VIII Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion, presupposes tireless work to ensure that demands for dignity are respected and recognized in all spaces, whether public or private. It is a very arduous journey; we fight daily against violence of all kinds, which affects not only people’s bodies, but also their minds, their knowledge, and their existence. We must fight every day to not lose the little freedom we have gained. We must fight, even knowing that we will only advance a little – but a little is a lot for those who need it. We cannot forget that it was in this way, little by little, that people were building themselves and becoming more human.

### **Criticality in the processes of humanity**

“Another world is possible,” but it requires effort – however, not only effort. It requires love – but it is not only with love that new realities are built. It requires, above all, something very special: that the world and the realities seen and experienced are permeated by “criticality”. This was one of the “invitations” made by the VIII Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion. People from various parts of the world accepted the invitation and were present in a process of exchanges and sharing of experiences, stories and academic research guided by critical thinking.

“Criticality” requires taking critical positions toward certain topics or contexts. It is not necessarily a matter of

judgment, but rather the possibility of looking at realities in a more comprehensive way, since realities are complex situations that bring with them factors which, if not analyzed in a more forceful and responsible way, will not be understood in the details that make them up and influence the final outcome. There are many intersections that need to be revealed. Therefore, “criticality” presupposes “complexity”, in order to avoid evaluating situations and realities in simplistic ways. As Edgar Morin states, “complexity is a problem, it is a challenge, it is not an answer”. Complexity means everything that is interconnected, that is woven together by society; therefore, it generates uncertainty and the end of closed and absolute knowledge.<sup>11</sup> That is why complexity is so challenging and uncomfortable, but at the same time it can be emancipatory, because it enables a more comprehensive and critical perspective.

“Criticality,” permeated by complexity, is a “choice” and, perhaps, one of the central choices that encompasses all the others. It is a challenging choice, because it demands from each person greater openness to look at the world, diversity, and themselves with all the complexity and paradoxicality present. Perceiving the environment with “criticality” is an exercise that reveals the hegemonic, capitalist, and patriarchal neoliberal power, which moves with the intention of dominating people and the natural environment, without providing spaces for reflection and criticality. Quite the contrary, movements and people who exercise criticality are “badly regarded” and “fought against” by the hegemonic power. It is not expressly stated, but it is forbidden to dream and build “another possible world” where everyone is included and not integrated.

---

11. Morin, 2000, p. 495.

This is why “criticality” is uncomfortable for the hegemonic power and, in a certain way, it is also uncomfortable for each of us, since it takes people out of their comfort zone and demands responsibility based on what they perceive through the eyes of criticality. It leads to the insistent reflection of some structuring ideas that have to do not only with the individual, but with issues that involve humanity: what kind of world do we want? How can we build it in the face of patriarchal, misogynistic, capitalist, racist, inhumane, and violent foundations?

“Criticality” can be seen as a lens through which to observe the world, to feel it, to be in it and, at the same time, to transform the *status quo*. Paulo Freire insistently emphasizes the need to develop critical thinking through reflection. For him, all critical training leads to the development of people capable of analyzing their social, historical and cultural realities and, from there, creating possibilities for transforming them. Critical thinking and action lead to the autonomy and emancipation of human beings.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, “criticality” involves “seeing” and “understanding” the world and realities through reflection, which in turn leads to transformative “action”. “Seeing” the world without disguises. Revealing the reality of human geography, especially in places of oppression, submission, and exclusion. “Understanding” and critically reflecting on the way in which power manifests itself in people’s lives and bodies, whether through economic, religious, social, and/or political orders. Finally, through the critical exercise of seeing and understanding the world, one can create possibilities for “acting” to transform realities.

---

12. Freire, 1996.

The biblical passage that announces that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26)<sup>13</sup> meets this critical and responsible process of transformations. The “action” – the “works” – configure the ways in which people collectively and individually articulate themselves to promote the necessary transformations. It is not enough to wish for “another possible world”. It is necessary to focus actions to build human relationships that overcome misogyny, racism, patriarchy, capitalist relations and prejudice in all its forms.

“Criticality” and its consequences present a significant challenge for people, given the fact that everyone lives in a society that predominantly has “dehumanizing” values, and constantly maintaining responsible criticality that results in concrete actions is very difficult. Often, in the name of supposed “peace”, and even when faced with the naturalization of oppression, people end up consenting to and submitting themselves to violence, exclusion, submission, invisibility and situations of indignity. However, just because it is difficult, this does not mean that the process of “criticality” should be abandoned. Loving, having courage, resisting, fighting and carrying out criticality – although times exhausting – continues to be the right choice to build a more humane and just world.

## **Final considerations**

The brief reflections on “criticality” that permeated such important values such as love, courage, resistance and struggle, as well as having participated in the VIII Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion, reaffirm on the horizon that “another

---

13. King James version online. Available at: <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/James-2-26/>.

world is possible”, because during the days of the Congress, the invitation involving the themes “freedom, identity and criticality” went beyond the academic field of discussions and were widely experienced, experienced and exchanged among the participants. These were days in which words were transformed into actions.

One of the few certainties that are not illusory in this world is that “another world is possible” if people come together and build, despite all the difficulties and complexities present, this “another possible world”. The struggle to ensure that all people can be included and recognized in society, so that they can have a good life in all its aspects, is legitimate. The time has come for all people to experience the dignity of having the minimum existential necessities and to be recognized as “human beings”, in their diversity.

It is well known that we are facing a complex and challenging utopia, which has not yet been realized. However, history is an accomplice in the fact that structural changes occur through love, courage, resistance and the struggles experienced by people and groups who preceded us, and because of them we have advanced as humanity. Thus, everything we do today, everything we prophesy – responsibly –, everything we dream, everything we hope for, serves as a foundation for better days for humanity. As I conclude this text, I wish that “critical thinking” will accompany us on this earthly journey. May we always renew our choices to build “another possible world”, with more humanized, respectful and equitable spaces. Together, it is easier. Together, we are stronger! “Promise me that we will not let go of each other’s hands”!

## I PROMISE

*Promise me that we won't let go of  
each other's hands.*

*That we'll keep moving forward,  
facing whatever comes our way.*

*Promise me that love will always  
be our answer and our revenge.*

*That despair will never overcome  
you.*

*Promise me, because today I need  
you so much.*

*That pain will make us raise our  
heads and look much further  
ahead.*

*And be resilient in times of  
intolerant people.*

*Promise me to be careful and  
protect yourself.*

*Promise me that we won't let go of  
each other's hands.*

*That we'll always break bread  
equally.*

*That it's never too late; that love  
will soon shine.*

*Promise me that we won't let go of  
each other's hands.*

*That it's never too late; that love  
will soon shine.*

*Promise me that we won't let hate  
take over.*

*Promise me that we won't let go of  
each other's hands.<sup>14</sup>*

---

14. Tata Alves. Prometo. Elefante Sessions. Available at: [hwww.youtube.com/watch?v=gzqeP-Qh0Ms](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzqeP-Qh0Ms)

## References

- ALVES, Tata. *Prometo*. Elefante Sessions s.a. Available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzqeP-Qh0Ms](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzqeP-Qh0Ms). Accessed on: May 14, 2024.
- ANGELIN, Rosângela; HAHN, Noli Bernardo. *Movimentos feministas e a vida das mulheres: (re) construindo possibilidades emancipatórias*. Curitiba: Editora CRV, 2019.
- BÍBLIA SAGRADA. *Nova tradução na linguagem de hoje*. Barueri, SP: Sociedade Bíblica do Brasil, 2000.
- BRASIL. *Constituição Federal de 1988*. Presidência da República. Available at: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/Constituicao/Constituicao.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/Constituicao/Constituicao.htm). Accessed on: May 14, 2024.
- FÓRUM SOCIAL MUNDIAL. *Outro mundo é possível: apresentação*. s.a. Disponível em: <https://www.fsm.org.br/>. Acesso em: 11 maio 2024.
- FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogia da autonomia: saberes necessários à prática educativa*. 25. ed. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1996.
- GOHN, Maria da Glória. *Novas Teorias dos Movimentos Sociais*. 3. ed. São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 2010.
- HONNETH, Axel. *Luta por reconhecimento: A gramática moral dos conflitos sociais*. 2. ed. Trad. Luiz Repa. São Paulo: Ed. 34, 2003.
- MELUCCI, Alberto. *A invenção do presente: movimentos sociais nas sociedades complexas*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2001.
- MORIN, Edgar. *Ciência com Consciência*. Trad. Maria. D. Alexandre; Maria Alice Sampaio Dória. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2000.
- TOURAINÉ, Alain. *Iguais e diferentes. Poderemos viver juntos?* Petrópolis: Vozes, 1999.



## CHAPTER 3.

# Gender and religion: freedom-identity-criticality

*Silvia Regina de Lima Silva*

### **“In the most secret place of my being”**

Freedom is a rebellious word, it breaks the boundaries of definitions and creates new imaginaries, like a restless child running ahead of us, moving from one place to another, forging paths, inviting us to walk. Freedom evokes the body, bodies that seek it, embody it, that make it possible to exist. To speak of freedom, inspired by its very dynamics, we searched for words, stories, paths, and experiences that could be an invitation to each reader to discover their own freedom.

Words inhabit us. They are not concepts we talk about. Words have a place in our bodies. They evoke memories, they create history in our bodies, they connect us, uniting us with other stories and bodies.

This is what happens with the word freedom. Others have already defined it, classified it, and compared different authors' definitions, even going so far as to prove, among themselves, which kind of freedom is the “true” one. They defined it, defined it, defined it, until they became its owners.

I let freedom flow through my body to feel it and see how far it goes. Feel the tickle it causes wherever it passes, the freedom that wants to penetrate me – and I close myself, and I open myself, I open and the freedom in me is reproduced. In me there are places, there are places where freedom desires to rest, where it rests, and sleeps. There, in these places, I keep the freedom!

I also feel the lack of freedom. I feel it tightening my throat, contracting my muscles, obscuring my vision, making my breath difficult, making my legs tremble, giving me a knot in my stomach, making my palms sweat, and my heart racing.

Let's return to freedom. This freedom felt, conceived, and complicit. The freedom that defines me. And if you ask me: How do you know so much about freedom? I'll tell you a secret. I learned it from my ancestors and it was Paulina Chiziane who shared this secret with me in the form of a poem,

I crossed the Atlantic singing a song of despair.  
But the silence of God whispered to me: rise and walk.  
Hide and gather the strength of your soul. Resist.  
Keep Freedom in the most secret place of your being.<sup>1</sup>

And so I did, so I do. I have it stored in the most secret place of my being. Stored but not dormant. There are places in my body where freedom takes hold and causes explosions.

Restless, provocative, stubborn, and daring freedom. It doesn't allow me to rest in the concepts and consensus that do nothing but tame it, that look to soothe it, that subtly seek to mold and dominate it. Ah, "black" freedom, freedom black!

---

1. Chiziane, 2013.

Many who sought to define you did so out of a desire for power. They kidnapped you, imprisoned you, built cages for you, and kept you in places only a few have access to. Freedom, a privilege of the few.

They did it with the definition of freedom and even with the definition of being. “I think therefore I am”! Today I say: we exist; therefore we feel and think, we affirm ourselves, we recognize ourselves, we have sorority. The freedom that accompanies me, with who I am, is felt from the collective of people who are convinced that “I am, because we are”.

Others spoke of the autonomy of the subject, emancipation, freedom through the use of reason, reason as a faculty granted a priori. You are free as long as you use reason, pure or theoretical reason, and practical reason. Freedom, one of Kant’s three postulates<sup>2</sup>. Although, the same reason associated with freedom, consider black people as those who “[...] are full of affection and passion, very lively, talkative, and vain. They can be educated, but only as servants, slaves, that is, they allow themselves to be trained. They have many motivating forces, are also sensitive, and are afraid of blows [...]”<sup>3</sup>. And there is no reason to keep talking about freedom from those who defined it and denied it to for many human beings.

I cannot turn this page without first mentioning the understanding of freedom —the freedom to consume. Freedom as a principle of the market— the neoliberal market. Freedom that fuels inequality, exploitation, the denial of life, and the death of the people impoverished.

---

2. Kant, 2003.

3. Kant *apud* Eze, 2001, p. 226.

Ah, there are so many cages in which you find yourself imprisoned, oh freedom...! We can no longer think of freedom as a philosophical concept, one that philosophers contributed to the construction of Western society, but did not extend to discriminated and excluded people. It's a different thing to have the option of sitting down and thinking about freedom as a concept, and to feel and to think about it, to embrace it, as the only possibility of survival, as a negation of the state of "non-freedom," of "non-life". We find/conceive freedom as a path and place of life and dignity. Yes, because freedom, a characteristic of the humanized society sought by the European revolutions, was not intended as a principle for the colonies. Rather, it was intended for the instrumentalization and destruction of subjugated and marginalized bodies.<sup>4</sup>

In the past, for Black and Indigenous peoples, losing freedom meant losing territory, ancestors, community, original society, customs, language, place of residence, beliefs, and family ties. The freedom with a communal, social, and political meaning that we affirm here means the reappropriation of territory, the reunion with ancestors, community life, living the customs, recovering language, place of residence, beliefs, and family ties.

Freedom has wings. And its wings spread. They come out from here, from the center of my chest, cut through the inside of my body, through the ribs, and break backward, exiting in the center of my back. They are large wings that flutter, bringing air and moving the realities of other bodies mistreated, excluded, abject, broken, bodies that are not, "non-beings"<sup>5</sup>. I acquired

---

4. Mbembe, 2016.

5. Maldonado-Torres, 2007.

and have deeply rooted this habit of thinking about freedom from the experience of its denial in the aforementioned bodies.

But freedom flutters, keeps fluttering. At the same time, it circles my body, it awakens other bodies. It passes through my curves, penetrates me, copulates within me —yes, we are both, two females who fertilize each other, become one, multiply. And thus, we enable the awakening of other bodies so that they too may be free.

Freedom, free bodies, are disturbing. They don't go unnoticed. Freedom should not be confused with any other feeling. Isn't that right? There's nothing more uncomfortable than seeing a free person. Freedom is uncomfortable. This discomfort is the awakening of your freedom.

Freedom awakens in me the irreverence of someone who, after losing fear, also lost shame – the shame of being different, of protesting, of disobeying the scandalous injustices of a world marked not only by the instrumentalization of life, but also by the destruction of bodies, by necropolitics that does not merely let die, but actively makes die.<sup>6</sup>

Freedom is embracing identity, the right to live and to be! But life is teaching me to experience and talk about freedom, not just from lack, from absence, the absence of freedom. But also from desire, enjoyment, fulfillment, abundance. From personal desires, but also from collective, communal desires. Freedom as a principle of relationship, of loving sociability. The desire for a dignified life, for well living, for living a fulfilling life.

Freedom, no one gives it to me, I “conquer” it. If anyone tries to take it away from me, I'll defend myself, I'll defend it. It's

---

6. Mbembe, 2016.

a constant search and struggle. It's always under threat. Freedom is an attribute of God. To have it is to be aware of good and evil. To experience it is to be like God. This was the discussion of the myth of origin. In the background, the forbidden fruit, isn't it freedom? Who was right? God said: Do not eat it, or you will die. Eat it, said the serpent, and you will not die. The woman ate it and offered it to the man. It was a fruit that was good for food and pleasing to the eyes and desirable for reaching wisdom (Gen. 3:6). Necessity (to eat), aesthetics (the beauty of the fruit), wisdom! A fruit that awakened consciousness. Awareness of one's own body, of the body of others, of God.

To eat the fruit was to embrace consequences, responsibility, transformation, a shift in condition. A choice of a path, a path called freedom! This is how we were born, this is how human beings were born, as beings of freedom! And we are building ourselves as beings of freedom, as free bodies. With consequences, but without guilt. Facing threats, confronting limits not as impossibilities, nor as closed paths, but as thresholds from which we can go no further, for now. We reach this limit, and it moves onward. It's like the horizon, the utopia we're walking toward. Ah, freedom! Freedom as path, as horizon, as utopia!

I feel it in me again, in my body, a body inhabited by other bodies. By ancestral bodies, sororal human bodies, bodies of earth that are with the other created bodies. A body that is synthesis of past, present and descent, a cosmic body – a free body. And once again I hear the voice of my ancestors that merge with the whisper of God in my ears: "Hide and gather the strength of your soul. Resist. Keep freedom in the most secret place of your being". I can already see my wings growing. I fly. I'm a bird woman. I'm freedom!

## References

- BISCAIA VEIGA, Sônia Regina. Mulheres-pássaro, entre o bater das asas e o caminhar: a representação e a transformação da mulher em narrativas orais. *Revista Confluências Culturais*, Joinville, vol. 10, n. 1, p. 24-35, 2021. Available at: <https://periodicos.univille.br/RCC/article/view/791/696>.
- CHIZIANE, Paulina. *O canto dos escravizados*. Belo Horizonte: Nandyala, 2013.
- EZE, Emmanuel Chukwudi. El color de la razón: la idea de “raza” en la Antropología de Kant. In: MIGNOLO, Walter (ed.). *Capitalismo y geopolítica del conocimiento: el eurocentrismo y la filosofía de la liberación en el debate intelectual contemporáneo*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Signo, 2001. p. 201-252.
- KANT, Immanuel. *Kant, Crítica de la razón práctica*. Buenos Aires: Editorial La Página S.A., 2003.
- MBEMBE, Achille. *Crítica de la razón negra*. Ensayo sobre el racismo contemporáneo. Buenos Aires: Futuro Anterior Ediciones, 2016.
- MALDONADO-TORRES, Nelson. Sobre la colonialidad del ser: contribuciones al desarrollo de un concepto. In: CASTRO-GÓMEZ, Santiago; GROSGUÉL, Ramón (ed.). *El giro decolonial: Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores; Universidad Central, Instituto de Estudios Sociales Contemporáneos y Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Instituto Pensar, 2007. p. 127-167.
- WALSH, Catherine. *Interculturalidad crítica y decolonialidad*. Ensayos desde Abya Yala. Quito: Abya Yala, 2012.



## CHAPTER 4.

# Weaving existence with broken and burned threads in Abya Yala

*Sofía Chipana Quispe*

### **Words that open paths toward sharing**

I come with the strength of the ancestral peoples who recognize themselves as daughters and sons of the earth, and in the voice of Anita Tijoux from the Mapuche people, I am accompanied by the beautiful rhyme of connection that is an invitation to awaken to cosmic consciousness in a context of ruptures:

I come to seek the silenced history, the history of a plundered land.

I come with the world, and I come with the birds, I come with the flowers and the trees' songs.

I come with the sky and all its constellations, I come with the world and all its seasons.

I come<sup>1</sup>

Despite the unpleasant memories and realities that experience ruptures and imbalances, I am grateful to all the vital forces, guardians, protectors, and beings of respect, for conspiring to create the experiences that weave life together, based on the di-

---

1. Tijoux, 2014.

verse experiences and stories that seek to restore the perspective of the human community, allowing us not only to recognize diversity, but also to recognize ourselves in the beautiful pluriverse of forms and ways of being and inhabiting the cosmos.

I come grateful for the opportunity to feel the energy of the territoriality known as Brazil, where the memory and presence of ancestral peoples flow, and others continue not only to resist, but also to recreate and heal the fabric of life; but I am also grateful for the energy of the territorialities where the Quilombos of the re-existence of peoples of African roots and other peoples who transitioned to this territoriality are reconstructed. Blessed embodiment of bodies, territories, and land, which, despite unpleasant memories and realities of genocide, subjugation, and the alienation of identities, continue to be and continue to generate fissures in the hegemonic system.

The sharing of words seeks to be an invitation to reflect on the imposed and constituted identities of the patriarchal and colonial structure, which must be rewoven from the broken and burned threads that regenerate the colonial wounds of racialization and the hierarchization of identities. From the connection to healing memories, the integration of time is conceived, where the past is not behind us, but ahead, guiding the path that makes integration into the fabric of life possible.

Therefore, paths of connection and interdependence are proposed with the diverse communities of life, where the presence of ancestry flowing through the cosmos is located, and which are recognized by indigenous peoples in relation to vital energies or sources. These paths allow them to redefine their uprooting from the land and the imposed identities, not as ethnic minority identities, but as diverse ones, in order to generate fissures in the

hegemonic and heteronormative structures that generate ruptures in the network of relationships of correspondence.

### **The imbalance in the fabric of life**

When we refer to identity, it not only implies broadening its meaning to recognize ourselves as part of diversity in order to affirm existence; we also need to recognize that we live in societies shaped by the colonial matrix from which the colonization of being was established. This reality gives rise to the demand to recognize oneself as part of territorial biodiversity, which challenges the assimilation of constructed and learned identities, based on the naturalization of inferiority sustained by theological discourses of non-being, or diminished being, on which the domination of invaded populations is based.

A notion that is still maintained in the hegemonic religious discourse and its dualistic perspective that separates life into contrasting realities, between what is considered sacred based on a single understanding, in which the notion of the one and true is imposed, to characterize the realities that deviate from it as profane, where the notion of idolatry and impurity assigned to what is considered non-being is located, in the configuration of the antagonistic other, such as women and other men (“Moors”, Jews, Blacks, and Indigenous). Without a doubt, it is an understanding of life based on a superior morality of the male with the power to dominate.

The religious dichotomy or dualism was involved in the invasion processes of *Abya Yala*<sup>2</sup>, the desecration of territo-

---

2. In the language of the Kuna people of Panama, it translates as a land of full maturity, of lifeblood, of full bloom. This is an expression adopted by various peoples to abandon the colonial name of America.

ries, since the invaded peoples had managed to establish links with vital forces, beings of respect and guardian spirits, named in various ways in ancestral languages, which were catalogued as demonic, which meant condemning the bodies assigned as non-beings due to their ways of life related to the cosmos. This aspect will not be new, since colonization had its antecedents in the persecution and condemnation of women accused of witchcraft<sup>3</sup> in the territories that are now called Europe.

It is no coincidence that the Inquisition persecuted and condemned women accused of being possessed by the devil in their bodies, their sexual avidity, and their power to dominate men<sup>4</sup>, however, it is worth mentioning that the women who burned at the stake had developed abilities that possibly came from their relationship with the cosmic and telluric energies that were associated with seeds, birds, animals, the cycles of the moon and other beings. According to Silvia Federici, the majority of women who challenged the power structures to dominate were still linked to the land, while those who persecuted them were part of the power structures of a rural capitalism that was beginning to emerge, breaking the communal sense of the people and their relationship with the land.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, witchcraft represented a social control based on the misogynistic campaigns described in the text of Malleus

---

3. According to Federici, witch hunts reached their peak between 1580 and 1630, that is, at the time when feudal relations were already giving way to the economic and political institutions typical of mercantile capitalism. It was during this long “Iron Century” that, practically through tacit agreement between countries often at war with each other, witch burnings multiplied, while the State began to denounce the existence of witches and take the initiative in their persecution (Federici, 2010, p. 226).

4. Cf. Forcades, 2011.

5. Cf. Federici, 2010.

Maleficarum (the hammer of witches), a work that “presents in its first chapters a selection of misogynistic texts...”<sup>6</sup>, from which the inferiority of women was sought to be sustained, by placing them in a condition of non-existence, which was reinforced with the accusation of witchcraft, so their abilities or powers were put under suspicion and seen as a threat, since they could only come from the devil. In this sense, the criminalization of witchcraft will be a means of disciplining and controlling the inferiorized bodies of women through persecution, torture, and violent deaths.

This reveals the spread of colonialism in peasant territories, starting with the genocide of women in Europe, while in *Abya Yala* it extends to entire villages, where male bodies will also be feminized, and all populations characterized as demonic:

According to a theory of the time, formulated by José de Acosta in his *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (1590), after the complete Christianization of Europe, the Devil would have moved to America: ‘But finally, since idolatry was eradicated from the best and noblest part of the world, he (the Devil) withdrew to the most remote part, and reigned in this other part of the world, which although in nobility very inferior, in greatness and breadth is not.’<sup>7</sup>

This discourse not only impacted the dominated bodies, but also the land and territory, since the colonial structure converged with modern thought, which led to a rupture with nature and to seeing it only in its materiality and assigning it as an object of domination. This implied not only subjugation but also the unbridled exploitation of lands and bodies that lost the ability to name themselves.

---

6. Forcades, 2011, p. 59.

7. Van Den Berg, 1990, p. 195.

## The feminization of bodies

At this point we raise the notion of patriarchal colonialism, as well defined by community feminism: “it is the system of all oppressions, all exploitations, all violence and discrimination that humanity (women, men and intersex people) and nature experience, historically constructed on the sexual bodies of women”<sup>8</sup>, to suggest that patriarchy is not limited to the domination of women, its power extends into the domain of life, as it is a colonial and warlike structure that crosses territories and times.

However, the persecution that reached our territories presupposed the colonial structure where women were not only considered as spoils of war, but the evil that had been feminized, an aspect that responds to the ways in which the hegemonic religion configured its relationship with the sacred from the exaltation or preeminence of masculine energy, limiting and silencing the feminine energy or vital force associated with women, the cosmos and the conquered populations, denying their life-generating capacities and being considered as a kind of objects of reproduction, control and domination.

Feminization in the colonization of Abya Yala meant the inferiority of all populations and their territories, where indigenous male bodies were limited in their being, and associated with the feminine<sup>9</sup>, in order to establish relations of dominance over their bodies by considering them equal to women, as “weak”, “sinners”, and “ignorant”, and without the capacity to reflect.<sup>10</sup> Thus, even though the indigenous men often belonged to the ruling elite within their own communities, they were not

---

8. Paredes, 2017, p. 5.

9. Ochoa, 2014, p. 105-118.

10. Lewis, 2021.

recognized by the the invaders as their equals. Although some sought to be part of this male hegemony by allying themselves in the social, economic and religious control of the towns, however, they would not be recognized due to the sense of inferiority that placed them in the zone of non-being.<sup>11</sup>

Another thing worth considering is that the demonization of feminine vital energies took place in territorial reductions where diverse populations were centralized, which generated ruptures in the communal organization of peoples who recognized kinship or lineages related to territories, from which relationships were established with the vital forces linked to the body, territory, and land. A notion that can still be perceived in cosmogonies centered on the cosmos from the relationships of correspondence with the various beings: plants, birds, fish, seeds and others. This is evident in the various cosmogonic narratives that seek a connection with cosmological kinship through songs and dances that require garments made of cotton fibers, trees, camelids, and feathers, for example, in order to establish identification with these beings and benefit from their energies and knowledge – since these connections are part of the rituals that make possible the relationship with the vital forces or beings of reverence that inhabit the territories.

The colonial structure, while feminizing bodies, constituted identities configured from the construction of racism that sustained the inferiority of racialized people in the face of “white” hegemony<sup>12</sup> and the sexual control of bodies from confessionals, pulpits and the establishment of marriage as a

---

11. Fanon, 2009.

12. The construction of identity in Abya Yala around the paradigm of whiteness meant enjoying privileges. For Rita Segato, it is a “collective neutral identity that privileges the European side of its organizational systems...” (Segato *apud* Celentani, 2014, p. 32).

system in which the constitution of the heteronormative binary is established, based on the figure of the man and the woman in the cosmogonic story of Adam and Eve, where the woman will be defined as a complement to the man. Therefore, relationships that deviated from the paradigm of the Adamic myth will be assigned as a “deviation”, therefore, non-binary sexual relationships would be subjected to severe punishments for being considered a perversion induced by the devil.<sup>13</sup> These relationships were condemned by royal decrees (documents issued by the king) and persecuted by the Inquisition.

Therefore, the foundation on which the colonial structure is built is the inequality that is shaped by the notion of the white, religious male as the prototype of the human being who dominates, subjugates, inferiorizes, and dispossesses. For its part, colonial religion sought to destroy the relationship with the various vital forces by demonizing them, in order to strip the inhabited territories of that presence and dissociate the relationship with the peoples who recognized and related to them, thus paving the way for the encroachment and violent penetration of lands and territories, turning them into objects of exploitation.

For this reason, the notion of identity in our contexts requires an anthropological revision that transcends closed concepts regarding biology and colonial constructions of race, in order to recognize diversity; that is, the biodiversity of the cosmos in which humanity resides, as a path that fosters interrelations in the great web of life. This presupposes a shift from our anthropocentric anthropological perspectives, inherited from a hegemonic religious tradition that shaped the cosmogony that predominates in our understanding of life.

---

13. Lewis, 2021.

The feminization of territories and bodies in Abya Yala involves considering them from the perspective of diverse experiences and formulating questions about how we reframe the meaning of our ways of life, considering that many peoples, despite experiencing the religious violence of the Inquisition and the theological discourse of the sacred, still recognize relationships with the vital forces that are presented as feminine and masculine in the translation of their languages. However, they reflect the recognition of plurality and diversity, as they are not limited to the sexual bodies of women and men but rather forces or beings that make life possible in a dance of synergies that embrace diverse corporealities.

In turn, openness to diversity means moving beyond the imposed definitions of life, recognizing ourselves in a cosmic history of millions of years, connecting with the inner self and once again becoming *Pacha*, the Cosmos.

## **Weaving life from relational spiritualities**

At this point we evoke the power of the word that reflects voices and experiences that conceive spirituality as the thread with which the affirmation for life is woven, since for some people it is assumed that “Spirituality is part of cultural identity and vice versa, because there is no identity without spirituality, nor spirituality without identity. Therefore, we are convinced that spirituality springs from life”<sup>14</sup>. And from a relational perspective, it is necessary to return to the connection with the cosmos, to break established patterns and move away from functional biologisms.

---

14. Mamani, 1999, p. 25.

On this path, one still has the experience of other ways of life in the cosmos from the ancestral spirituality that was kept secret, to recognize oneself in the integral notion of life, where the relationships of correspondence with the plural vital forces that flow in the diverse corporalities are recognized, as Aura Cumes proposes in the rereading of the cosmogonic story of the *Popol Vuh*, where eleven couples are called together representing:

Everything that gives life, such as the heart of heaven and earth, rivers and lakes, small and large animals, female and male deities, among others. Everything that already has life summons itself to create *winak*, the people. Therefore, in ancestral cosmogonies, the makers are not one, nor do they have purely masculine references. It is everything that surrounds us, which gives us the notion of a plural life; because the mention of the energies of life is always in pairs.<sup>15</sup>

The notion of pair or duality in relational worlds recognizes that life does not arise from the one, but from relationships of correspondence, which have often been confused with binary relationships, since dual relationships do not specifically involve woman and man, but rather the other pair that can make life possible, for example, the sun and the moon, the earth and water. For this reason, in some stories and representations we find the configuration of androgynous beings, for example, in the Andean context there are images of beings with two faces, one that looks towards the east, space and time where life arises in the cosmos we inhabit, and the other face is the one that looks towards the west, the space and time of the other forms of life that transcend the cosmos, in this sense the correspondence of times and spaces is raised.

---

15. Gil, 2021, p. 23.

This is why ancestral spiritualities are presented as relational ways of life that have guided the journey of various peoples, in which there are also moments of tension that require times of restoration to recreate relationships, where the link with healing memory will be important, since it supposes the connection with the transgressive memory that did not allow itself to be covered by the garments of what was imposed, and sought to show its vitality as resistance so as not to die.

Although diverse peoples experienced the fracture of the communal world, the strength of the senses of life still remains, stemming from the connection with ancestral memories that are not located in the past, but rather are located ahead, guiding the path of life and making possible the reciprocal healing of past, present, and future lineages. This allows for the telling of stories where pain seeks to be harmonized and healed, allowing joy to flow, manifested in the encounter, the celebration, the path of shared hope.

The healing memory woven from spiritualities makes it possible to read the transgressive stories that repeatedly sought the healing of land territories and body territories, since it implied the understanding that violated bodies had the possibility of incorporating themselves through connection with the Vital Force that inhabits them and that makes it possible to reestablish balance and harmony in the fabric of life.

Healing memory, in turn, involves drinking from ancient sources that allow us to recognize ourselves in a cosmic history that flows in the dynamic cycles of existence, in which everything is considered to have its time and space, a principle from which the necessary links with *Pacha* are generated, in which some imposed religious symbols are integrated, interpreted from the wisdom of the Cosmo-experiences themselves.

In the experiences of alienation and the policies of assimilation through globalization that various peoples are going through, the challenge of weaving spiritualities with the broken and burned threads is assumed, because it is not only about sustaining traditions, uses and customs, but about recreating the links through the relationship with the ancestral force that lives in the territories and in each body that is the same land-territory, because it is based on the conviction that “Everything that exists in the Cosmos exists in you. You are the Cosmos”<sup>16</sup>.

In this sense, ancestral spiritualities recover the awareness that “all types of living beings depend on others for their existence and are intertwined in an immense fabric that continually evolves”<sup>17</sup>, dynamic interrelations considered as the mutual nurturing of life, as it implies certain ethical codes of coexistence in a given territory, where each being lives its own development, acquiring the vitality of other beings. It is a nurturing community, where everyone raises and allows themselves to be raised.

Teachings in which the human community learns to relate reciprocally at every stage of their lives and relationships in order to maintain and restore balance in *Pacha* and all living communities, since it is a constant journey of becoming a person in relationship in every time and space, which makes Good Living possible. The exchange also involves personal relationships that safeguard balance, therefore, one way to generate harmony is the representation of feminine and masculine energies in the dignifying relationship between women and men. Although it should be considered that the women of the ancestral peoples, those who were doubly devalued and silenced,

---

16. Reinaga, 1978, p. 22.

17. Arnold, 2017, p. 19.

are those who resisted being completely dispossessed and colonized, and knew how to weave the life that refuses to die, and are recreating “actively, ancestral spiritualities to decolonize those religious universes that they were forced to adopt historically”<sup>18</sup>, and recreate the life of the people, as they do from their imposed clothing, to which they gave their own nuances, since while they are transforming them, they also create and dignify themselves and their environments.

### **Words to keep feeling and thinking along the way**

The approach to relational worlds poses the challenge of not recognizing ourselves with fixed identities established by hegemonic mandates and the binary structures that determine the hierarchical and power relations that destroy communal life, but rather with ways of life that flow in the cosmic history of vital energies or forces that generate dynamic processes in the fabric of life.

Sharing the offered word is an invitation to move away from purist notions based on sacrificial spiritualities in order to maintain ethnic purity, associated with the sacred, where women’s bodies had to be kept “pure” to preserve it. To open up to the notion of identities that flow, that are nuanced, that are stained, that are made *chix’i*<sup>19</sup>, as a kind of color that cannot be distinguished, since it is composed of opposite colors, which present the permanent complexity of existence, as can be seen in the resistance and recreations of the life of peoples and populations that propose other ways of life that challenge the heteronomous policies of patriarchal capitalism, and the notion of the religious that maintains the power that dominates.

---

18. Marcos, 2002, p. 4.

19. Word that comes from the language of the Aymara people (Bolivia, Peru, Chile). Cf. Rivera, 2023.

These are times when diversity seeks to step out from “the globalized identity policies and universalism that impede the dynamism and creativity of societies in our territories”<sup>20</sup>. These are diversities that meet common realities, such as food, health, sexuality, water, land, and the threatened world of diverse communities of life.

Recognizing ourselves in the pluriverse leads us to recognize that there is no single form of identity, which invites us to weave affections and proximities that challenge us to an embodying of the pluriversities in the defense and care of all forms of life as a fundamental axis of existence that is recognized as a thread in the fabric of life, as our ancestor Berta Cáceres already said:

A militarized, besieged, and poisoned Mother Earth, where basic rights are systematically violated, demands action.

Let’s wake up! Let’s wake up, Humanity! There’s no more time.

Our consciences will be shaken by the mere fact of contemplating self-destruction based on capitalist, racist, and patriarchal predation.<sup>21</sup>

From the spaces of sharing that call us together in community, let us intend the Pachakuti, which is the time of closing the cycle of a disharmonious, unbalanced life, to make possible the birth of relational worlds that dignify life, weave the Good Living, the beautiful life, life in harmony, the *Sumaj Kausay*, *Suma Qamaña*.

*Jallalla!*<sup>22</sup>

---

20. Segato, 2007, p. 21.

21. Mediavilla, 2022.

22. Aymara word that intends to restore balance and harmony in the various realities.

## References

- ARNOLD, Denise. Hacia una antropología de la vida en los Andes. In: GALARZA, Heydi (ed.). *El desarrollo y lo sagrado en los Andes: Resignificaciones, interpretaciones y propuestas en la cosmo-praxis*. La Paz: ISEAT, 2017. p. 11-40.
- FANON, Frantz. *Piel negra, máscaras blancas*. Madrid: Akal, 2009.
- FEDERICI, Silvia. *Calibán y la bruja: Mujeres, cuerpo y acumulación originaria*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2010.
- FORCADES, Teresa. *La Teología Feminista en la Historia*. España: Fragmenta Editorial, 2011.
- GARGALLO CELENTANI, Francesca. *Feminismos desde Abya Yala*. Ideas y proposiciones de las mujeres de 607 pueblos en nuestra América. Ciudad de México: Corte y Confección, 2014. Available at: <https://francescagargallo.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/francesca-gargallo-feminismos-desde-abya-yala-ene20141.pdf>.
- GIL, Yásnaya. Entrevista a Aura Cumes: La dualidad complementaria y el Popol Vuj. Patriarcado, capitalismo y despojo. *Revista de la Universidad de México*, p. 18-25, abr. 2021. Available at: <https://www.revistadelauniversidad.mx/download/171c2172-9cbe-40cc-ae9df2bc0ae3a0b?filename=entrevista-con-aura-cumes-la-dualidad-complementaria-y-el-popol-vuj>.
- LEWIS, Laura. De la sodomía a la superstición: el pasivo activo y transgresiones corporales en la Nueva España. *Cuadernos de Literatura*, v. 25, 2021. Available at: <https://revistas.javeriana.edu.co/index.php/cualit/article/view/34525/26275>.
- MAMANI, Vicenta. *Identidad y espiritualidad de la mujer aymara*. La Paz: Misión de Basilea-Suiza y Fundación SHI-Holanda, 1999.

- MARCOS, Sylvia. *La espiritualidad indígena y las mujeres organizadas*. Oaxaca: Planetaria, 2002. Available at: <https://sylviamarcos.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/planetaria-la-espiritualidad-indc3adgena-y-las-mujeres-organizadas-web.pdf>.
- MEDIAVILLA, Manu. Berta Cáceres, defensora ambientalista hondureña. Se cumplen 6 años de su brutal asesinato. *Amnistía Internacional España*, 02 mar. 2022. Available at: [www.es.amnesty.org/en-que-estamos/blog/historia/articulo/6-anos-del-asesinato-bertha-caceres/](http://www.es.amnesty.org/en-que-estamos/blog/historia/articulo/6-anos-del-asesinato-bertha-caceres/).
- OCHOA, Karina. El debate sobre las y los amerindios: entre el discurso de la bestialización, la feminización y la racialización. In: ESPINOSA, Y.; GÓMEZ, D.; OCHOA, K. (ed.). *Tejiendo otro modo: Feminismo, epistemología y apuestas descoloniales en Abya Yala*. Popayan: Universidad del Cauca, 2014. p. 105-118.
- PAREDES, Julieta. El feminismo comunitario: la creación de un pensamiento propio. *Corpus* [En línea], vol. 7, no. 1, p. 1-9, 2017.
- REINAGA, Fausto. *La Razón y el Indio*. La Paz: PIB, 1978.
- RIVERA, Silvia. *Un mundo Ch'ixi es posible: Ensayos desde un presente en crisis*. La Paz: Piedra Rota, 2023.
- SEGATO, Rita. *La nación y sus otros: Raza, etnicidad y diversidad religiosa en tiempos de Políticas de la identidad*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2007.
- TIJOUX, Ana. *Vengo*. In: *Vengo*. Nacional Records, 2014.
- VAN DEN BERG, Hans. *La tierra no da así nomás: Los ritos agrícolas en la religión de los aymara-cristianos*. Cochabamba: Hisbol-UCB/ISET, 1990.

## CHAPTER 5.

# Some ecofeminist proposals for the construction of critical and change processes

*Cinthia Méndez Motta*

### **Introduction**

The Women and Theology Nucleus of Guatemala is a group of women of faith from different religious denominations. Although we are a small group, in recent years, the proposals in the training programs we have conducted with women have been based on the principles of ecofeminism.

We are grateful to our fellow theologians who pioneered this knowledge: Ivone Gebara, Alicia Puleo, Mary Judith Ress, Elizabeth Johnson, and Geraldina Céspedes, among others; as well as to the humble women with whom we constantly learn and unlearn this new wisdom. I am especially grateful to the organizers of this VIII Congress on Gender and Religion for inviting the Lutheran churches and members of other Christian churches to participate in these new searches.

The objective of this presentation is to begin by exploring the ecological and human crises we are currently experiencing, rethinking anthropology from an ecofeminist perspective, in

order to contribute to critical, transformative education that fosters change.

I intend to briefly address some ecofeminist proposals in three stages. The first attempts to describe the critical perspectives from which we feel and think about the human and ecological crises we are experiencing in the 21st century. Faced with these crises, there is an urgent need to rethink anthropology and theology in a second stage, and then connect with some proposals on the ethics of care in a third stage.

We begin, then, with this short presentation, which simply aims to provoke feelings and thoughts, and which can be enriched, questioned, and debated by our colleagues at the thematic panel.

## **Life in the hands of the patriarchal system**

Ecofeminism is based on the critique that traditional and modern societies, as well as the market with its neoliberal productivist policies, continue to oppress societies and nature. All of this was well expressed by the indigenous peoples at the Iximché Summit in Guatemala when “They denounced the neoliberal plundering of territories, the degradation of Mother Earth, poverty, and forced migration due to the actions of transnational corporations”<sup>1</sup>.

A year later, the First International Forum of Indigenous Women of Abya Yala, discussed in depth the problems that are affecting their communities and, to a greater extent, women, the effects of climate change, the difficulties that women have in accessing communication and technology, “about their suffering

---

1. Declaración De Iximche. 2007.

from racism and discrimination, about difficulties in accessing money, domestic violence, physical, sexual, and psychological violence”<sup>2</sup>, the concern about the increase in pregnancies among girls and adolescents, the exploitation of wage earners, and other problems affecting women at the regional level. “They demanded that developed countries end their environmental pollution practices and support the protection of Pacha Mama”<sup>3</sup>.

In this way, the impoverishment of nature, women, girls, and children is due to the regional and local structures that enable it. In the words of Vandana Shiva, these inequalities have their origins in a patriarchal system and have been strengthened by modern capitalism. Her studies have shown that disasters and ecological deterioration have greater repercussions for the lives of women than for the lives of men, and that women are, everywhere, the first to defend nature against environmental destruction and the first to care for and carry out healing actions in nature.

According to Alicia Puleo, the ecological crisis and current social problems are “an opportunity to overcome all sexist and androcentric prejudices and advance toward a new worldview, built on principles of respect, equality, justice, and solidarity”<sup>4</sup>. But these principles arise from other emerging paradigms, which invite us to return to other types of relationship models that favor healing these worn-out relationships, from ecofeminist perspectives.

---

2. Bonfil, 2008.

3. Declaración en el i Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas, 2008.

4. Puleo, 2018, p. 346.

## **Proposals from ecofeminist theologies**

The proposals are based on the perspective of the ecofeminist paradigm. “Looking is not a naive action, but rather it pursues and constructs realities, and therefore it also deconstructs”<sup>5</sup> the projects that impose homogeneous thoughts, roles, and behaviors that justify the subjugation of entire peoples, women, and vulnerable people, and invite us to feel and think about the vision we have as human beings.

### **A paradigm in crisis: the anthropological**

The current anthropological paradigm, with the relationships it establishes, not only plunges us into a humanitarian and ecological crisis, no longer provides meaning for human beings. Therefore, the first thing that needs to be reconsidered is the reconstruction of anthropology. This is one of the approaches of feminist and ecofeminist theologians, as can be seen in María Pilar Aquino, who believes that responses to women’s problems are directly or indirectly conditioned by a particular anthropology. Ivone Gebara asserts that, to achieve more just human relations, one of the great challenges of our time is a new understanding of the human being.

Geraldina Céspedes clarifies that the visions of human beings that are at the root of gender violence and the degradation of nature are those of human beings as the center of the universe (anthropocentrism) and as the center of the world (androcentrism). Patriarchal androcentric anthropology causes disastrous consequences not only for the earth and women “but also for human beings considered close to nature

---

5. Ventura, 2023.

and women”<sup>6</sup>. Since the man whom this system deifies above all human beings is not just any man, but a powerful adult man, its harmful effects extend also to those men who lack power and who have developed feminine attributes: such as caring. In this sense, androcentrism goes beyond the men-women issue to encompass other categories of human beings who lack power. These observations or intuitions urge us to rethink human beings. As Alicia Puleo says, “It’s time for ecofeminism to make another world possible”<sup>7</sup>.

### **Towards a plural anthropology**

Asking questions from a philosophical perspective allows us to better understand ourselves as a human species: Where do we come from? Who are we? And where are we going? These are questions that Mary Judith Ressa invited us to answer at a School of Ethical Ecofeminist Spirituality in 2003. Since then, the ecofeminist perspective, the violet and green perspective, has awakened and sharpened in those of us who have participated in the experience.

Ivone Gebara in her book *Essay on philosophical anthropology: The art of mixing concepts and planting dis-concepts*, In the second chapter, carefully dismantles the imaginary of human beings, the *anthropos* androcentric, anthropocentric, theocentric and hierarchical. She claims that the crisis caused by the multiple problems is due to patriarchal epistemology<sup>8</sup>, the knowledge that we have as humans has distanced us from the being, as well as from other *anthropos* and also from nature, since the paradigm of development, conquests and destructive

---

6. Céspedes Ulloa, 2021, p. 24.

7. Puleo, 2018, p. 16.

8. Gebara, 2020.

exploitations have caused negative consequences: division and distance from nature.

Theological experience has distanced us from the experience of the sacred, which is why we have placed Divinity outside, above, far away, and we have placed ourselves outside the Planet and have learned to survive with violence, which can provoke reciprocal violence. It has also created patriarchal religious beliefs that inhibit the encounter with divinity in everyday life and fall asleep with romantic experiences of the patriarchal God who justifies serving exploitative, abusive, and violent humanity, in addition to distancing us from the experience of an image of a merciful, tender, friendly God, who loves human beings and all creation.

So, the problem for human beings lies in defining where we think, where we act, where we stand. We have drunk from the sources of the patriarchal system, which in other times and ages nourished great empires, dominant societies, tribes, and cities. How can we escape this patriarchal anthropology?

Ivone asserts that there is an unequal universality of *anthropos*, as we are multiple and diverse. Differences can provoke polarizations and mutual judgments with varying degrees of perversity and reciprocal violence. When differences are accepted, they can be a source of wealth, as Paul Knitter says “If we truly accept the otherness of our neighbors and of religions, if we admit that we will never be able to fully grasp and understand their otherness, then we must also accept diversity”<sup>9</sup>. In nature there is diversity, unity, and interdependence, but not to the point of destroying diversity. Biodiversity reflects the beauty of nature. And beauty is also reflected in the diversity of human

---

9. Knitter, 2007, p. 450.

beings. Beyond the richness of cultures and nationalities, lies the richness of human beings as such, close and diverse. Jesus calls us to unity, but never at the expense of diversity.

When similarities or what is in common are a priority for human beings, in practice we enter into a more familiar, closer, more inclusive logic. Thus, we are called to enter into a more familiar and inclusive logic with our different closest. Likewise, it is necessary to consider the Earth valuable, and recover its *imago Dei*, but a creative, dynamic image that constantly renews life that is finite. That we find its traces in our bodies, that its life flows in our lives, that we are part of it and it is part of us, that it is in our dreams, that it appears in our fears and in our states of trust, let us awaken to this ecological awareness and to this awareness of diverse and beautiful humanity.

### **A spiritual awakening towards the earth and women**

To make this process of deep encounter with nature and with women is to take a leap in human consciousness. It is to evolve. It is conversion. As Elizabeth Johnson proposes: “to carry out a spiritual conversion that involves making several different turns at the same time”<sup>10</sup>. In my experience and that of other theologians, this involves several steps; for now, let’s review two:

- **Recovering the biocentric vision of life:**

One of the proposed movements is to move from anthropocentric and androcentric worldviews to broader, biocentric ones that value life in all species on Earth, so that all species are included in the circle of life and in the sacred. The above

---

10. Johnson, 2015, p. 258.

statement means getting rid of a philosophy of life shaped by hierarchical dualisms, which values one reality more than another and contrasts them, for example: estimating the spirit as superior to matter, culture more than nature, human beings more than animal species, men more than women; unlearning this dualistic and hierarchical philosophy that generates great distances and exclusions between human beings and nature will help us make the shift to biocentrism, which is undoubtedly a movement of inclusion, of dance, of evolution animated by the *Ruah* in creation.

- **Recovering a sense of belonging and interdependence with women and the earth:**

This movement entails, as human beings, relocating ourselves in the cosmos, in creation, no longer placing ourselves at the summit of the creative work as the book of Genesis 1:28 placed us. Our place is within the circle of creation as another species, aware of its limitations, its finitudes. Recognize that as a species we arrived at the last moment of creation and that the other species of the animal, plant, and mineral kingdoms arrived first. Recovering the theology expressed in the Book of Job, which, in the face of Job's anguished accusations against God for his suffering... The Lord answers: Where were you when the Earth was measured, when the stars burst into their unanimous song, when the sea was confined and its arrogant waves were given limits? Job 38:4, a theology that relocates us as part of creation.

Recognize that other species can live without humans and that humans could not live without the presence of women, men, and other identities of the species that produce life. It is urgent to change the illusion or epistemology of human beings

as separate, isolated, and outside of species, and move toward a heartfelt affinity with the other species with whom we share creation, forming and feeling part of the creative community of life. Those who can introduce us to this epistemology are the Indigenous and African peoples.

But can human beings make this shift if they haven't yet rediscovered, accepted, and repositioned themselves differently toward the other half of humanity: women and other human beings who are different from the hegemonic masculine man? If they haven't yet felt affinity, sympathy, and acceptance for women? That's what women alongside of the planet are asking ourselves.

It is worth highlighting then, that it is clear to consider that it is necessary to change the epistemology taught by the patriarchal system to more inclusive epistemologies, ecofeminist, Black, Indigenous, queer, Afro-descendant epistemologies, which listen to the cry of women and the earth and invite a portion of humanity, men, to relate in terms of equality and justice towards women and to develop for themselves the attributes that have been considered only feminine, such as caring for people and Nature, so that they also have the opportunity to develop a dignified life, without violence and without competition.

## **Human Beings: Towards the Ethics of Caring for Life**

This is a topic critically addressed in ecofeminism, due to the associations that have been made between "care" and women. Feminist ethics analyzes that women have traditionally been the caregivers, but it is necessary to clarify that women are not more apt to care for biological reasons, but rather due to learning; it is a social construction of gender, not a trait of sex.

Therefore, we might ask whether the development of caregiving is more due to socialization in a sexist culture.

For two women from Guatemala, caregiving is a responsibility of all human beings, although patriarchal culture has assigned it to women. Vilma Fonseca says: “Women play a social role, which is a historical and sociocultural construct. We are associated with caring for the home, family, and the environment, and we are also responsible for caring for the environment and nature”<sup>11</sup>.

Care work is generically assigned to women. We are the caregivers of children, older adults, people with disabilities, and the sick people. “It’s believed that because we’re women, we’re responsible for these tasks. In reality, they should be shared more, as it’s a very demanding and exhausting job”<sup>12</sup> says Alma Odette.

According to Carol Gilligan, “The perspective of care is neither biologically determined nor exclusive to women”<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, as a social construct, it can be modified, learned, or unlearned, and this is what we must insist on. From this starting point, we can educate ourselves differently and educate future generations in the ethics of care as the key element of a new culture of life and a life free from violence.

---

11. Interview with Vilma Patricia Fonseca, on the Ecology of Care, Guatemala, March 19, 2022.

12. Interview with Alma Odette Chacón, on the Ecology of Care, Guatemala, March 18, 2022.

13. Cf. Comins Mingol, 2003.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that these anthropocentric, androcentric, and hierarchical models, although they may seem difficult to dismantle, difficult to release from everyday relationships, can be dismantled, since the cry of the earth and the cry of women erupts unstopably and will not let us sleep peacefully because we are part of this living planet.

We human beings are called to awaken to an empathetic and decolonizing awareness of women's lives and bodies, of nature, of the present and future of humanity and the cosmos, replacing relations of power and violence with relations of power with and among the living community. By practicing relations of respect and eco-justice, by considering diverse humanity a treasure and not a threat, it is time to work for equality, equity, and the right to existence of a diverse and plural humanity.

It is at these moments in history when continuity and quality of life must be considered central concerns, that it becomes necessary to return to the fundamental realities and relationships of existence.

## References

- BONFIL, Paloma. Tradición vs. Derechos humanos y modernidad. *In*: FORO INTERNACIONAL DE MUJERES INDÍGENAS, 1., Perú, 2008. Available at: <https://25176774.fs1.hubspotusercontent-eu1.net/hubfs/25176774/Compartiendo-Avances-Para-Nuevos-Retos-2008.pdf>.
- CÉSPEDES ULLOA, Geraldina. *Ecofeminismo*. Teología saludable para la tierra y sus habitantes. España: PPC, 2021.
- COMINS MINGOL, Irene. *La ética del cuidado como educación para la paz*. 2003. 427 f. Tesis Doctoral – Departamento

- de Filosofía, Sociología y Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad, Universitat Jaume, Castellón, 2003. Accessed August 15, 2023. Available at: <https://www.tesisred.net/bitstream/handle/10803/10455/comins.pdf>.
- DECLARACIÓN DE IXIMCHE'. *In*: CUMBRE CONTINENTAL DE PUEBLOS Y NACIONALIDADES INDÍGENAS DE ABYA YALA, Guatemala, 2007. Available at: <http://www.cumbrecontinentalindigena.org/iximche.php>.
- DECLARACIÓN EN EL FORO INTERNACIONAL DE MUJERES INDÍGENAS, 1., Perú, 2008. Available at: [xhttps://25176774.fs1.hubspotusercontent-eu1.net/hubfs/25176774/Compartiendo-Avances-Para-Nuevos-Retos-2008.pdf](https://25176774.fs1.hubspotusercontent-eu1.net/hubfs/25176774/Compartiendo-Avances-Para-Nuevos-Retos-2008.pdf).
- GEBARA, Ivone. Ensayo de antropología filosófica. El arte de mezclar conceptos y plantar desconceptos. España: Verbo Divino, 2020.
- JOHNSON, Elizabeth A. *Pregunta a las bestias*. Darwin y el Dios del amor. España: Sal Terrae, 2015.
- KNITTER, Paul F. *Introducción a las teologías de las religiones*. España: Verbo Divino, 2007.
- PULEO, Alicia H. *Ecofeminismo para otro mundo posible*. España: Ediciones Cátedra, 2018.
- VENTURA, María Cristina. Ecología de cuidados desde una mirada teológica crítica y feminista a la constitución y deconstitución del género, raza y pobreza en Centroamérica. *In*: SEMINARIO ALUMNI INTERNACIONAL E INTERDISCIPLINARIO DE ICALA, Costa Rica, 2023.

## CHAPTER 6.

# **Orfa, the woman who returns to her ancestral tradition: a black and feminist hermeneutical reading of Ruth 1**

*Maricel Mena-López*

### **Introduction**

The Book of Ruth has been approached from a variety of academic and theological perspectives. The literary perspective analyzes the narrative structure, characters, and themes of the book, emphasizing a narrative of loyalty, redemption, and social inclusion.<sup>1</sup> The historical perspective places its emphasis on the periods of the Judges and the post-exilic era, the time when the book was probably written. This approach considers how the book reflects the social and political conditions of its time.<sup>2</sup>

The feminist or gender perspective focuses on the experience of women, especially Ruth and Naomi, highlighting themes of female solidarity, survival, and agency in a patriarchal

---

1. Ferreira, 2018.

2. Tezza; Toseli, 2010.

context.<sup>3</sup> Orfa is only mentioned<sup>4</sup>, so there are few studies that focus on this biblical figure. From a black perspective, the book of Ruth can be interpreted as a story of racial justice that contrasts with the experiences of Afro-descendant communities. Ruth, a Moabite woman, is a foreigner in Israel, which places her in a position of vulnerability similar to that of many black women in Afro-diasporic contexts.<sup>5</sup>

The theological perspective explores the themes of divine providence, loyalty to God and the people of Israel, and the inclusion of foreigners into the community of faith.<sup>6</sup> The sociological perspective, in its turn, analyzes the power relations and social issues reflected in the book, such as the protection of the poor, foreigners and widows, and social laws that aim to guarantee justice and equity.<sup>7</sup> The Church Fathers interpreted Ruth as a figure symbolizing the Gentile Church, praising her decision to leave her land and her idolatrous customs to worship the God of Israel.<sup>8</sup>

Because it is a book whose protagonists are women, many interpretations focus on the actions of the protagonists, Ruth and Naomi, with Orfa being invisible in the story. Most of the time, these interpretations are made from a patriarchal, Eurocentric, racist, capitalist and colonizing perspective. The text is often read under the parameters of inclusion and redemption of women in patriarchal culture – yet, from our perspective, this itself is a form of social segregation, since only

---

3. Barrientos, 2025.

4. Fischer, 2004.

5. Mena-López, 1995.

6. Mesters, 1997.

7. Nef Ulloa; Xavier, 2024.

8. Seijas de Los Rios-Zarzosa, 2024, p. 367-382.

those who embrace monotheism are valued, while those who resist the colonial model of the temple and its institutions are disregarded.

These readings also assume that their protagonists are white, which has made the subjectivity of marginalized groups invisible, especially black women and their ancestral religious traditions. Biased interpretations of superiority-inferiority fail to take into account the intersectionalities of gender, race-ethnicity, class, and religion in their analysis. An exclusionary biblical hermeneutics reinforces ideological discourses of whiteness. Being a black woman means experiencing the effects of the oppressive system in your body and being even more distant and disconnected from the stories of the biblical tradition. Based on the above, the following central question of this research arises: what message does Orpha's body convey to the reality of Afro-diasporic women in Latin America and the Caribbean?

The title of our text itself is already providing an interpretative line: This is a reading of chapter 1 of the book of Ruth from the experience of the *terreiro* or threshing floor, as the extramural meeting spaces were called where the so-called fertility festivals of pre-monarchical Israel were held and which during the exile and post-exile constituted a space of feminine resistance to the imposition of the temple as the only place where God manifests himself, according to the priestly mentality of the Second Temple.

In these festivals, female corporeality is fundamental, as fertility passes through their bodies, not only in their capacity to generate life, but also as a fundamental mediation where divinity manifests itself in multiple ways. The body is the her-

meneutic principle that runs through this narrative, these are the bodies of the patriarch Elimelech, his wife Naomi, his sons Mahlon and Chilion, his daughters-in-law Ruth and Orfa, and the elders of the community who give life to this narrative full of symbolism and movement.<sup>9</sup>

If the body is the hermeneutic place par excellence, then our body must be recognized as a spatial territory where our daily lives take place. It is our female body that enables us to experience the sacred within us and through it we are invited to read the sacred text. Through the liberation and movement of our bodies we are able to identify our rigidities. With this we are able to work on our deepest, archaic and mythical convictions learned from a patriarchal perspective and which affect our personality.

The recognition of women's bodies as a legitimate space of beneficial and independent power allows us to recognize the divine that exists in our corporeality. In this way, divinity is re-imagined through the feminine corporeality that frees us from the image of God as a man. We can read in the bodies of Ruth, Naomi and Orfa the divinity that reveals to us its own bodily and vital experiences. The body challenges us to grow and mature as people towards a fuller consciousness. With this key to reading the body, we are invited to read chapter 1 of the book of Ruth based on what the bodies, their voices, their movements say, having as an articulating axis the dialogue with African traditions and, in particular, with Candomblé from Brazil.

---

9. This study takes as its backdrop the intuitions initially presented in a biblical study space of the black pastoral of the Anglican Church of Rio Grande do Sul entitled "The Ruah yard from the book of Ruth" and which were widely systematized at the EST Gender and Religion Congress in 2023.

In light of the methodology of comparative religion, we will read this chapter in the light of the Candomblé's *terreiro*, as we consider that there are important memories in this chapter that place us in the Afro-Asian horizon where Israelite monotheism was established. These memories were not entirely erased; the book of Ruth is an example of this process of suppression of the memory of the goddesses and gods of the African pantheon by institutionalized Yahwism in the Sadducee theocracy in the Second Temple period.<sup>10</sup>

For the development of our argument, we begin with a brief structural proposal based on the interpretive keys outlined above. In conclusion, we present some challenges posed by the *eira da ruah* (the threshing floor of spirit/wind) for a feminist, anti-racist and decolonial theological education.

## **Structural proposal**

The book of Ruth is a relatively short book, with only four chapters. Our proposed structure for the first chapter follows the narrative line, with the following categories as the guiding thread of our analysis: Bodies (1-5); Voices (vv. 6-21); Movements (vv. 19-22).

Due to the limits imposed on this writing, we only focus our attention on the analysis of the first chapter. To analyze this chapter, we started from the following questions: what themes appear in the text and what is their situation? What do their bodies say, their names, what movements do they produce? What elements of the text allow us to dialogue with African traditions?

---

10. Terra; Rocha, 2019.

## The bodies (1-5)

The bodies of each of the implicit and explicit characters in the story allow us to get closer to the historical and cultural context, as they are the ones who experience in their corporeality the effects of a precarious situation that makes them emigrate from their hometown, Bethlehem, to the fields of Moab. Furthermore, each of these bodies has a name that determines its position in the story.

In these verses we have an introduction to the historical and social context. It begins with a setting from the time of the judges, but its story reflects the exilic and post-exilic situation of the 5th-4th centuries BCE.<sup>11</sup> Given this observation, it is striking why the writer needed to set the story in the context of the judges of tribal Israel. We suspect that the theme of land ownership implicit in the books of Judges undoubtedly brings with it implicit female memories of resistance by Canaanite women who fought to preserve their lands in the process of conquest and possession of the land of Canaan (see Debora, Jz 4.4; Jael, Jz 4.9; the anonymous woman of Thebes Jz 9.50-55).<sup>12</sup>

Elimelech's family moves to Moab due to the famine in Bethlehem. A situation of poverty and hunger is evident (Ruth 1.1; Neh 1.3; 5.2). Most people live off the land, but there is no more land (Neh 5:5), the poor who still have land are forced to abandon it and sell it because of famine and taxes (Ruth 1.1; Neh 5.3-4;). The name "Bethlehem" has a rich and interesting etymology. In Hebrew, "Bethlehem" (בֵּית לֶחֶם) means "House of Bread". This name is composed of two parts: "Beth" (בֵּית), which means "house" and "Lehem" (לֶחֶם), which means "bread". This

---

11. Navarro, 1995.

12. Mena-López, 2009.

meaning reflects the agricultural importance and fertility of the region. The paradox in the text is that in the “house of bread” there is no bread. The fact is that a man has to migrate with his family to the fields of Moab, where the patriarch and his sons die, leaving only the mother and her two daughters-in-law. It also draws our attention to the fact that each of the characters is named by their own name.

Moab was the son of Lot and his eldest daughter, born of an incestuous relationship after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19.30-38). The descendants of Moab, known as Moabites, settled in the Transjordan region, that is, east of the Dead Sea. In ancient times, Transjordan was divided into three territorial entities: Ammon, Moab and Edom. “It seems probable that Ammon was the first to become a centralized monarchy, then Moab, and finally Edom, and that Ammon would have been the most developed form of primitive state and Edom the most elementary”<sup>13</sup>.

Apparently, the borders of those monarchies were not so defined. However, it is known that the land of Moab was a fertile plateau, ideal for agriculture and sheep farming. The region produced grains, cereals and grapes. The fields or threshing floors were a flat and open area where farmers threshed or separated the grain from the chaff. These open fields are a space for revelation and encounter with the divinities. In the book of Judges, Gideon meets an angel of the Lord at a threshing floor, where he receives a divine commission to save Israel from the Midianites (Judges 6.11-24). The fact is that the family of Abimelech and Naomi find God’s favor in these fields of abundance and commensality. The text does not provide explicit data on the reasons

---

13. Younker, 1997, p. 246.

why famine reached these fields, only in v.20 Naomi laments that *Shadday* has caused her bitterness, possibly referring to her condition as a widow.

The Moabites were closely related to the Israelites, but were often in conflict with them. In Numbers 22-24, the king of Moab, Balak, tried to hire the prophet Balaam to curse Israel, but God intervened and Balaam ended up blessing Israel. One of the best-known stories involving the Moabites is that of Orpah, who makes the decision to stay in Moab, and Ruth, the Moabite who decides to take up the faith of Israel and secure the right to ransom as a guarantee of survival.

Moab is mentioned in several biblical prophecies, including those of Isaiah (15-16) and Jeremiah (ch. 48). These prophecies often speak of Moab's pride and arrogance and God's judgment upon them, but they also mention God's mercy and the possibility of a Moabite remnant taking up arms against the God of Israel.

The question that arises here is: what happens to the Moabites who remain in their religious tradition linked to fertility cults and the goddesses of the Canaanite pantheon? Our text cannot answer this question because the Deuteronomist writers have no interest in continuing the story of Orpah. His interest lies in the typification of religion with metaphors of prostitution and idolatry. This seems to be the consensus when it is assumed that the determination to stay in the house of Orpah's mother makes her insensitive to her mother-in-law Naomi, however, oblivious to Yahweh's plans.

In biblical Israelite culture, names had deep meaning and were often chosen to reflect important aspects of a person's identity, faith, and birth circumstances. In fact, many Israelite

names included references to God (Yahweh or El). For example, Elimelech means “My God is king”. Others, such as Naomi, mean “grace or gracious,” possibly referring to a blessing bestowed upon her parents. They also reflect personality traits or mood, which is why she changes her name to Mara, which means “bitter”. Some names were given as a form of prophecy or wish for the child’s future, for example, Malom, which means “obedience”. The name of the second son is Quiliom, which means “fragility”, possibly highlighting traits of his personality or the fragile condition of his birth. The same goes for Obed, which means “servant”. The name Orpah can mean “nape of the neck” or “cervix”. This name is also associated with the idea of “turn the back”, which is symbolic in her story, since Orpah decided to return to Moab instead of following Naomi to Bethlehem.

### **The Voices (vv. 6-21)**

Once her husband and children are dead, Naomi decides to return with her daughters-in-law upon hearing that there is bread in Bethlehem again, and on the way, a dialogue takes place between her and her daughters-in-law.

**8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law:** Go back, each of you, to your mother’s home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. **9** May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of her husband. Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud

The phrase “mother’s house” is the expression used by Naomi when advising her Moabite daughters-in-law to return to their family. Orpah initially expresses a desire to accompany Naomi, but after a second insistence from Naomi that she return to her mother’s house, she decides to return to her family

and her gods in Moab. This act contrasts with Ruth's decision to remain with Naomi and follow the God of Israel.

The etymology of the expression “mother's house” (in Hebrew, “בֵּית אִם” – “beit em”), refers to the maternal home, a place of safety and shelter for women, especially in times of crisis. The “mother's house” thus symbolized a return to family care and protection, possibly beyond consanguinity, contrasting with the vulnerability of widows without children or husbands and with the patriarchal “father's house”.

In Canaanite culture, the “mother's house” was the nucleus of family life where women played central roles in raising children, managing household chores, and performing religious duties. In some ancient cultures, including the Canaanite, lineage and inheritance could be passed down through the maternal line. This meant that the mother's house was a symbol of family continuity and stability.

In Hebrew, the “father's house”, (“בֵּית אָב” – “beit av”) refers to the home established under paternal authority, which may include an extended family or clan, which is a group of households related by blood ties. This is the family model that Naomi knows, and that is why in v.9 she evokes the need to rest in the house of a husband. This fact allows us to suspect that in Moabite culture women could remarry without having to go through the search for a male redeemer from the patrilineal lineage. This is a very long path; Naomi would have to have more children.

10 **And they said to her:** We will go back with you to your people. 11 **But Naomi said:** Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? 12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another hus-

band. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons 13 would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord’s hand has turned against me! **14 At this they wept aloud again;** Then Orfa kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

Orfa freely decides to return to her mother’s house, to her ancestral matrilineal tradition. She also claims her mother’s house as a place of refuge and protection, especially for women and children. She returns to the space that provides women with security and emotional support. The home is a spiritual space par excellence. Many religious and cultural traditions and rituals were performed in the mother’s house, reinforcing its central role in spiritual and community life. These aspects show how the mother’s house was valued and respected in Canaanite culture, reflecting its importance in the social and family structure. However, the return to the mother’s house has been used itself to colonialist interpretations to the point of being typified as a fragile woman who abandons God’s plan.

However, we see in her a woman who is faithful to her tradition, an independent woman who can say no. She returns to her mother’s house and to her religion. She is a countercultural woman for her time, since she does not accept the fate to which women are confined in the religion that is being created in Judah. Ruth, in turn, means “friend”, and is the one who clings unconditionally to her mother-in-law. Her name already has an intentionality in accordance with the Deuteronomist line in charge of presenting this story to us.

**15 Therefore Naomi said:** your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her. **16 But**

**Ruth replied:** Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God;

In these verses Ruth makes a profession of faith and adherence to the God of Israel. It is striking how this hymn is still a symbol of the spousal union of heterosexual marriages, and here it is a song sung by one woman to another woman. It is a confession of love that includes passionate and possibly erotic love, at least this is the intuition of some readings that understand that the relationship between Ruth and Naomi can be seen as an example of deep affection and solidarity between two women.

While the biblical narrative does not explicitly suggest a romantic relationship, Ruth's loyalty and commitment to Naomi is remarkable and can be interpreted as a model of unconditional love and support that resonates with the experiences of many LGBTQ+ people.

Lesbian invisibility is not something natural, but rather the result of several factors. Among these are misogyny, sexism, and the socialization aimed at these bodies in a society that operates based on a Judeo-Christian morality, which in turn supports and makes a series of binaries work, including the masculine-feminine one.<sup>14</sup>

### **The movements (vv. 19-22)**

Naomi and Ruth walked until they reached Bethlehem, causing a great commotion in the city. The women recognized Naomi, but she rebuked them, saying that she was no longer

---

14. Santos; Tagliamento, 2021, p. 9-10.

Naomi, but rather “bitter” Mara, because “Shadday” had embittered and mistreated her, and “Yahweh” sent her with her hands full and returned empty-handed, giving a bad testimony about Naomi.

The names given to the divinity in these verses call us for attention. Among the various meanings applied to *Shadday*, the most prominent are: “God of the mountain” and, in the vast majority, “The Almighty”. A third meaning is “Great mother” or “One of the Breasts”. For our study, we are interested in exploring this last meaning, because it seems more appropriate within the context in which it occurs. Shadday, as indicated by Harriet Lutzky<sup>15</sup>, may derive from *Shad* (feminine “breast/s” or “chest”), translated as “the one of the breasts”; something like the one which nourishes or sustains all things. Also the suffix *ay* is a feminine morpheme – (a) and which would have existed in the Semitic West. Tallay, Arsay, Pidray; Rahmay (meaning “womb” or “uterus”), as well as *Shadday*.

These aspects reveal how names were an integral part of identity and spirituality in biblical Israelite culture, carrying meanings that went beyond simple identifiers, as they also reflected traits of each person’s personality – much like in African traditional religions, where *filhos de santo* (initiates) receive the name of their deity within the Bantu or Yoruba pantheon.

### **From the Moabe terreiro to the Candomblé terreiro**

The *terreiro*, *goren* in Hebrew, translated as “threshing floor” or “yard” in English, appears four times in the central part of the Book of Ruth (3.2-3,6,14). This term appears in many other books of the Bible. In the book of Chronicles – a

---

15. Lutzky, 1998.

contemporary version of the Book of Ruth about the history of Judah – this place is so sacred that David himself celebrates sacrifices there: “At that time, when David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there” (I Chronicles 21.28). A place that will always be a reference to the encounter between David and the Lord (II Chronicles 3.1).

This same word names “squares” or “wides” (such as *Largo Zumbi dos Palmares* in Porto Alegre) at the entrance to cities, places of prophetic events (II Chronicles 18.9). In Candomblé, the terreiro is a space for the propagation of African civilizing values, they are true “mini Africas”<sup>16</sup> where the community, the celebratory, ancestry, commensality, protection and matrilineality converge.

In African cultures, names carry profound and multifaceted meanings. They are not just identifiers, but carry rich meanings and are an extension of a person’s identity and ancestry. Names can indicate a person’s ethnic origin, social status, and even religion. Many African names have meanings linked to nature, spirituality, or significant events in the family’s life. For example, the name “Kwame” in Ghana means “born on Saturday,” while “Amina” means “peace” in Arabic. A child’s name can influence his or her destiny and character. Choosing a name is a solemn act, often involving rituals and celebrations.

In Candomblé, the influence of the orixás/orishas (saints or deities) on the temperament and identity of *filhos de santo* (initiates) is a fundamental part of religious practice. Each orisha has specific characteristics that are reflected in their Saint’s sons. Each orixá/orisha has distinct attributes and person-

---

16. Silveira, 2014.

alities. For example, Iansã is known for being a warrior and impulsive, Xangô for his bold and arrogant character, Ogum for his shy and vengeful personality, while Oxum is associated with sweetness and motherhood. These characteristics are transmitted to the children of the saint/deity who are governed by these orixás/orishas.

The *filhos de santo* often incorporate the qualities of their orixás/orishas into their identities and daily behaviors. This can influence everything from the way they dress to how they interact with others. During initiation rituals, the *filhos de santo* go through processes that reinforce their connection with their orishas. This includes adopting behaviors and attitudes that reflect the characteristics of the orisha. The *pais* and *mães de santo* (spiritual leaders) guide the *filhos de santo* on how to live according to the principles and characteristics of their orixás/orishas, helping them to understand and channel these influences in a positive way. The practice of Candomblé seeks balance and harmony between the *filhos de santo* and their orixás/orishas, promoting a deep understanding of themselves and their relationships with the world around them.

The rediscovery and affirmation of African names are ways of resisting the imposition of external cultures and remembering the grandeur of the African heritage. Each name carries a story, a purpose and an identity that deserves to be celebrated and preserved. In this sense, human corporeality is an extinction of the divinity that reveals itself in the everyday life and bodies of women in the African diaspora.

## Concluding considerations

The recognition of the integral body of women as a legitimate space of power, of a beneficial and independent power, challenges the view that women's power is inferior and dangerous. In this way, Divinity is rethought in corporeality. This undoubtedly allows us to proclaim the liberation of images of God as the only masculine, and allows us to read in bodies the God that they reveal to us, which starts from their own bodily and vital experiences.

The voice as a key to reading makes it possible to “give voice to those who have no voice”, which means that history traditionally ignores social groups that do not have a prestigious social status and repeatedly ignores women and their sexualities, thus promoting classism, sexism and racism under the assumption of an inclusive reading. This also happens in biblical interpretations, where the bodies that matter are only those of important men of prestige. In this story, Orfa's body, voice and movements are almost always invisible, the focus always being on Ruth and Naomi.

To cross borders, movements are necessary. In times of threat, we always focus on tradition, because it is what gives us security; however, in the community it is necessary to break down the borders that separate us in order to open ourselves to diversity. The history and thinking of women constantly revolve around the transgression of borders. Orpha does not accept patriarchal orthodoxy and with her it is possible to claim the leading role of women in ancestral religions.

By understanding Moab as a space of abundance, commensality and alternative community, we do justice to a history that has seen evil in the corporeality of women who refuse to enter into the control of a patriarchal religion that oppresses them.

This chapter, set in the fields or threshing floors of Moab, allowed us to draw an analogy with the open-air spaces where the saint's festivals were initially celebrated in Candomblé. With this, we can affirm that in the biblical tradition there are ancestral Afro-Asian memories in the constitution of the Israelite religion.

## References

- A BÍBLIA. Tradução Ecumênica Brasileira. São Paulo: Loyola/ Paulinas, 1995.
- BRUNETTO CARLIN DOS SANTOS, Dayana; TAGLIAMENTO, Grazielle. Corpos e experiências lésbicas importam? Para quem? A rede lésbi brasil diálogos entre ativismo e academia. *Sul-Sul*, [S.l.], vol. 2, n. 2, p. 8-18, 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53282/sulsul.v2i02.892>.
- BARRIENTOS, Iris. *Eres quien puede redimir*. Una lectura latinoamericana de Rut desde género. [s.d.]. Available in: <https://www.mercaba.org/Caravias/01/Barrientos.Rut%20desde%20genero.rtf>. Accessed on: February 4, 2025.
- FERREIRA, Cláudia Andréa Prata. Livro de Rute: leitura contemporânea, reflexão literária da condição feminina e a valorização das medidas socioprotetivas presentes na torá. In: CONGRESSO INTERNACIONAL ABRALIC, 15., 2018, Uberlândia. *Anais [...]*. Uberlândia, Universidade federal de Uberlândia, 2018. p. 5479-5490. Available in: [https://abralic.org.br/anais/arquivos/2017\\_1522246828.pdf](https://abralic.org.br/anais/arquivos/2017_1522246828.pdf). Accessed on: February 4, 2025.
- FISCHER, Irmtraud. El libro de Rut: Una exégesis de la Torá desde la óptica de las mujeres. *Selecciones de teología*, [S.l.], n. 172, p. 275-282, 2004. Available in: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=989061>. Accessed on: October 4, 2023.

- LUTZKY, Harriet. Shadday as a goddess epithet. *Vetus Testamentum*, [S.l.], vol. 48, fasc. 1, p. 15-36, 1998.
- MENA-LÓPEZ, Maricel. A força da solidariedade: o livro de Rute numa perspectiva negra e feminista. *Mosaicos da Bíblia*, São Paulo, n. 20, p. 1-19, 1995. Available in: [https://www.academia.edu/39341723/0\\_livro\\_de\\_Rute\\_numa\\_perspectiva\\_negra\\_e\\_feminista](https://www.academia.edu/39341723/0_livro_de_Rute_numa_perspectiva_negra_e_feminista) Accessed on: February 4, 2025.
- MESTERS, Carlos. *Como ler o livro de Rute*: pão, família, terra. 3. ed. São Paulo: Paulus, 1997.
- NAVARRO, Mercedes. *Guía Espiritual del Antiguo Testamento*: Los libros de Josué, Jueces y Rut. Barcelona: Editorial Herder, 1995.
- NEF ULLOA, Boris; XAVIER, Magno de Carvalho. A amizade social no livro de Rute. *Revista de Cultura Teológica*, São Paulo, vol. 34, n. 108, p. 258-273, 2024.
- SEIJAS DE LOS RIOS-ZARZOSA, Guadalupe. El libro de Rut en la exégesis patristica. In: MEDRANO, Estela Aldave; ARBIOL, Carlos Gil (ed.). *Voces bíblicas olvidadas y recordadas*: ensayos de exégesis con perspectiva de género. Libro homenaje a Carmen Bernabé Ubieta. Navarra: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2024. p. 367-382.
- SILVEIRA, Hendrix Alessandro Anzorena. “*Não somos filhos sem pais*”: história e teologia do batuque do Rio Grande do Sul”. 2014. 136 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Teologia) –Faculdades EST, São Leopoldo, 2014. Available in: [http://dspace.est.edu.br:8000/xmlui/bitstream/handle/BR-SIFE/529/silveira\\_haa\\_tm296.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://dspace.est.edu.br:8000/xmlui/bitstream/handle/BR-SIFE/529/silveira_haa_tm296.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y). Accessed on: October 4, 2023.
- TERRA, Kenner Roger Cazotto; ROCHA, Abdruschin Schaeffer. Judaísmo enoquita: pureza, impureza e o mito dos vigilantes no Segundo Templo. *Horizonte*, Minas Gerais, vol. 17, n. 52, p. 148-166, 2019.

TEZZA, Maristela; TOSELI, Cecilia. Rut. Una introducción. *Revista Interpretación Bíblica Latinoamericana*, Quito, n. 67, p. 37-47, 2010. Available in: [https://www.academia.edu/39340980/La\\_Tor%C3%A1\\_femenina\\_Introducci%C3%B3n\\_hist%C3%B3rico\\_literaria](https://www.academia.edu/39340980/La_Tor%C3%A1_femenina_Introducci%C3%B3n_hist%C3%B3rico_literaria). Accessed on: February 4, 2025.

YOUNKER, Randall W. Moabite social structure. *The Biblical Archaeologist*, [S.l.], vol. 60, n. 4, p. 237-248, 1997.



## CHAPTER 7.

# The truth that bodies communicate

*Angélica Bernate Rojas*

### **Initial considerations**

Within the framework of the VIII Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion, a simple reflection is offered on the use of women's bodies for war purposes within the armed conflict in Colombia and the various consequences this situation has generated. To this end, will be observed the component, *My Body Tells the Truth*, of the report presented on June 28, 2022, by the Commission for the clarification of the truth, Coexistence and Non-repetition, established after the signing of the final agreement for the termination of the conflict and the establishment of peace, between the Colombian State and the FARC-EP. From there, fragments of four stories of women victims of sexual violence will be brought, proposing some ideas from the theological-pastoral perspective that concerns us. This seeks to continue interpreting what faith and spirituality mean for women in this time, providing sororal support for the desired and necessary transformation.

Among the proposed thematic organization, the commission established a successful category called: "My body tells the truth" and, under this, was proposed a path of active

listening, accompaniment, and recognition of the impacts of sexual violence on the bodies of hundreds of women and their environment. It works as an intervention tool in victim support processes. These are women who, in their circumstances, were victims of the humiliations of violence in an environment of conflict. Within the dynamics of war, they suffered the horrible consequences of inequality at the hands of the paladins of patriarchy. They told their stories of the violence inflicted particularly on their bodies<sup>1</sup>, women in rural or urban contexts, indigenous, black, Afro-descendant, peasants, with disabilities; women who, as women, suffered sexual violence, among other forms of violence. Most cases of sexual violence occurred in rural areas and, to a lesser extent, in cities. The most affected were girls and young women between 11 and 26 years old. These cases also occurred within the ranks of combatant groups, such as, for example, reproductive violence.

To achieve this experience of relief and the beginning of vindication, the Truth Commission worked from a gender perspective, seeking to ensure dignity and proper treatment for women in accordance with their rights. The documents presented by the Commission included stories that reveal the practices of violence perpetrated against women by various actors, both legal and illegal. This approach also had, as a second section, an interest in the effects on sexually diverse, LGBTIQ+ people in the context of the armed conflict.<sup>2</sup> This approach

---

1. To review the statistics and classifications of the information found, it is recommended to review the following website: Comisión De La Verdad. *Guía para la pedagogía del volumen Mi cuerpo es la Verdad*. Sección mujeres. Available at: [www.comisiondelaverdad.co/pedagogia/guia-para-la-pedagogia-del-volumen-mi-cuerpo-es-la-verdad-seccion-mujeres](http://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/pedagogia/guia-para-la-pedagogia-del-volumen-mi-cuerpo-es-la-verdad-seccion-mujeres).

2. This gender approach was seen as a threat to a large part of the Colombian population, particularly members of the Evangelical Church who, supported by certain

highlighted, among other things, the lack of protection and disinterest in equal rights for this population, which is accentuated in wartime environments, as they have been morally branded as unworthy of rights, in a project to prioritize people based on how they experience their gender identity and sexuality.

## **Voices of bodies at war**

Below are excerpts from stories told by courageous women who spoke from their pain in the process of relief and freedom. This highlights the weakening of women's power and its impact on the community.

The first presents the story of Nery, a woman from Putumayo, southern Colombia. 2012. She says: *"I needed time to recover. Physically, I managed, but inside, it's something that's etched in my memory. It was a terrible blow for all of us. Weakening women like that was weakening our community, take off our strength. That's how they always want us: weak"*<sup>3</sup>.

NERY'S RESISTANCE: Nery shares what the deep wound of sexual violence meant to her and her community. She speaks in the plural, conveying the impact of violence at the community level. The pretense of controlling the body functions as spoils of war, and armed groups understood this very well and worked to weaken their opponents by exploiting women's bodies. Nery tells how this pretension affected her entire being and interprets it as a blow to the power of the individual. This

---

political groups and media outlets, some with ulterior motives, worked to distort the Agreement. Such was the scope of this bidding that it fueled the fears of many families, particularly in the area of education. It was called "The Gender Agenda," which would bring about the macabre, diabolical intentions of changing the sexual identity of girls and boys, especially in schools and also within their homes.

3. Comisión De La Verdad, 2019, p. 43.

type of violence is used to satisfy sexual desires and compensate or reward the combatants. Maintaining and stimulating warlike virility accompanied by a weapon, etc. Many more unfortunate consequences could be listed in favor of military objectives inside and outside the armed ranks; But the use of women's bodies to dominate territory, families, the economy and all areas of society is striking. The hegemony of patriarchy and its pretensions of dominance amass power to the detriment of others. The belief in superiority is evident in order to cause harm. An example of this is considering others as incapable, until they are destroyed, using excessive force to reduce them to the bare minimum. The hegemony of patriarchy and its claim to domination, adds power to the detriment of others. The belief in superiority is evident in order to cause harm. An example of this is considering others incapable, even to the point of destroying them, using excessive force to reduce them to the bare minimum.

Let's listen to this second story that speaks of the disrespect towards women's lives and the consequences it has on their self-esteem. "*The men outside the reservation don't respect us. We're 'exchange coins' to them. They abuse us to show our men who's in charge, and they do whatever they want with us. With these acts, they threaten the survival of our people*"<sup>4</sup>. The armed groups understood that attacking women meant attacking the entire community, their families and their environment. Therefore, we speak of the effects on women as effects on the general population and on the quality of life. For the woman in the story, her self-esteem has been severely affected. The comparison with a low-value coin, increasingly devalued, clearly illustrates the situation of women who are victims of this type

---

4. Comisión De La Verdad, 2019, p. 46.

of violence. Not only is the accumulation of harm evident, but also the perverse intentions of lecturing the men of the community, using the woman's body to demonstrate power. It could be considered that the possession of a body that belongs to another mobilizes a system of revictimization and degrades to the point of nullifying her worth. The perfect breeding ground for insecurity, fear, and shame that immobilizes, silences, and leads to impunity. Faced with so many faces and perpetrators of violence, blame is usually placed on the victim, and impunity arises.

At the center, once again, a violated body. There are so many stories to tell that reflect abandonment and the inability to recognize oneself. It also highlights life's obstinacy in searching for ways to resist. Marta de Risaralda comments on this: "[...] *While I was there, I didn't know love; no one treated me with affection. I missed my family and the life I had with them. I didn't recognize my own body; it felt alien, as if it didn't belong to me... that's how it really was. Many times I wished I could die so I wouldn't have to live like that anymore. I only found strength in the memory of my mom; I never lost hope of seeing her again*"<sup>5</sup>.

THE FORTRESS OF MARTHA RISARALDA, 1985: Resistance is part of the women who, while they manage to describe their condition of death in life, find something to hold on to in order to resist, without a body, without identity, without relationships, without love. Sexual violence is described as a plundering of what is most sacred, the dispossession of what is intimate, what is one's own, what is most precious. Blow after blow, a profound impact is inflicted on all dimensions of being a woman, and life is extinguished once again. It is evident how violence weakens the power to be authentic and free. The damage

---

5. Comisión De La Verdad, 2019, p. 57.

is so great that, combined with the violence already experienced by the presence of the patriarchal system and the addition of classism, racism, and so on, exacerbated by war, women are imprisoned in despair and the resignation of death in life.

A new violated body now speaks to question our bodies: “[...] *I was never able to report it. I was afraid to do so. How could I trust after what had happened to me? I found support among my own people, in my community, but we need to be able to talk about what we’ve experienced. That’s why I’m here. We need people outside to know about our pain, and above all, we need it to never happen again*”<sup>6</sup>.

Fear and dread of speaking are difficult after-effects for those who have suffered violence. The goal of violence is to chain its victims to the dungeon of silence and mistrust, who will always take the path to further bind women and deny them freedom, the possibility of believing and being again. The story presented makes clear how safe and trusting environments, although affected, can also become environments of hope. The woman speaks of her own place, that of sorority in her community, that of her own communal body that fosters truth. For the woman in the story, her place of return to life is there. Finding support in sincere connections, in a community that believes her, she speaks to be heard. Thus, she regains the confidence to listen to her body and let it speak. The power of raising her voice, the visit, gains value from her experience with a strong life commitment so that this story will never be told again.

---

6. Comisión De La Verdad, 2019, p. 48.

## Voice to give life

Each person's experiences of violence and oppression connect and fit almost perfectly with the stories of many women throughout history, even outside of armed conflict. This exercise allows us to recognize that the person who exercises control over the body of another becomes powerful and that this constant is intrinsic to the systems; and that a parallel could be drawn between the stories of violence against women's bodies in the Bible and the many stories of violence against women in my country and in Latin America. This is not a great discovery, as it has already been mentioned in studies on the subject in Latin America<sup>7</sup>, only that, hearing it firsthand, questions arise about overcoming the relationships of domination and power that are perpetuated by some over others.

In the hermeneutics of the body, Cardoso says:

Understanding the text as a body, the fruit of gendered social relations, and understanding the process of interpretation also through the concrete relationships between bodies, sheds new light on the understanding of discourse. The body, as a hermeneutical criterion, offers new reading alternatives that invite us to experience new relationships between women and men.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, it could be said that this hermeneutic category allows us to directly recognize and identify violence and its consequences. Although barbarism and fatalistic reality make

---

7. Dagoberto Ramírez makes it clear that when reading the Scriptures from a Latin American perspective, it is surprising to find such a marked parallel between the experiences of the biblical people and the circumstances facing our people today, especially in those popular Christian communities scattered throughout the continent.

8. Cardoso, 1997, p. 6.

us think that all is lost, the truth communicated by bodies also allows us to dream about what could happen or is happening. When the sources of truth are reconsidered and opened up to other epistemologies, an alternative path begins to assume the use of power with equity and co-responsibility. This raises questions such as: What would change if we truly perceived the world and our relationships from the body? What would change if, as a faithful people, we proclaimed the truth about what our bodies say? How can we speak about the experience of salvation and the incarnation of Jesus from and for suffering and violated bodies? How has the death of Christ been interpreted, and the insults received where bodies experience death in so many ways? What category would we give to the resurrection of bodies and their place in the transformation of power relations today?

Without attempting to cover all the aspects that could be addressed through this exercise, some conclusions will be presented to continue the dialogue on gender and power.

Unfortunately, many theological perspectives establish noble evangelical discourses that justify and naturalize violence in light of Christ's suffering. The lacerated body of Jesus on the cross, his suffering, undoubtedly makes a connection with the suffering caused by violence. Therefore, listening to the voice of the body is to appeal to the freedom and power of the new life that arises and is manifested in the Resurrection. It's necessary to return to the basics of assertive communication, the ability to listen, starting from the stories of violated bodies, allowing themselves to be challenged and seeing there a reflection of their own struggles. Speaking out for those responsible for these crimes, has not been the same as speaking out about other types of crimes, therefore, speaking out from the perspective of the violated body means making this horrendous crime visible,

giving it a name by raising a voice of denunciation, exposing the perpetrators, and opening paths to restoration.

The power to dominate another's body exposes the need for mastery of one's own body and makes clear the need to guide this tendency to avoid the repetition and continuation of violence that ends up affecting not only the weakest, but also the most powerful and, consequently, the entire community. Respectful listening, within a gender perspective, will be essential for survival and cultivating more just relationships and environments. If we consider, according to the biblical testimony, that the church is the body of Christ, then we are saying that this body must ensure to proclaim the truth at all costs. He will be concerned not only with expressing and interpreting what the text says; he will also listen to the heartbreaking voices that the bodies are screaming out. Gender approaches and policies must permeate all the Church's efforts and actions. When the body speaks, it speaks the truth; there is no room for lies.

“MY BODY IS RESISTANCE AND TELLS THE TRUTH;  
IT IS DIVERSITY, IT IS FEAR, IT IS STRENGTH,  
IT IS COURAGE, IT IS PAIN, IT IS REPUDIATION”<sup>9</sup>.

## References

CARDOSO, Nancy. Presentación. Pautas para una hermenéutica feminista de la liberación. *RIBLA*, Quito, n. 25, p. 5-10, 1997. Available at: <https://www.centrobiblicoquito.org/images/ribla/25.pdf>.

COMISIÓN DELA VERDAD. *Guía para la pedagogía del volumen Mi cuerpo es la Verdad*. Sección mujeres. Available at: <https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/pedagogia/guia-para-la-pedagogia-del-volumen-mi-cuerpo-es-la-verdad-seccion-mujeres>.

---

9. Comisión de la verdad, 2019, p. 13.

COMISIÓN DE LA VERDAD. *Mi cuerpo dice la verdad*. [S.l.]: 2019. Available at: [https://web.comisiondelaverdad.co/images/zoo/publicaciones/archivos/Mi\\_cuerpo\\_dice\\_la\\_verdad\\_V2022.pdf](https://web.comisiondelaverdad.co/images/zoo/publicaciones/archivos/Mi_cuerpo_dice_la_verdad_V2022.pdf).

RAMÍREZ, Dagoberto. Evangelización y cultura. Estudio exegético-hermenéutico de Hechos de los Apóstoles. *RIBLA*, Quito, n. 12, p. 135-152, 1992. Available at: <https://ia801205.us.archive.org/14/items/revistadeinterpr12depa/revistadeinterpr12depa.pdf>.

## CHAPTER 8.

# The canaanite woman's ministry that facilitated the understanding of salvation in Matthew (15.21-28)<sup>1</sup>

*Mercedes L. García Bachmann*

### Initial considerations

I appreciate the invitation to reflect on gender, leadership, and power, and in particular on power, because, due to its patriarchal nature, it has long been a topic avoided on feminist agendas. I mean that since the beginning the patriarchal use of political power has been justifiably criticized – including the religious – , But at the same time we have found it uncomfortable to try to do it in a different way. However, this discomfort has not been part of early feminist reflection either. I begin, then, by noting our own need to be freed from our fears or prejudices regarding our authority and our power; Fears presented as very real, because they are encouraged by the patriarchal system in which we were raised and we move – We already heard about this in the opening conference of this congress. These mechanisms of control of female authority produce, among other evils, the “imposter syndrome”<sup>2</sup>.

---

1. This contribution is a revised version of the presentation made at the thematic panel *Gender Justice, Leadership, and Power* at the congress in August 2023.

2. I don't think it's necessary to explain this in a gender context; I borrowed the expression from Dr. Marcia Blasi, who used it on the panel that gave rise to this

## Grievance, a (valid?) way of achieving salvation

I propose to reflect on the recognition of the power of assertive women based on a biblical text about a miracle in favor of a woman who had nothing going for her— or so it seemed.

I am not bringing any extraordinary discovery, but rather a collection of clues that different biblical scholars have been pointing out. These clues have to do with the way in which influential women, with some important qualities, are discredited based on patriarchal control, in past and modern times (it is not just a Jewish or biblical problem). One of the ways these women are discredited is by making them strange, foreign. Because being or not being a foreigner denotes belonging or not, having rights or not, having to justify idiosyncrasy or taking it for granted. Being a foreigner is an example of what one of the speakers asked at the opening conference of this conference: *Who were you before others told you who you are?* Being considered foreigners means being pitted against “non-foreigners,” natives. Although it is an exclusive but not inherently discriminatory classification, our colonial histories have marked the other, the colonized, as foreign and negative. In our personal and social histories, examples of the “foreignization” of Aboriginal groups and individuals abound; In some cases, even animalization, such as when they have been exhibited in museums or hunted as wild animals. And in this, as we know, the Bible itself is guilty. Niels Lemche puts the understanding of Canaan and its population

---

publication. An exercise that would surely yield significant results would be to list the (known) prejudices that each of us has faced — only those that we know are not applied in the same way to our male colleagues. More serious are the class and racial prejudices, about which there are excellent contributions in both the magazines of our region (Coisas do Gênero, RIBLA, Caminhos) as in the Faculdades EST congresses themselves.

in these terms: “stereotypical and inflexible, and makes it clear that the Canaanites and their land did not have an independent history of their own; they were only included in historical narratives to promote the storytellers’ intentions”<sup>3</sup>. This statement is even more valid when it comes to female Canaanites, as they endure additional discrimination.

What encouraged me to take up this topic was an article that appeared in a collection of feminist re-readings of Matthew. The author built his piece from three women in this gospel, some of whom are Canaanite.<sup>4</sup> Then I realized I couldn’t list them. I remembered, reread the gospel and discovered at least four Canaanite women, not all with equal prominence: Tamar and Rahab in the genealogy of Jesus in Mt 1:1-17 and the Canaanite woman and her demon-possessed daughter in Mt 15:21-28 (the daughter gives rise to the story, but is absent from it).<sup>5</sup> I wondered about the possible post-exorcism life of this anonymous Canaanite woman<sup>6</sup>. Could she have simply disappeared from

---

3. Lemche, 1991 *apud* Jackson, 2002, p. 75.

4. Humphries-Brooks, 2001, p. 138-156.

5. The remaining women in Jesus’s Matthean genealogy are Ruth, a Moabite woman brought into Israel, and Bathsheba, who had been married to Uriah the Hittite and later became the wife of David and the mother of Solomon, but whose own genealogy is unknown<sup>6</sup>. Rahab and Ruth [...] certainly represent in a positive way, as firstfruits, the entry of Gentiles into the Promise” affirms Avril (2001, p. 148). To Bathsheba a rabbinic tradition (Sanhedrin 107a) made her “granddaughter of Ahithophel of Giloh, David’s advisor” (Avril, 2001, p. 156). Levine (2015, p. 125-126) also identifies the Queen of the South (12:41) and Pilate’s wife (27:19). “There were probably Gentiles among those seeking Jesus’ healings ‘throughout all Syria’ (4:24) and those who followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan (4:25)”.

6. See the long list of women mentioned by Matthew in Richter Reimer (1997, p. 146-147). She notices that “In Matthew, women are mentioned by name only in the opening and closing sections of the Gospel: in the genealogy, at the foot of the cross, and in the resurrection. Their names, along with their actions, have also been preserved. For the majority, however, the historical memory of the excluded

history? The bibliography I have access to doesn't answer this question.

## **“The Nations” in Matthew**

The relationship between Matthew and “the nations”, one of which would be “Canaan” (although it is an anachronistic term), is ambiguous and therefore does not have consensus among biblical scholars.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Matthew has traditionally been considered the gospel to the Gentiles, starting above all from the Great Commission. Since it is not our goal to resolve this ambiguity, it is enough to understand why the opinions expressed differ on this matter. Glenna Jackson claims that in this gospel “There are only eight instances, including the Canaanite story, in which titles with geographical designation or place names are used” and all, with the possible exception of the references to Magdala, are negative.<sup>8</sup> Thus, any contemporary audience of the gospel would have associated Canaan with the stereotypical opponent, knowing also that it no longer existed as such in their time (perhaps that made it a potential enemy, not a real one). In

---

remains, who, with their lives, forged a new history of participatory inclusion in the Kingdom of God manifested in history. In this way, they practically open and close the Gospel, also acting in its central part (15,21-28)”.

7. Other causes are the polysemic nature of the term “nations” (Gullotta, 2014, p. 333) and the prism with which biblical scholars approach the topic. For example, Selvidge (1987, p. 79): “By using the term Canaan, Matthew encourages this ancient fear and perhaps hatred of the foreigner, the unknown—the one who became Abraham’s enemy”. For Gullotta (2014, p. 329), Matthew has an anti-Gentile attitude. Carter (2004, p. 274), adds economic discrimination, since they probably came from the poor peasantry; see Richter Reimer (1997, p. 156): “She receives the image, reworks it, and returns it to Jesus. She sees the bread, the children eating the bread, and the dogs eating the crumbs that fall from the table. She radicalizes the experience of poverty, because she must know it very well. Nothing is said about abundance, about being satiated. The theme is the lack of abundance”.

8. Jackson, 2002, p. 61.

any case, there is consensus among scholars that Matthew aggravates the situation of the Syrophoenician woman by making her Canaanite and by adding “Tyre” to Sidon (see the confirmation in Mt 11:21-22!, as well as Ezekiel 26-27, for example).<sup>9</sup>

Matthew includes her among the group of people imploring Jesus for saving action. She is at the center of a concentric structure that begins and ends with the healing of the blind, continues with the sign of Jonah, and finally surrounds the expulsion of demons from the Canaanite woman’s daughter with the two multiplications of the loaves (the allusion to the bread thrown to the dogs connects these three sections)<sup>10</sup>. Gail O’Day shows the difficulty of classify this story from the criticism of literary genres, because to be a story of miracle it lacks the description of it and to be said of Jesus it includes a lot of confrontational dialogue<sup>11</sup>. A text structure could be the following, proposed based on the 3+1 model:

The woman’s failed request (22): “have mercy” A  
Jesus’ response (23a): silence  
Disciples’ failed request (23b): “send her away” B  
Jesus’ answer (24): only lost sheep  
Woman’s failed request (25): “Help me”  
Jesus’s answer (26): children’s bread  
Successful request of the woman (27): “even the dogs” C  
Jesus’s response (28): “Let it be done unto you”<sup>12</sup>

---

9. Lee, 2014, p. 15; Jackson, 2002, p. 78, Note that, after the first mention in Genesis 9, Canaan reappears in the list of nations in Genesis 10 (see in particular v. 15), as the father of Sidon.

10. Richter Reimer, 1997, p. 154. Also see, Anderson (2001, p. 37).

11. O’Day, 2001, p. 116-117.

12. Lee, 2014, p. 14 brings as examples Mt 6:1-34 and Am 1:3-2:8; The 3+4 sayings from Proverbs 30 could be added.

The structure of 3 failed requests + 1 positive one points to surprise. It is also possible that Matthew wanted to associate her with her predecessor, Rahab: according to Joshua 2, Rahab knew the faith in YHWH very well and joined Israel. Rahab had negotiated the inclusion of herself and her blood family in Israel when they conquered Jericho. Rahab not only negotiated her survival: the text makes her the first person they encounter when they enter to spy out the land to be conquered and the first person to proclaim YHWH's saving deeds, as if to say: "All the people know of the powerful hand with which YHWH brought them out of Egypt and accompanied them through the desert; I want to be part of those people and that history". Rahab bears witness to YHWH's great deeds in the wilderness, while the Canaanite woman and the blind seeking sight (9:27) cry out using Christian terminology, particularly "Lord" (though also, "son of David," 9:28; 15:23).<sup>13</sup>

Joshua 2 and 6 tell us that Rahab was a woman of poor sexual reputation and low social status, indicated by the term *zōnâ* (prostitute, slut, single woman etc.) because she lived in the worst area of the city and because she did not live in her parents' house or were associate to a man. At the cost of its low status, saving grace is fully manifested: Even a woman of bad life, bad religion and bad ethnicity can become part of God's people if she knows how to recognize the powerful arm of YHWH and argue theologically with his agents! Ah, but this bad reputation will change! By the time she resurfaces in Matthew 1 she is the honorable wife of Salmon and mother of Boaz, no less, although a rabbinic tradition links her to Joshua himself.<sup>14</sup>

---

13. Richter Reimer, 1997, p. 155.

14. Humphries-Brooks, 2001, p. 139.

We see then that the lower one goes on the social, political, religious and gender scale, the “bigger” the miracle. In both the story of Rahab and that of the anonymous Canaanite woman, divine grace is magnified at the cost of confirming various kinds of prejudices against these women. In human eyes, they had nothing going for them. However, they had faith, perseverance, boldness, and a clear theological vision. However, as Gullotta puts it rather brutally, but not for that reason misguidedly regarding the Canaanite woman (but applicable to Rahab), this was an exceptional circumstance, not the “Great Commission”:

Whether she calls him Lord now or later doesn't really matter to Mateo: What matters is his recognition that he is a dog, that his place is under the master's table, and from there and only there can he receive the crumbs that fall from the master's table. She accepts her place but offers the positive traits of the animal she resembles, in this case eating the crumbs so that nothing goes to waste. In Matthew's mind, the centurion of Capernaum and the Canaanite woman are exceptions to Jesus' normative rule, which limits his ministry solely to the 'lost sheep of Israel' (Matthew 15:24). These are not normative encounters, but exceptional ones. [...] Throughout the story, Jesus remains in the position of power and grants the healing only after she has accepted and used the insult to reinforce Jesus' power over her. The shift in the narrative comes from the woman's ability to recognize not Jesus as the master, but herself as the dog and admit that both humans (Jews) and dogs (Gentiles) need bread.<sup>15</sup>

What should be done in the face of this realization? Of course, there are different reactions. For example, many feminists have praised the Canaanite woman's boldness over insult;

---

15. Gullotta, 2014, p. 335.

this seems to me to be hermeneutically accurate, as it does not deny the insult but offers a strategy for resilience. Another reaction is to recognize the social, historical, and religious limitations of Matthew and his community, which is the point of this author: do not romanticize the story, but rather recognize it as an exception to the Matean community's restrictive policy toward Gentiles. But... are there crumbs in the Kingdom?

From our perspective, Latin American, Lutheran and feminist, we must recognize the limits of the narrative, yes; But, in addition, a deconstructive work is necessary that affirms that these miracles are operated thanks to the faith of this woman and not in spite of her conditions; which is brought about by her challenging the corresponding Israelite men who do not wish to share her treasure, the disciples and Jesus himself (it is possible that there were female disciples as well, but they are not identified as such in this passage from Matthew). Thanks to their faith, Rahab and the Canaanite woman (and Ruth and other women) were admitted into the people of God, into the Kingdom of Heaven, and, thanks to having been admitted through their faith, any particular condition (ethnic, economic, marital status, with or without daughters, good or bad sexual reputation, etc.) becomes *adiaphoron*: Any particular condition makes them rich in the diversity of creatures, but insignificant in terms of salvation. (This isn't Matthew, of course, but Paul!).

### **The post-exorcism life of this anonymous Canaanite woman**

Has the Canaanite woman entered the Christian community? Why not? I can imagine a leadership role for a woman of her characteristics: assertive, confident in her needs, with impeccable theology, despite the fact that she herself confirms

the ethnic prejudice of Jesus and his disciples and despite not having the ethnic credentials required of the lost sheep of Israel. I imagine her, like Richter Reimer, a woman whose “ministry is to facilitate both the understanding of the different accesses to God’s salvific action, as well as the understanding of one’s own salvation in different contexts”<sup>16</sup>. I don’t imagine that the story corresponds to a true event so much as that it contains some reworked memories of the biography of one of several leaders of the first-century church.

## **Invitation to continue thinking about power and leadership**

As in so many biblical and more recent stories, women who are self-proclaimed leaders rarely find recognition and power. They are foreignized, questioned, boycotted, suspected, persecuted, and ignored, even by other women. Societies are based, among other elements, on an honor system, which regulates behavior without the need for physical violence. In traditional societies — and I suspect not only in them — authority and power are among the goods considered non-renewable.<sup>17</sup>

I wonder if that is the leadership model we want to practice.

And I also wonder if we are allowed to exercise another model of leadership.

I think we can also return here to the questions that the panelists at this conference have been giving us, such as the

---

16. Richter Reimer, 1997, p. 155.

17. Kirkpatrick (2005, p. 32): “Like all resources, honor was perceived as a limited good in the ancient world. [...] The resulting concern with protecting and maintaining one’s own honor produces an underlying current of potential conflict in social interactions, as parties seek an opportunity to gain honor while simultaneously being careful to preserve the honor they already possess”.

question of freedom or identity, defined by other people and by an entire worldview. Adding criticality, she invited us to continue evaluating our own roles as women in the “Canaanization” of other women or in allowing ourselves, like Jesus himself in another context, to say “if is not against our cause, is with us” ... even if she continues to be a Canaanite woman bothering us with her screams.

## References

- ANDERSON, Janice Capel. Matthew: Gender and Reading. In: BLICKENSTAFF, Marianne; LEVINE, Amy-Jill (org.). *A Feminist Companion to Matthew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001. p. 25-51.
- AVRIL, Anne Catherine. Las mujeres judías en la genealogía de Jesús según Mateo 1,1-17. *RIBLA*, Quito, v. 40, n. 3, p. 147-158, 2001.
- CARTER, Warren. Matthew and the Gentiles: Individual Conversion and / or Systemic Transformation? *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, [S.l.], v. 26, n. 3, p. 259-282, 2004.
- GULLOTTA, Daniel N. Among Dogs and Disciples: An Examination of the Story of the Canaanite Woman [Matthew 15:21–28] and the Question of the Gentile Mission within the Matthean Community. *Neotestamentica*, África do Sul, v. 48, n. 2, p. 325-340, 2014.
- HUMPHRIES-BROOKS, Stephenson. The Canaanite Women in Matthew. In: BLICKENSTAFF, Marianne; LEVINE, Amy-Jill (org.). *A Feminist Companion to Matthew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001. p. 138-156.
- JACKSON, Glenna S. “Have Mercy of Me”: The Story of the Canaanite Woman in Matthew 15.21-28. Londres / Nueva York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.

- KIRKPATRICK, Shane. *Competing for Honor: A Social-Scientific Reading of Daniel 1-6*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- LEE, Dorothy A. The Faith of the Canaanite Woman (Mt. 15.21-28): Narrative, Theology, Ministry. *Journal of Anglican Studies*, v. 13, n. 1, 2014.
- LEVINE, Amy-Jill. The Gospel of Matthew: Between Breaking and Continuity. In: NAVARRO PUERTO, Mercedes; PERRONI, Marinella; LEVINE, Amy-Jill (org.). *Gospels: Narrative and History*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015. p. 121-144.
- O'DAY, Gail R. Surprised By Faith: Jesus and The Canaanite Woman. In: BLICKENSTAFF, Marianne; LEVINE, Amy-Jill (org.). *A Feminist Companion to Matthew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001. p. 114-125.
- RICHTER REIMER, Ivoni. "No temáis... id a ver... y anunciad". Mujeres en el Evangelio de Mateo. *RIBLA*, Quito, v. 27, p. 146-147, 1997.
- SELVIDGE, Marla J. *Daughters of Jerusalem*. Kitchener: Herald Press, 1987.



















## CHAPTER 9.

# **Gender identities and sexual diversity: a genealogy on policies, rights and knowledge production**

*Andrea S. Musskopf*

This text aims to provide a genealogy of the theme proposed for the Thematic Table “Gender identities and sexual diversity: policies, rights and knowledge production” held at the VIII Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion. By carrying out this genealogy, we aim to give visibility to political and academic practices that have brought changes in the fields of rights and knowledge production. In addition to visibility, it is understood that knowledge or acknowledgment of these practices explicitly and (rein)forces the commitment to issues on sexual and gender diversity, affirming their presence, possibilities and challenges.

To construct this genealogy, I draw on my own memories of participation and involvement with the subject. Many of these issues are covered in other publications and materials that are used as sources for the construction of this text. Other information and data are added from complementary references, updating and expanding the memory framework and organizing the information as proposed.

The axes of analysis, as proposed by the Thematic Table, articulate issues within the scope of social movements, the production of scientific/academic knowledge and other forms of knowledge production, and theology and religious studies. In this sense, the text presents and discusses its developments in the past (part 1), reflects on more recent issues (part 2) and indicates possibilities for the current and future context (part 3). In this way, it seeks to contribute to situating the discussion in a broader historical perspective, critically reflecting on the paths taken and proposing alternatives that can help those who intend to continue walking along these paths.

## Exploring our queer past

“Queer” is a term that began to be used in the 1980s in some texts by scholars at the intersection of what can be called feminist studies and gay and lesbian studies.<sup>1</sup> Originally used in the context of political action, it soon came to represent a broad field of academic production that was consolidated, initially, as Queer Theory and, more recently, as Queer Studies.<sup>2</sup> To explore what is being called “our queer past”, however, we propose taking a step back to situate this “past” from the (at least) two perspectives that, as stated above, intersect, to understand how they impact it. When talking about gender and when talking about sexual diversity from a historical perspective, it is possible to establish different points of reference. In the case of feminism, for example, Elisabete Bicalho identifies six periods for a periodization of gender studies, namely: 1°. Philosophical movement of the *Enlightenment* and the Liberal

---

1. Teresa de Lauretis and Judith Butler are generally identified as the first authors to use this term in their theoretical reflections.

2. Musskopf, 2019.

Revolution (17th and 18th centuries); 2nd. Formation of classical social thought (19th century); 3rd. Suffragism and social sciences (1880-1940); 4th. Classical phase of feminine reflection (1940-1965); 5th. Reflection of New Feminism (1965-1979); 6th. Gender Theory (1980s).<sup>3</sup> As the author herself states, this is not a definitive periodization, but a possible organization to perceive certain developments in the feminist field until reaching the emergence of the gender category and the development of a field of studies that is articulated from it – which is the interest in this text.

Likewise, I myself articulated a proposal for periodization in dialogue with other authors, identifying different moments of political action and academic practice implied in the category “queer” or in the expression “sexual and gender diversity”<sup>4</sup>. In this periodization, which already establishes a relationship with the field of theological reflection, I identify three periods: 1st. The emergence of a subject and the construction of an identity (19th century); 2nd. The consolidation of an identity (1970); 3rd. The destabilization of identity discourse (1980)<sup>5</sup>. In relation to theological reflection, this periodization is expressed graphically as follows:

---

3. Bicalho, 1992.

4. Queer is used in this text as equal to “sexual and gender diversity”. Although this expression does not include all the possibilities and potentialities of the term queer in English-speaking contexts, it has been used to represent a broad field of political and academic action that, with all its contradictions, is what comes closest, in the Brazilian context, to what is implied in the category “queer” (also this one representing a broad universe with its own contradictions). See Musskopf (2019).

5. Musskopf, 2012, p. 172-208.

<b>Social movement</b>	<b>Academy</b>	<b>Theology</b>
Homophile movement	Studies on (homo) sexuality	Homosexual Theology
Gay/LGBT Liberation Movement	Gay and Lesbian Studies	Gay and Lesbian Theologies
Queer/LGBTIQA+ Movement	Queer Studies/Sexual and Gender Diversity	Queer theology

The two periodizations presented above have in common the relationship established between social movements/political action and academic research/theoretical reflection, a fundamental issue for understanding how these fields interrelate and the type of knowledge they produce. The other issue is that they are in the 1980s. Evidently, although they follow specific paths, they do not develop without dialogue and points of contact between them, as well as with other fields and perspectives, but they are deeply connected and feed off each other. For this very reason, both are important for reflecting on “our past”.

From a religious perspective, the table above makes explicit the systematization of a dialogue, appropriation and impact through different forms of theology (homosexual-gay-queer). In the field of feminist theology, it is also possible to trace a similar periodization.<sup>6</sup> In what follows, we will delve deeper into

---

6. Brunelli, 2000, p. 209-221. identifies the following phases in feminist theology in Latin America: 1. Preliminary phase – the emergence of women in the Church: 1960s, Liberation Theology, participation in CEB and pastorals – role and place of women; 2. First phase – theology and the “women’s question”: second half of the 1970s, women’s theological production, new hermeneutics; 3. Second phase – theology “from a woman’s perspective”: 1980s, perceiving and denouncing the androcentric, patriarchal and rational nature of theological discourse, biblical re-interpretation, valuing the sensitive, the experience, the everyday, the celebratory; 4. Third phase – feminist theology and gender mediation.

the issues related to religion in the field of sexual and gender diversity studies. However, particularly in the theological discussion and from a Latin American perspective, it is important not to forget “our feminist past”.

## **Homosexual-gay-queer theologies in Latin America**

The categorization of different theological discourses and practices into “homosexual”, “gay” and “queer”, although it responds to certain developments in the academic/scientific and political fields, it does not always identify specific productions that can articulate different perspectives. In terms of distinction, a homosexual theology or theology about homosexuality relates to the medical perspective that coined the term “homosexual” in the 19th century, but remains present in contemporary elaborations. Even though they have played (and continue to play) an important role in drawing attention to the experience of certain subjects and social groups, their limitations are quite evident, since, even in the field of theology and religious practice, they repeat the idea of a uniform subject and a homogeneous group and, in general, over which certain suspicions and second-class citizenship hang. This is what, when assumed in an affirmative stance, is called an apologetic or defensive perspective, generally seeking to respond (positively) “what science says about...”, “what tradition says about...”, “what does the Bible say about...” and “what pastoral practice says about...”<sup>7</sup>.

This perspective is present in many discussions and controversies in the context of Christian churches in Latin America and the world. It is also present in the theological elaborations of

---

7. This and the other perspectives mentioned in what follows are discussed in relation to biblical interpretation in Musskopf (2023).

many NGOs and groups in Latin America that have confronted the HIV/AIDS pandemic against the strong homophobic appeal reinforced by institutions and religious leaders on the continent in relation to the pandemic.<sup>8</sup> But there we can also see elements of what has been configured as gay theology and even more radical positions and constructions in what can be understood as queer theology. In many ways, the identity agenda, not exclusive to gay and lesbian movements, made possible what in Liberation Theology was called the “emerging theological subject”. It is this perspective, with its gains and its limitations, still dependent on a relatively homogeneous and uniform social subject, even when marked more by an offensive perspective of claiming rights, that also appears in the emergence of inclusive or LGBT groups and churches in the 1990s and, more fully, in the early 2000s.<sup>9</sup>

It is within this movement of emergence of a gay theology, in a more visible and systematized way in which several theologians are located that began to write and publish their reflections in this field. Participation in social movements (especially those related to combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic), in inclusive groups and churches, and academic production are intertwined in the trajectory of these leaders in Latin America. Likewise, their relationship with Latin American Liberation Theology, with self-identified gay theological productions from other contexts and other liberation theologies (feminist, black, peasant), appears as a characteristic of this group that can be identified as a first generation of gay theologians. Again, regardless of how leaders and scholars have sought to identify their work, the

---

8. See Musskopf (2023).

9. See Musskopf (2023).

boundaries between what can be identified as homosexual theology, gay theology, or queer theology can be very tenuous and articulated in different ways. Along this path, it was undoubtedly Marcella Althaus-Reid's work that gave the most visibility and boosted queer theological production – which she initially called “indecent”<sup>10</sup>. Both in her own production and in the work developed by religious leaders and researchers on the continent, the way in which Marcella articulated liberation theology, feminist theology and gay and lesbian theology with feminist, queer and post-colonial studies appears in a blunt form in the most recent production in this field.<sup>11</sup> But before going into more detail about this most recent production, there are other elements to consider.

## **Reclusion and invisibilization**

The periodization of gay and lesbian movements and/or sexual and gender diversity in the Latin American context does not necessarily coincide with other contexts, particularly in Europe and North America, which generally serve as the basis for historical analysis. Regina Facchini, for example, reflects on the path taken by the LGBTI movement in Brazil in three acts: Act I. Centering: from the dispute between *be* or *being* homosexual to sexual orientation; Act II. Citizenship and decentering: from combating homophobia to combating LGBTphobia; Act III. Multiplication of fields: the fight against LGBTphobia and the emphasis on experience.<sup>12</sup> In this periodization it is possible

---

10. Althaus-Reid, 2001.

11. The Indecent Theological Essays Series fits into this context. See also the publications: Cooper (2021); Isherwood e Córdova-Quero (2021); Musskopf e Freire (2021).

12. Facchini, 2018, p. 311-330.

to perceive alterations and changes in the political field and in the production of knowledge in this particular context.

Since the redemocratization process in Brazil, it has been possible to see a strengthening of social movements and the guarantee of rights, which the main expression is in the 1988 Constitution. Regarding issues of sexual and gender diversity, more significant changes in the field of public policies occurred more visibly in the 2000s. It was in the context of governments more left-handed that concrete actions appeared such as: Brazil Without Homophobia Program [Programa Brasil sem homofobia], which was an important milestone in addressing these issues at the government level, the creation of the National Council for Sexual Diversity with the holding of National Conferences on Public Policies and LGBT Human Rights and the presentation of National Plans for the Promotion of LGBT Citizenship and Human Rights until the establishment of a National LGBT System.

In addition to the political action of social movements, the construction and consolidation of a field of studies in this area also contributed to these changes. The growth in the number of researchers, the creation of research groups and organizations such as the Brazilian Association for Studies on Homoculture/ Sexual and Gender Diversity (ABEH)<sup>13</sup> and the consequent increase in publications, creation of specialized academic journals and holding of events at local, regional and national levels express the vitality and developments in research and academy.

Despite these developments, whether in the political field (social movements and governments) or in the academic field,

---

13. The concept of “homoculture” was used in the formation of the association, which was gradually abandoned. Currently, the Association maintains the acronym (ABEH), but uses “sexual and gender diversity” as a demarcation of its scope.

the presence of discussion on religion and theology remained restricted. Generally seen as the main historical enemy in the advancement of agendas on sexual and gender diversity, both the involvement of religious sectors and groups in the fight for the recognition of citizenship and rights, and the production of knowledge about religion from the perspective of sexual and gender diversity were viewed with great suspicion and any relationship with the issue of religion was seen as a problem from the point of view of the secularity of the State.<sup>14</sup>

In the religious and theological field itself there was a certain “reclusion” in the early 2000s. The lack of a certain sense of urgency with the advancement of public policies and the recognition of some rights may have weakened the actions of those more activist religious groups in the 1990s (including the disappearance of some). On the other hand, the emergence of a new wave of religious groups and inclusive churches more focused on religious practice and less involved in addressing theological issues in the more traditional field may also have discouraged theological reflection and academic production in general.

While in the 1990s and early 2000s, theologies identified as gay/lesbian/queer appeared in the broad spectrum of “faces” or emerging subjects in Latin American liberation theology (in events and publications), this perspective also practically disappeared in the subsequent period. The adoption of new approaches by some liberation theologians, for example, suggested that certain questions related to the various new subjects of theology were being incorporated into their reflections. And, even if there was a change in vocabulary and even the inclusion of new theoretical references, the deeper questions related to

---

14. See Muszkopf (2021).

the questioning of cisgender/straight/patriarchal systems and structures (political, institutional and thoughts) remained untouched and were solemnly ignored (generally as “excesses” or secondary issues).

Thus, for various reasons, both political action and the production of knowledge at the interface between religion and sexual diversity (from a queer perspective) underwent a process of reclusion and invisibility in the early 2000s. Work and production, however, did not stop, and subsequent developments reveal the importance of what was created during this period for the possibility of a “return” with more strength and maturity.

## **A new wave**

The relative invisibility and lack of space for homosexual-gay-queer theologies in the first decade of the 2000s does not reflect the work being developed within social movements (especially in inclusive groups and churches) and in political participation or in the production of academic knowledge within and outside theology. The actions and production of previous decades undoubtedly paved the way for sexual and gender diversity issues to appear in other ways in different spaces, perhaps in a movement (act) that Regina Facchini called the multiplication of fields (see above).

Themes of sexual and gender diversity have appeared in various religious organizations in different forms. Especially in the ecumenical field, organizations as Ceca, Ceseep, CEBI, even CONIC, among others, in Brazil, or in Latin America as Cetela and Clai incorporated in different ways, issues of sexual and gender diversity on their agendas. This is evident in meeting themes and specific projects, publications and actions developed

by these organizations. New groups and networks, emerging both from a more traditional ecumenical movement (as Reju, for instance), and others in the evangelical field, as Evangelicxs, or even new denominational groups like Lutheran Inclusion, Catholic Diversity and Methodist Inclusion, appeared as an effort by a new generation that, to a large extent, was nourished by the struggle and production that has preceded them. A new wave of inclusive churches (as in the case of ICM) completes this picture that reveals a certain assimilation of issues of sexual and gender diversity in religious spheres, at least in some sectors. The setbacks experienced in the period immediately after also confirm this renewed movement that they wanted to stop at all costs.

From the point of view of academic theological production, the situation slowly began to change. The weakening of the most recognized and traditional centers of theological education Latin America, however, was a factor that contributed to the aforementioned reclusion, but which also began to be broken by a new generation of students and researchers who entered training in this field with a different political and social context in relation to issues of sexual and gender diversity – although in the religious and ecclesiastical sphere things have not changed that much. Without a recognized and consolidated space in the academic field, the articulation of a Latin American queer theology continued to be developed in some gaps and alternative paths.

In 2012, in an unprecedented initiative on the continent, the Ecumenical Research Department (ERD) convened a diverse group of researchers, activists and religious leaders for the

1° Queer Theology Symposium.<sup>15</sup> The event brought together people working in different contexts, but who, in a certain sense, already formed an informal network of agents identified in one way or another with this field. Several of these people met again in 2015, during the IV Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion<sup>16</sup> and, from that meeting, they decided to create a Network of Queer Theologies and Pastorals<sup>17</sup> and a periodical called Queer Connection – Latin American and Caribbean Journal of Queer Theologies.<sup>18</sup>

This articulation continued in other Latin American Congresses on Gender and Religion<sup>19</sup>, but also in new spaces created for such discussions such as the 1st LGBTI+ Churches and Community Congress, held in 2019 and the articulation of the People of faith Block, at the LGBT parade in São Paulo. Likewise, the holding of the II International Symposium on Queer Theories and Theologies at DEI, in 2022, reflects the search to consolidate spaces and give continuity to queer theological production on the continent. In the broader academic context, the ongoing effort of academic production on sexual and gender diversity continued to manifest itself in events such as the ABEH Congresses, the National Meetings of University Students on Sexual Diversity (ENUDES) and new events and articulations such as the International Seminar Undoing Gender, which had its first edition in 2013.<sup>20</sup> In many of these spaces,

---

15. See Boehler *et al.* (2013).

16. See Declaration of the Queer Theologies Working Groups (2015).

17. Available at: <https://redteologiapastoralqueer.weebly.com/>.

18. Available at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/conexionqueer/>.

19. See Declaration of São Leopoldo (2019).

20. According to the website of the 2015 event, which took place at UFBA: “The International Seminar Undoing Gender was created after an exchange of ideas between some researchers and activists linked to queer studies in Brazil.

there is a noticeable interest and greater acceptance of discussions in the field of religion, with the inclusion of related themes in different event spaces. The importance that religious issues have assumed on the national and regional scene has possibly also contributed to this, shaping issues related to our present.

## **Our queer present**

From the perspective of academic theological production, although it is possible to identify a queer past that is moving towards maturity, its location in the institutions and departments of Theology and Religious Sciences (Area 44 of CAPES) remains closely linked to the field of feminist and gender studies. To a large extent, it is in the relationship with feminist theologies and gender and religious studies that more systematic training and production in queer terms develops. In this field it is possible to identify not only individual researchers, but Research Groups<sup>21</sup>,

---

After detecting the difficulty of inserting their other theoretical, conceptual and methodological perspectives into the events already existing in the country, the proposal was to create a space for dialogue between people who work with queer studies, in their interface with studies of subalternities and post-coloniality. Therefore, the Seminar was named after one of the books by feminist philosopher Judith Butler. Furthermore, the objective is also to contribute to modifying the geopolitics of knowledge production in our area and to emphasize the importance of the work that has been developed in the Northeast of Brazil” (II International Seminar Undoing Gender. Available at: <http://www.desfazendogenero.ufba.br/>).

21. For instance: Mandrágora – Netmal: Gender and Religion Study Group (Umesp), Gender Research Center (EST Colleges), GREPO – Research Group on Gender, Religion and Politics (PUC-SP), Affective-Sexual Diversity and Theology Research Group (FAJE), REDUGE – Religion, Education and Gender Research Group (UFJF), REGEPODE – Religion, Gender and Power Research Group (PUC-GO), REGEVI – Religion, Gender and Violence Research Group: Human Rights (Unida).

specialized publications<sup>22</sup> and academic events<sup>23</sup> that configures a consolidated academic space. Looked at from the other side, could be said that “the gender became queer” and this is evident in the counter-offensive of conservative groups, manifested in the infamous expression “gender ideology”, used as propaganda by these groups.

The entire campaign against what has been called “gender ideology” involves many of the issues that have marked Latin America in recent years and continue to resonate, posing concrete challenges in the fields of politics, rights and the production of knowledge in the context of religion. Decisively articulated by religious groups, the campaign against “gender ideology” was triggered as a moral panic and used by political sectors to promote their agenda.<sup>24</sup> In several countries it was used to weaken governments considered left-handed, in electoral processes and in the most diverse social and political sectors. The result in many contexts, such as Brazil, was the rise of far-right governments with harsh attacks on public policies in the most diverse sectors, particularly in the fields of education and academy/science.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the violence and inequalities generated by this type of policy. On the one hand, the denial of scientific knowledge as valid and relevant by political authorities has had devastating implications in its direct effects on the population, but also on

---

22. For example: Mandrágora Magazine (Umesp) and Things of Gender (EST); also thematic dossiers in the main magazines in the area.

23. For example: Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion (EST), Thematic, Working and Symposium Groups at events held by the main associations in the area (SOTER, Anptecre, ABHR).

24. Junqueira, 2017, p. 25-52; Miskolci; Campana, 2017.

the scientific community itself and its credibility. Even though the measures implemented, in some cases forcibly, as a result of scientific knowledge (both in relation to prevention measures and treatments) have effectively allowed the situation to be addressed in the public health sphere, significant sectors continue to question issues related to science and education, particularly when related to gender and sexuality and/or sexual rights and reproductive rights. On the other hand, the pandemic itself, due to several of its characteristics, affected women and the LGBTQIA+ population differently, aggravating social vulnerability and the guarantee of rights.

In both the political and scientific fields, religious data provided fuel that favored the impact of these campaigns in the most diverse sectors. This has manifested (and continues to manifest) in the various fundamentalisms that function in conjunction with one another. And the monoculture of knowledge prevails as an expression of economic, political, cultural and religious beliefs. Even so, such political processes were not further aggravated and were resisted due to the articulation in the field of social movements, many of them with new configurations caused by previous historical developments, but also by the urgencies posed by the present. There is a great debate about the massive spontaneous movements that took place in Brazil in 2013 and their effects.<sup>25</sup> Some perceptions indicate the inability of the government at the time to understand and deal with new formats and processes of social movements and how these movements were important in facing what would come after that. The occupation of secondary schools in 2016 was an important movement, including in the construction of

---

25. See Veja Souza (2019).

feminist and anti-racist agendas among youths. Before that, in 2015, there was talk of a “feminist spring” when several feminist and youth collectives took to the streets to block Bill 5069/2013 by the president of the Chamber of Deputies at time, Eduardo Cunha, which fed into and strengthened other movements such as the Slut Walk. Many of these articulations were also important in the #himnot movement, with large demonstrations across the country against then presidential candidate Jair Messias Bolsonaro. Although these movements did not prevent his election and the implementation of an anti-rights agenda, they strengthened resistance processes in this new context.

There were similar processes throughout Latin America. Groups and movements such as #notoneless, we want to live!, the “green wave” for the legalization of abortion and the performances of the Chilean collective *Las Tesis* that spread throughout the continent and beyond, are some examples of great mobilization. Furthermore, the international strike for March 8, called for the first time in 2019 and which began to articulate the 8M movement around the world, highlights the confrontation and resistance to conservative movements, especially in relation to the agenda of sexual rights and reproductive rights.

It was in this context that the category “gender” took on different meanings and uses. In the field of feminist and queer political and academic discussion, she had already gone through a series of questions, since the distrust of many groups regarding the weakening of the feminist agenda due to the replacement by “gender”, seen by some sectors as a “less aggressive way” of naming the political agenda, even theoretical questions from the context of the emerging queer theory or studies<sup>26</sup>. The

---

26. Just look at the classics *Gender trouble* and *Undoing gender*, by Judith Butler.

syntagm “gender ideology”, as Rogério Junqueira found out and became evident in the various campaigns promoted in various social media, the term was inflated to mean issues related to the LGBTQIAPN+ population, including abortion, sexual education, pedophilia and even the ancient ghost of communism. In one way or another, the category of gender has been “queered”, coming to represent a wide range of issues, and this has also impacted the discussion within the scope of religious studies and queer theological reflection.<sup>27</sup>

## **Our queer future**

There are many questions to be explored and analyzed regarding the genealogy presented here. In any case, it serves to make it clear that we already have a Latin American “queer past,” which includes a list of martyrs and ancestors. More than that, it also makes explicit a “queer present” that is quite complicated in view of the political, economic, religious and social situation on our continent and the need for a continuous commitment to these issues in political action to defend rights and in the production of knowledge.

Looking to the future, it will be important to continue the discussion on the different categories used both as an axis of analysis and to name our actions and productions. The way in which “gender” will continue to fluctuate as part of conservative and reactionary practices and discourses, and the impact of this on queer political and academic action will need to be analyzed as a possibility for deepening issues of sexual and gender diver-

---

27. Junqueira, 2017. According to the author: ““In fact, since the second half of the 1990s, in an effort to find combinations that would work best in the media and political spaces, there have been numerous forms of declination in the documents of the Roman Curia, the episcopal conferences and their allies”.

sity or as a hindrance to possible and necessary dialogues and advances. The very use of acronyms in their various variations (such as LGBTQIAPN+) is part of this mobile and disputed field of identity categories that still guarantee some achievements in terms of rights, but are always limited in terms of their representation. “Queer” continues to be, in the Latin American context, an ambiguous term that fulfills the same function: be useful as a category and in certain contexts (especially academic reflection), but not very communicative in terms of political articulation and guarantee of rights.

However, this apparent “difficulty” with the different categories due to their instability does not need to be seen as a problem to be solved, but rather as a result of what the theoretical and political field itself proposes and expresses. Some classic definitions regarding “queer”, for example, can help to “make peace” with this fluidity as a fundamental part of what is intended. Definitions like those presented by Eve K. Sedgwick, for example, can be useful to not lose this reference. For her, queer expressed (in the 1980s):

An open web of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of one’s gender, of one’s sexuality are not made (or cannot be made) to signify monolithically.<sup>28</sup>

Likewise, it will be important to resume the discussion of what we mean when we say “theology” and “religion”. We are talking about the religious experiences of communities and

---

28. SEDGWICK, 1993, p. 8. Stephen D. Moore (2001, p. 18) argues that queer theory, more than a methodology, is a sensibility. To William B. Turner, a post-structuralist analysis proves that “many people do not fit into the available categories and that such failure to fit reflects a problem not with the people but with the categories” (Turner, 2000, p. 32).

groups (fluid, unstable and mixed themselves)<sup>29</sup> and what in Latin America was called popular religiosity or the systematizations produced within religious institutions and academia (what Marcella Althaus-Reid called T-theology), often marked by idealisms distant from people's lives? And what is the relationship between them? It is not necessary to choose, but it seems to me that sometimes these different "forms" of theology are confused and the "concrete existential ground"<sup>30</sup> of religion is forgotten as the primary source of any theological reflection. Here, Ivone Gebara's concept of "religious biodiversity" can be useful, especially in the necessary dialogue with ecofeminist theology and in the construction of a queer ecotheology:

Religious biodiversity opens the doors to another type of consideration, although we are aware of its inherent limits. It is also about biodiversity within a religious confession and not just respect for what is different, completely distant from us. It is about admitting that a religious web is woven from the experience of men and women, white, black, yellow or mixed race, heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. This web of suffering, joy and hope, although it has a similar background for different groups, is experienced in its differences, in its particularity, in its own historicity.<sup>31</sup>

An important element of this definition is the critique of denominationalism and its colonial heritage, which is sometimes also present in some branches of churches and inclusive religious groups. The idea of religious biodiversity relates to an

---

29. See Gebara (2000, p. 81-80) on mixture as an anthropological concept.

30. Accordingly Gebara (1997, p. 92-93): "Our religious values and symbols no longer have a concrete existential basis. [...] The symbols that signify our dreams are sick and can no longer energize our existence".

31. Gebara, 1997, p. 105.

agroecothological perspective that seeks an erotic relationship with the earth<sup>32</sup>, dismantling economic, religious and sexual fundamentalisms and which is done as indecency<sup>33</sup>, per/verting the order of the systems that organize life. The perspective of the ecology of knowledge<sup>34</sup> allied with decolonial feminism<sup>35</sup> could help us face topics that are little explored among us, such as social class (capitalism), whiteness (racism) and masculinity (patriarchy). There are no defined routes. Only paths to be explored and followed in the construction of policies, in the guarantee of rights and in the production of relevant knowledge.

## References

- ALTHAUS-REID, Marcella. *Indecent Theology*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- BICALHO, Elizabete. Correntes feministas e abordagens de gênero. In: SOTER (org.). *Gênero e teologia*. São Pulo, Belo Horizonte: Paulinas, Loyola, SOTER, 2002. p. 37-50.
- BOEHLER, Genilma; BEDURKE, Lars; SILVA, Silvia Regina de Lima (org.). *Teorías queer y teologías: estar... em otro lugar*. San José, Costa Rica: Editorial DEI, 2013.
- BRUNELLI, Delir. Teologia e gênero. In: SUSIN, Luiz Carlos (org.). *Sarça ardente*. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2000. p. 209-221.
- CARDOSO PEREIRA, Nancy. Da agropornografia à agroecologia: uma aproximação queer conta as elites vegetais... em comunicação com o solo. In: MUSSKOPF, Andrea [André] S.; BLASI, Marcia (org.). *História, saúde e direitos*. São Leopoldo: CECBI, 2016. p. 35-42.

---

32. Cardoso Pereira, 2016, p. 35-42.

33. Althaus-Reid, 2001.

34. Santos, 2010.

35. Segato, 2021.

- COOPER, Thia. *Queer and indecent: An Introduction to the Theology of Marcella Althaus-Reid*. London: SCM, 2021.
- DECLARAÇÃO de São Leopoldo (2019) – Rede Inter-Religiosa Global. Available at: GIN (2019) – Declaracao Sao Leopoldo. pages (filesusr.com). Accessed on: January 30, 2024.
- DECLARAÇÃO dos Grupos de Trabalho das Teologias Queer (2015). Available at: Declaração do Grupo de Trabalho Queer Theologies 2015 (filesusr.com). Accessed on: January 30, 2024.
- FACHINI, Regina. Múltiplas identidades, diferentes enquadramentos e visibilidades: um olhar para os 40 anos do movimento LGBT. In: GREEN, James N.; QUINALHA, Renan; CAETANO, Marcio; FERNANDES, Marisa (org.). *História do Movimento LGBT no Brasil*. São Paulo: alameda, 2018. p. 311-330.
- GEBARA, Ivone. *A mobilidade da senzala feminina*. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2000.
- GEBARA, Ivone. *Teologia ecofeminista*. São Paulo; Olho d'Água, 1997.
- GOMARIZ, Enrique. Los Estudios de Género y sus fuentes Epistemologicas: Periodización y Perspectivas. *Revista fin del Siglo – género y cambio civilizatorio*. Isis Internacional (org.). Ediciones de las mujeres, n. 17, 1992.
- ISHERWOOD, Lisa; CÓRDOVA-QUERO, Hugo (ed.). *The indecent theologies of Marcella Althaus-Reid*. London: Routledge, 2021.
- JUNQUEIRA, Rogério Diniz. “Ideologia de gênero”: a gênese de uma categoria política reacionária – ou: a promoção dos direitos humanos se tornou uma “ameaça à família natural”?. In: RIBEIRO, Paula Regina Costa; MAGALHÃES, Joanalira Corpes (org.). *Debates contemporâneos sobre Educação para a sexualidade*. Rio Grande: Ed. Da FURG, 2017. p. 25-52.

- MISKOLCI, Richard; CAMPANA, Maximiliano. “Ideologia de gênero”: notas para a genealogia de um pânico moral contemporâneo. *Revista Sociedade e Estado*, v. 32, n. 3, p. 725-747, set./dez. 2017. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/se/a/Ns5kmRtMcSXDY78j9L8fMFL/abstract/?lang=pt>. Accessed on: April 29, 2024.
- MOORE, Stephen D. *God’s Beauty Parlor*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
- MUSSKOPF, Andrea [André] S. *Fazemos a teologia que podemos*. Rio de Janeiro: Metanoia, 2023. Série Ensaios Teológicos Indecentes, vol. 4.
- MUSSKOPF, Andrea [André] S. *Nem Santo te protege*. Rio de Janeiro: Metanoia, 2023. Série Ensaios Teológicos Indecentes, vol. 1.
- MUSSKOPF, Andrea [André] S. *Que comece a festa*. Rio de Janeiro: Metanoia, 2023. Série Ensaios Teológicos Indecentes, vol. 2.
- MUSSKOPF, Andrea [André] S. *Tan queer como sea posible*. *Revista Concilium*, n. 383, p. 11-20, nov. 2019.
- MUSSKOPF, Andrea [André] S. Teologia Queer e grupos cristãos LGBTQIA+ na América Latina. *Interações*, v. 16, n. 1, p. 208-216, 30 mar. 2021.
- MUSSKOPF, Andrea [André] S. *Via(da)gens teológicas – Itinerários para uma teologia queer no Brasil*. São Paulo: Fonte Editorial, 2012. p. 172-208.
- MUSSKOPF, Andrea [André] S.; FREIRE, Ana Ester Pádua (org.). *Religião e indecência: Diálogos com Marcella Althaus-Reid*. Rio de Janeiro: Metanoia, 2021.
- SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa. Para além do pensamento abissal: das linhas globais a uma ecologia de saberes. In: SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa; MENESES, Maria Paula. *Epistemologias do sul*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2010.

- SEDGWICK, Eve K. *Tendencies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.
- SEGATO, Rita. *Crítica da colonialidade em oito ensaios*. Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo, 2021.
- SOUZA, Daniel Santos. *A revolta da ineficiência: os acontecimentos de junho de 2013 no Brasil e suas destituições político-teológicas*. Tese de Doutorado. São Bernardo do Campo: Universidade Metodista de São Paulo, 2019.
- TURNER, William B. *A genealogy of queer theory*. Philadelphia: Temple, 2000.



## **Women in the brazilian semi-arid region: Participation, autonomy and freedom in the construction of environmental justice**

*Waneska Bonfim*

The relationships established between people and between people and the environment have generated serious changes in the climate. Socio-environmental conditions in the world already reveal that the current development model is the main cause of climate change and its consequences for life on the planet. It is a hegemonic model of exploitation of natural resources with the imposition of methods and narratives that disregard respect for nature and the need for fair and integrated relationships between the different expressions of life existing in the environment.

It is urgent and necessary to recognize that climate conditions in the world, and especially in Brazil, have strong gender, race and class implications. It is essential to realize that this reality in Brazil affects women, black people and those with more vulnerable economic conditions in different ways. This observation is essential to affirm that the consequences of these climate changes affect men and women differently.

In semi-arid regions, drought and dry spells require significant resilience. In Brazil, agroecology, with its foundations of mutual learning, experimentation and social technologies, presents itself as a methodological alternative for learning and coexisting with nature, demonstrating that it is possible to create favorable conditions for coexisting with the Brazilian semi-arid region, practicing low-carbon agriculture, resilient to climate change and generating decent living conditions in the countryside.

Under these conditions, this text will address power relations and their consequences on women's lives, while also proposing to highlight the contributions of women's participation, existing inequalities and the repercussions imposed on their lives and the environment. These aspects will be discussed based on the experience of Diaconia<sup>1</sup> on Coexistence with the Semiarid Region and Gender Justice, contributing to the recognition of the work, participation and public expression of women in family farming on an agroecological basis.

## **Agroecology and semiarid**

In Brazil, agroecology is gaining ground in the Semiarid region and is becoming a path towards socio-environmental equity, understood as an alternative that opposes the idea of exploitation while redesigning the production system and promoting social changes that enable effective transformation in people's lives. From the perspective of a counter-hegemonic

---

1. Diaconia – A non-profit social organization founded in 1967. With Christian inspiration, its assembly is made up of 11 Protestant churches. It is committed to justice, promoting and defending human rights. It is present in semi-arid territories of the Brazilian Northeast and its main commitment is to serve to transform lives. Website: [www.diaconia.org.br](http://www.diaconia.org.br); Social media: @diaconiabr

model, the conceptualization of agroecology presents itself as a commitment to socio-environmental justice, endorsed by Toledo when he argues that: “Agroecology represents an epistemological and methodological leap that provides new ways of doing science, a new scientific paradigm. It is a politically and socially committed science”<sup>2</sup>. Added to this perspective, interactions are highlighted, as Altieri discusses, who highlights agroecology as the science of positive interactions.<sup>3</sup> The conceptual conception of agroecology as a science begins with theoretical foundations related to a “agricultural approach, which incorporates special care regarding the environment, focusing not only on production, but on the ecological sustainability of the production system”<sup>4</sup>. Over the last 25 years, there have been many reflections, adaptations, and reformulations that have enriched the concept of agroecology and expanded the theoretical-conceptual field, based on practical experiences that have brought other elements to the science of interactions.

The Brazilian semi-arid region has been the locus of agroecological practices encouraged by organizations and social movements in the agroecological field, which defend agroecology as “a science that is based on the dynamics of nature and whose principles are applied in agriculture, social organization and the establishment of new forms of relationship between man (sic) and nature to guarantee the sustainability of planet Earth”<sup>5</sup>.

---

2. Toledo, 2018.

3. Altieri, 2002.

4. Hecht, 2002, p. 26.

5. Diaconia *et al.*, 2010.

In practice, agroecology is expressed in the recognition of popular wisdom arising from observation and experience in the field; the exchange of knowledge with mutual learning, especially among farming families; in experimentation with social technologies<sup>6</sup> of coexistence; the systematization of experiences; and collective political incidence. Any territory, whether in the countryside or in the city, can be a common place for experimentation or practices on an agroecological basis. In the Northeast of Brazil, especially in the semi-arid region, there are the most remarkable and successful experiences of strengthening coexistence, in contrast to the defense of combating drought and dry weather, disseminated for many years in Brazil.

In contrast to the prevailing perspective at the time, part of Brazilian civil society began to construct and defend structural measures for the sustainable development of the region, guiding a set of policies and practices based on the conviction of the possibility of coexisting with the Semiarid region, and no longer on combating drought, “abandoning the vision of the semi-arid region as a region full of limitations and lacking in potential”<sup>7</sup>.

## **Gender Justice and Agroecology – The Experience of Diaconia in the Semiarid Region**

Affirming agroecology as the science of interactions and with it the perspective of coexistence with the semi-arid region in contrast to the understanding of combating drought that prevailed in the region, Diaconia broadens the view on power relations and begins to introduce as a methodological basis the

---

6. Social technology is understood as a set of transformative techniques and methodologies, developed in interaction with the population, which represent solutions for social inclusion (Caccia Bava, 2004).

7. Jalfim, 2011.

perception of Gender Justice as fundamental to ensuring a sustainable transformation in the Brazilian semi-arid region.

To this end, the institution agrees with the understanding that the concept of gender arises to identify relationships between men and women as social constructions, based on what is established as feminine and masculine. These relationships are presented in a hierarchical manner and are commonly configured as power relations, having a structuring character to the set of social relations, and presenting themselves in specific ways if observed from the different identities that constitute each person (race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality etc.).

This hierarchical sociability constructs, disseminates and maintains social roles assigned to each sex, with the reinforcement of these symbols always focused on a duality, a binary logic where the attributes of strength and virility are attributed to the masculine, with permissive access to public spaces, etc.; and the feminine is attributed the condition of fragility, of permanent disposition to care for others; of impediment to the use and occupation of public spaces, etc.

**Patriarchy** is the driving force behind unequal relations between men and women, that “it is not only a system of domination anchored in the political and ideological fields, but also a system of exploitation that directly concerns the economic field, where women are the main target”<sup>8</sup>.

This violent system of domination of women is not confined to a specific culture, region or country, nor to particular groups of women within a society. The idea of intersectionality helps us to perceive the existence of a multiplicity of differenti-

---

8. Saffioti, 1987, p. 50.

ations that are linked to gender issues, but also permeate other aspects of the social field.

Rural women experience expressions of violence on a daily basis, whether physical, symbolic or patrimonial (the latter based on the invisibility of their economic production). Sometimes the economic results of the work of rural women are characterized as indirect income because they are intended for the family's own consumption, and therefore are not accounted for; sometimes they are counted in the set of products of the family production unit, so that their specific work ends up not being properly remunerated, restricting their financial autonomy and their protagonism.

Difficulties in accessing civil documentation in semi-arid areas impose legal restrictions on women and limit their access to social security policies and other rights, reinforcing the stigma of the invisibility of their work.

Considering this reality marked by inequalities that severely affect women's lives, Diaconia's actions take place, and it is in this scenario that Gender Justice presents itself as a fundamental aspect for overcoming oppression and for the realization of social justice, since it directly implies the protection and promotion of the dignity of women and men.

It is worth register, for the methodological sequence, that the institutional strategy is endorsed by a Gender Policy, developed as an instrument to strengthen the institutional identity as a defender of Human Rights; and as a tool to encourage the involvement of groups and collectives in actions to promote justice through the defense of women's rights. As the document states:

Gender Justice is expressed through balanced power relations between men and women and the elimination of interpersonal, institutional and cultural systems of privilege and oppression that sustain discrimination.<sup>9</sup>

From this perspective, the approach to coexistence with the semi-arid region implemented by Diaconia began to address the reality of women's lives, seeking to locate them in the family unit, giving visibility and identifying the aspects that affect them in the daily maintenance of the family's productive property. Referring to the different concepts and practices of agroecology, it is not possible to affirm this method and its benefits without knowing that **Without Gender Justice there is no agroecology.**

In the Semi-Arid region, Diaconia works with the Water–Food–Energy nexus. In these interconnections, women are touched by the three realities together and also separately – and it is in these realities that the direct consequences of climate change can be seen. In their daily lives, they are responsible for fetching water, preparing food and collecting firewood to cook food, among other tasks. Thus, in conditions of drought and dry spells, a consequence of climate change, women are the most affected by these phenomena. At the same time, when experiencing agroecological transitions, they are the ones that contribute most to mitigating and confronting this climate reality in Brazil, when they assimilate new methodologies and change the dynamics of caring for the home, the family and property management practices.

Everything that happens around the home is usually a woman's task, and falls within the scope of caring for the

---

9. Diaconia, 2016.

family and domestic activities. Women are also responsible for “helping” in the fields, work that is recognized as being the main responsibility of men. The diagnosis of this reality generated a methodological review, including a Gender Justice approach with rural women and men, favoring the visibility of women’s work, the valorization and monetization of labor, the focus on the fair division of domestic work, the social and political organization of women with leadership positions in groups, associations and unions, in addition to political advocacy to guarantee rights and perception about actions to mitigate and confront climate change.

Women came to the center of the debate on agroecological training and experience, giving visibility to the reproductive and productive work they carry out. One question has become basic at the beginning of any technical advisory and rural extension process practiced by Diaconia: **Where and How Are Women?** From there, agroecological advice begins within the family unit, with a joint recognition of property, use, possibilities and forms of management appropriate to mitigating and confronting climate change. Each family collectively prepares a property management plan, which must include the participation and involvement of women and a description of the property’s characteristics, use and work of everyone who makes up the family unit.

In this sense, Diaconia’s contribution to coexistence with the Semiarid region has materialized with the development of social practices and technologies, and with an impact on the implementation of public policies in line with the concept of sustainable development.

The strategies that encourage agroecological practices with Gender Justice and, consequently, contribute to mitigating

the effects of climate change are enhanced with activities that consider contexts, recognize accumulations, and value the knowledge of rural peoples. Specifically, three components are pursued to shed light on women's experiences:

1) Strengthening women's economic autonomy

This is a strategy to include and/or enhance women's participation in agroecological and artisanal production and marketing strategies, with ongoing encouragement of their presence in all stages of production, processing and marketing of products. This inclusion can guarantee or generate an increase in income with direct impacts on expanding women's financial autonomy, whether they are agroecological farmers or organized in markets and community networks of the solidarity economy.

This strategy also connects with the central objective of promoting gender justice, permanently providing favorable conditions for equal relationships between people; encouraging discussion on the topic among partners; promoting technical training actions, in such a way that it is possible to strengthen women's self-organization.

2) Promoting women's political organization and participation in decision-making spaces

One of the main objectives of institutional action in the field of promoting Gender Justice is to increase the qualified participation of women, not only in training activities, but also in those related to governance practices in decision-making spaces, be they rights councils, local associations, production and marketing networks, or organic compliance participation bodies (OPAC).

### 3) Strengthening women's participation in spaces for articulation and monitoring of government action

In general, Diaconia has invested in the articulation and strengthening of women and women's and feminist collectives to promote empowerment, build contextualized criticism and offer proposals to the State for a feasible public policy plan.

In practice, this line of action enables women organized in different collectives to build and participate in hearings, conferences and public events, in addition to demanding the functioning of equipment and programs that structure and implement public policies.

### **Autonomy and freedom: a horizon to pursue**

Understanding and valuing the role of women farmers in agroecological experiences contributes to analyzing and recognizing the relationship between Gender Justice and Climate Justice. Women in the Brazilian semi-arid region have played a fundamental role in mitigating and confronting climate change by recognizing themselves as the main people affected by the phenomena resulting from these changes and by finding resilient responses to the climate in daily practice.

Along this journey, results are recorded in the lives of women that have a positive impact on coexistence, health and family well-being. There is an increase in understanding about the role, participation and work of women. From there, analysis and reflection on the fair division of domestic work is ensured, with changes in habits in maintaining household chores and in the involvement of women in family, production and income generation decisions. Women are now considered part of agroecosystems, leading productive arrangements, with access to

income and decisions about financial investments. In the public sphere, women begin to occupy collective spaces, in leadership roles in groups and/or organizations. In doing so, they expand initiatives to report and address situations of violence that threaten women's lives and effectively contribute to public policies to strengthen family farming and coexistence with the semi-arid region, recognizing the participation and specificities of rural women.

Many results are listed, but there is still much to be done to consolidate the autonomy and freedom of all women in the semi-arid region. Thus, future commitments to training processes on Gender Justice are reaffirmed, including an approach to masculinities; the continuity of rural technical advisory processes on an agroecological basis; encouraging the Social and Political organization of women with a focus on participation and occupation in leadership roles; and, finally, the Collective Political incidence to ensure rights.

## References

- ALTIERI, Miguel. *Agroecologia: bases científicas para uma agricultura sustentável*. Guaíba: Editora Agropecuária, 2002.
- CACCIA BAVA, Silvia. *Tecnologia social e desenvolvimento local*. Instituto Pólis, 2004. Disponível em: [www.polis.org.br](http://www.polis.org.br).
- DIACONIA; CAATINGA; CENTRO SABIÁ. *III Caderno de Experiências: Agroecologia transforma paisagens desertificadas*. 2010.
- DIACONIA. Política de Justiça de Gênero. Recife, 2016. Accessed March 15, 2024. Available at: <https://composic.nyc3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/2021/02/09/cbOwLDRpGa.pdf>

- HECHT, Susanna B. A Evolução do Pensamento Agroecológico. In: ALTIERI, M. *Agroecologia: bases científicas para uma agricultura sustentável*. Guaíba: Editora Agropecuária, 2002.
- JALFIM, Felipe Tenório. Notas sobre a caminhada da Agroecologia no Semiárido Pernambucano. In: LIMA, J. R. T. de (Org.) *Agroecologia e Movimentos Sociais*. Recife: Bagaço, 2011.
- SAFFIOTI, Heleieth. *O poder do macho*. São Paulo: Moderna, 1987.
- TOLEDO, Victor Manuel. A Agroecologia é uma revolução epistemológica: depoimento. *Revista Agriculturas*, v. 13, n. 1, mar. 2016. Entrevista concedida a Diana Quiroz. Available at: <http://aspta.org.br>. Accessed on: April 16, 2018.

## **Mobility of brazilian women in the guianas: the connection between migration and domestic violence**

*Osvaldina dos Santos Araujo*

### **Initial considerations**

This text aims to discuss the relationship between domestic violence and the mobility of women into prostitution.<sup>1</sup> This study addresses the situation of women who knew, before migrating, that they would work in prostitution, but were not familiar with the working conditions. The methodological instruments used for data collection and analysis are based mainly on multi-sited ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews conducted in Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana, on the dynamics of mobility of Brazilian women through prostitution. The issue of domestic violence emerged as a relevant piece of information during the research, as it is a motivator for the mobility of women into the sex market.

---

1. This article is an excerpt from my doctoral thesis in sociology, entitled: *Frontières en mouvement et échanges économique-sexuels. Dynamiques migratoires des Brésiliennes au Suriname, en passant par le Guyana et la Guyane Française* developed at the University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès-L'UT2J in international co-supervision with the University of São Paulo-USP.

The intensification of the circulation of Brazilians in the Guianas has led to a dynamic of circulatory mobility in the region, contributing to the reconfiguration of relations in the multiple border territories that comprise it. The notion of transnational “circulatory territory”, from Alain Tarrus<sup>2</sup>, contributes as an analytical element to understanding this mobility on the border of the Northern region of Brazil. Several markets have been structured and are constantly being structured in these territories, opening up possibilities for the existence of “a own world” around networks of exchange of goods, aid, materials, economics and symbols, which revolve around the movement of people for gold mining, prostitution and commerce, reconfiguring social and institutional relations. They are meeting places for multiple ethnicities and nationalities, differing from other South American countries due to their greater cultural proximity to the Caribbean; They are inserted in the Pan-Amazon, in which, according to Luis Aragón<sup>3</sup>, “the majority of migrants come from the Amazon countries themselves, illegal migration is frequent, and cross-border migration occurs along Brazil’s border, but also on the borders of other countries”.

### **The sex market: mobility circuits**

Since the 1960s, mobility on the Brazil-Guyana border, involving migrants from both countries, has been noted<sup>4</sup>, and some research indicates that it was intense, including the one of women.<sup>5</sup> Although the 1990s were characterized by male migration across the Brazil-Venezuela-Guyana triple border,

---

2. Tarrus, 2001.

3. Aragón, 2009, p. 5.

4. Pereira, 2006.

5. Arouck, 2002; Simonian; Ferreira, 2005.

driven by the failure of colonization and settlement projects implemented in the 1970s, and by the closure of mining sites in Roraima, women were also initially present, in family regroupings or working in domestic services indirectly linked to mining. In the 2000s, the flow of women who migrated alone to work in Brazilian businesses intensified: in commerce, restaurants and areas linked to beauty salons.<sup>6</sup> Prostitution was and still is one of the sectors that attracts single women to work. Although mining activity absorbs sex work, some of the women attracted by it do not always go to mining areas to supply the sex market aimed at those who work there: they may migrate to Georgetown, for example, to prostitution clubs.

With regard to Suriname, the research indicates that the arrival of Brazilian women predates the large influx of men in the 1990s, but with their arrival, female migration increased, due to the demand for other services, mainly in the food sector (cooks, for example, began to be recruited more frequently), and there was a break in the monopoly of the sex market, which until then had been controlled by prostitution clubs. Information collected in the field shows that in the 1970s, Brazilian women were already migrating to prostitution in clubs, a migration that intensified in the 1980s. Field data reveal that female migration, in general, at that time had as its main destination clubs in Paramaribo or gold mines in the interior. Even though there have been changes, even today, in many situations the club is a transit point for those who want to work in that city or in the gold mines (whether in the sex market, as a cook in the gold mines, in stores, beauty salons, etc.), and, therefore, they often accept (temporary) work as a prostitute in one of them, since

---

6. Rodrigues, 2009, p. 223-236.

they do not have the resources to cover travel expenses and end up getting into debt with the clubs.

Just as in Suriname, in the brothels in Guyana, especially those owned by Guyanese, women generally arrive with a debt, have their passports withheld, live in places defined by them, have schedules to follow, cannot be late for work, are prohibited from returning to their homes while there are clients in the room, and must encourage them to consume at the bar — in other words, they follow numerous rules established by the owners, which, if broken, result in fines that vary according to the severity of the rule, increasing the amount of their debt with the establishment.

In Guyana and Suriname, clubs, which are registered as hotels and/or bars, are constantly changing their operating strategy to avoid situations that could cause them legal problems. The scenario observed in the clubs is an attempt to camouflage the type of service they sell, in a clear lack of respect for sex workers, who, due to their lack of knowledge of the language and the legal aspect of prostitution in the country, combined with the fact that there is a moral commitment to pay the “agreed” debt with those who “helped” them, believe they have contracts that need to be fulfilled, paving the way for real and potential criminal proceedings against them.

In French Guiana there is prostitution linked to mining — in the interior and on the border with Suriname and Brazil —, in which Brazilian women work, mostly, and there is prostitution on the street and/or in bars and nightclubs, mainly in coastal cities (Cayenne, Kourou and Saint Laurent du Maroni), but it is hidden.<sup>7</sup>

---

7. Guillemaut; Samson, 2011.

The contrast between the reality of the sex market in Guyana and Suriname and the French department is great, especially due to the lack of a prostitution club structure, giving rise to a more traditional, subtle, less branched market, which results in the presence of sex workers in public places that do not go unnoticed, and also for occasional prostitution, to supplement income, practiced by foreigners and nationals.

## **Migration and domestic violence**

Violence is an issue that is present in the trajectories of the women interviewed. Sexual assault and abuse are some of the dangers present in the crossing and in the movement of women across the border, and cases of gender-based violence in marital relationships in Brazil or in the host country have also been reported. For some women, domestic violence was one of the constitutive elements of the decision to migrate, both for those who decided to go to a prostitution club and for some who go to work in domestic services: The prospect was to work and also leave Brazil, to stay out of the reach of their husband/partner, or ex – husband/partner, since they were victims of violence by him, with some even receiving death threats. For some, the husband's feeling of possession made him not accept the possibility of separation, with situations of domination incorporated as symbolic violence.<sup>8</sup> These women sought to rebuild their lives far from Brazil and in safety, but, as the reports of some point out, migrating did not mean the end of gender violence, nor of remnants of traditional patriarchal behavior in society.

---

8. Bourdieu, 1998.

Lara<sup>9</sup>, 52 years old, owner of a canteen<sup>10</sup> and cabaret<sup>11</sup>, three children. She went to Suriname in 1982, to join the club. She was 26 years old and wanted to escape from her husband. If she hadn't migrated, she could have become another number in the statistics of femicide victims:

I met Vânia and Marlon's father. I lived with him for about four years, I think. He was very mean to me. He was very jealous, he beat me, you know? So, he kept saying that if I left him, he would kill me. [...] He was mean to me. I would also go after him, and he would hit me. He even stabbed me twice, and I almost died. Then he stole Marlon from me, when he was one year old. And he blackmailed me: if I didn't get back with him, he wouldn't give me my children anymore.[...] To me, he was a criminal, you know, who wanted to beat me all the time, out of jealousy. His jealousy was horrible. So, he blackmailed me, and then I got back with him. But when I got back with him, I didn't like him anymore, you know? [...] But he had a sister, she would travel here to Suriname, she would come to the club, and then, his mother — who was the mother of the father of my children, Vânia and Marlon — said: 'I know that my son, he's worthless', she said to me like this, 'There's only one chance for you: I'll write to Paulina and you'll go to Suriname'" (Lara, 52 years old, owner of a canteen and cabaret).

The person who arranged her trip was her sister-in-law, who already worked at a club in Suriname. When she went, she

---

9. Fictitious names will be used to identify the interviewees and other people mentioned in the text.

10. Small business that sells a little bit of everything (food, clothes, shoes, motorcycle parts and machinery used in gold extraction in the mines).

11. Cabaret is the name used by Brazilians, in the gold mines, to designate the place where there is a bar and sex workers, in other words, a brothel.

left her oldest son, Germano, with her mother, whom she had with her first boyfriend, and the two youngest children (Vânia and Marlon), her husband's children, stayed with his mother. Lara stayed at the club for three months, and half of her debt, of "more or less" eight hundred dollars, was paid by a client, who took her out of the club to live with him in his family's house. After two years — during which time Lara was illegally living in Suriname — they formally got married, and she went to Brazil to collect her children.

Marília, 33 years old, cook, three daughters. In 2004, at the age of 25, she left her two daughters with her mother and migrated through the club, to escape her ex-husband, who was stalking her and threatening to kill her: He was very aggressive, that's why I left him. I separated from him [...], that's why I came, more. [...] He was horrible, he threatened, he hit, he did everything that was bad. (Marília, 33 years old, cook).

She was taken along with her cousin by an aunt, without knowing that she was going to a prostitution club: she left Brazil with the conviction that she would work in an ice cream shop (her aunt had never told her that she was a prostitute in a club in Paramaribo), but upon arriving in Suriname, her aunt took them to the club and convinced them to stay there, to earn money and return to Brazil. She was the only person interviewed in Suriname who said she had been deceived and decided to stay at the club when she discovered she would have to prostitute herself, believing that if she could get money she would change her situation in Brazil. However, she did not stay there for long. A month and a half after arriving, she fled to the mining with the help of a Brazilian woman who owned a cabaret.

Yasmim, 34 years old, cook, two daughters, although she stated that the main reason for her decision to migrate was financial difficulties, she also did not hide the fact that she suffered domestic violence. She admitted that the aggression she suffered and the fear of her ex-husband contributed to her decision to travel:

During my pregnancy, there was one time when he sat on my belly, strangling me – I was already six months pregnant. He sat on my belly, I had to pretend to be unconscious so he could let go. He would leave me alone at home, there was one time he let me sleep on the floor. He mistreated me a lot, a lot, a lot, a lot, a lot. So, with that on top of it, I also decided to come here. (Yasmim, 34 years old, cook).

Yasmim arrived in Suriname in early 2003, at the age of 26, to work at the club, leaving her two daughters in Brazil with their father. At the time she traveled, her mother had recently passed away and she separated from her husband shortly after, who refused to help financially with the children. In Belém, through a friend, Yasmim met a woman who had already been to clubs in Holland and Suriname, and she invited her to go to a club in Paramaribo. She accepted the proposal and stayed at the club for three months, despite having paid off the debt in one month; she left when she got involved with a client, a Surinamese man who paid for her exit (handing over her passport) and they went to live together.

Quirina, 42 years old, shop assistant, two children. She joined the club in 1997, at the age of 28, at the invitation of a friend who wanted to move. At the time, they were both housewives and depended on their partner, but for Quirina, what really weighed on her decision was the lack of expectations for

the future with him, who was constantly abusive to her, and since she didn't work, she didn't see any possibility of separation. When she left, she left her son with her mother and her daughter with a friend, and stayed at the club for two months; with the help of a client, she paid off the debt in one month. She left, but didn't want to live with him right away; they only moved in together after six months.

Ana, 37 years old, hairdresser and manicure. When she moved she was 23 years old, had two children, was separated from her husband and lived with her mother, but the relationship with him had not ended; despite the constant mutual aggression, they were always making peace, so she decided to leave:

– Why did you choose Suriname?

– Well, choosing... it wasn't really a choice. At the time, I was having problems with my ex-husband in Brazil, and I was practically forced to come. Not because they forced me, but personally, you know? I had to get rid of this platonic love I had there, that he wouldn't let me, I wouldn't let him, and then we would end up doing something stupid to each other, so I decided to do it. (Ana, 37 years old, hairdresser and manicurist).

In 1997, in Belém, a friend of hers was approached by a stranger who invited her to go to the club, and this invitation resulted in seven women (including Ana), seven friends, deciding to follow the same path. Ana, who traveled leaving her daughter with her mother and the boy with his paternal grandparents, spent sixteen days at the club: she had her debt paid by a client. V[Ana's motivation is similar to that of Marta, 33 years old, a street vendor, with two children (a couple, the boy born before she migrated). Separated, her relationship with

her ex-husband was tense, full of arguments, sometimes with physical violence. Since he insisted that they stay together, she thought that only by moving away would she be able to put an end to the relationship:

I separated from my husband and didn't want to get back together with him, who is the father of my son, [...] I wanted to be far away, in a city far away [...] But I really wanted to come, because I wanted to separate from him, because I couldn't stand the life I was leading with him anymore [...] We argued a lot because he drank too much [...] I really wanted to go far away from my husband, I didn't want to go back to him anymore, I had decided that I couldn't stand that life anymore: going back and forth, going back and forth with him, because he was too impregnating to go back [...] That's when I told the girl that I wanted to come here" (Marta, 33 years old, street vendor).

Her friend used to go to clubs in Suriname and told her about prostitution at the club as a way out of the situation she found herself in. According to the interlocutor, her friend did not hide the information: "[...] she told me where I was coming from and what I was going to do, that I was coming to a club. She told me everything I was going to do. [...] (Marta, 33 years old, street vendor) – and introduced her to the woman who arranged the trip. Marta quit her job (she had been a waitress in a diner for seven years) and, at the end of 2001, at the age of 25, she left her son with his paternal grandmother and went to the club, where she worked for a year. When she left, she worked as a sex worker in hotels and in the mining.

The interlocutors who reported having suffered some type of domestic violence by their partners migrated in the 1990s and 2000s, when there were already police stations specializing

in assisting women in Brazil, where, in recent years, efforts to overcome this type of violence have resulted in some regulatory changes: in August 2006, Law 11.340, known as the Maria da Penha Law, was enacted; in March 2015, Law 13.104, which deals with femicide, considered a heinous crime.

It is undeniable that there has been an expansion of defense mechanisms and greater penal rigor in relation to combating violence against women. This does not mean that in everyday life the number of women who are victims of their husbands/partners/boyfriends or exes-husbands/partners/boyfriends has reduced drastically, but it has been of fundamental importance in the public debate, which has led to encouragement and an increase in the number of people who report violence. Wânia Pasinato emphasizes that the Maria da Penha Law was an adaptation to feminist discourses fighting for gender equality, and that one of its greatest achievements was the recognition that violence against women is gender-based and violates human rights, and therefore, in Brazil, after its implementation, there has been an attempt to express, legally, that domestic violence, in addition to being related to family conflicts, is also related to the violation of women's rights.<sup>12</sup>

Brazil still needs to make progress with regard to gender behavior as social power relations, and to have a critical understanding of them, so that Brazilian society moves further away from the reproduction of representations of stereotypical and hierarchical relationships between women and men, which directly reflect on people's behavior in their daily lives.

---

12. Pasinato, 2015.

## Final considerations

Migration via prostitution, in the understanding of the interlocutors, appears under the tripod of prior knowledge, consent and provisional status, which can be translated as a strategy of economic emancipation and social mobility, rather than “ap-titude” or project to work in the sex market. They did not see themselves as victims, either of human trafficking or sexual exploitation, mainly because they were not deceived and did not suffer physical violence from the owners of clubs or cabarets.

The prostitution clubs in Guyana and Suriname have contributed and continue to contribute to the migratory waves of Brazilian women, mainly from the North of Brazil, to these countries, but their migratory flows do not have the ultimate goal of working in those countries. Migrating through clubs is a strategy: they think about getting a lot of money quickly or getting a job somewhere else, and leaving them. As things don't usually go as planned initially, new strategies emerge and are adapted according to the circuits presented to them. The decision to migrate is due to the lack of prospects, especially for those who did not work in prostitution in Brazil, the “newbies” in prostitution.

In Guyana and Suriname, Brazilian women who migrate to work in the sex market adapt to it and recreate it, navigating the legal and symbolic intricacies that surround it. In turn, the sex market creates and recreates structures that attempt to distance sex workers from the markers or signs of human trafficking mentioned in the *Palermo Protocol*, including deception, threats and violence. In doing so, they avoid criminal proceedings and transfer all risks to sex workers, who are subject to the most visible forms of control, exploitation, repression and violence.

In Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana, the mobility of Brazilian women, linked to prostitution and mining, is not homogeneous and results in their insertion into an informal and precarious labor market. Most of them are not part of the transnational sex market, but in a context of re-actualization of situations that contribute to the persistence of inequalities and violence, permeated by markers of gender and race.

All of these stories presented in the text reveal episodes of domestic violence as a motivation for women's mobility into the sex market, which requires a broad reflection on public policies aimed at strengthening legal mechanisms for preventing, protecting against and confronting this type of crime in Brazil. Breaking the silence and invisibility of situations of gender-based violence in homes and on the streets must be the responsibility of the State and of society as a whole. The commitment to justice, human rights and peace must be exercised daily. It is essential that we understand the life stories of migrant women and avoid analyses and perceptions that are often romanticized about the history of women who decided to cross the Brazilian border. One possible alternative is to look back to before the decision to migrate and ask ourselves: what support networks were used to help them escape the situation of violence? What public policies were available to these women? Were those who sought out the women's police station in fact adequately welcomed and protected?

## References

- ARAGÓN, Luis E. Apresentação. In: ARAGÓN, Luis E. (org.). *Migração internacional na Pan-Amazônia*. Belém: Naea/UFPA, 2009. p. 5-6.

- ARAUJO, Osvaldina dos Santos. *Frontières en mouvement et échanges économique-sexuels*. Dynamiques migratoires des Brésiliennes au Suriname, en passant par le Guyana et la Guyane Française. 501 f. Tese (Doutorado em Sociologia) – Université de Toulouse Jean Jaurès/Universidade de São Paulo, França, 2017.
- AROUCK, Ronaldo de Camargo. *Brasileiros na Guiana Francesa: fronteiras e construção de alteridades*. Belém: UFPA/Naea, 2002.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. *La domination masculine*. Saint-Amand-Montrond: Éditions du Seuil, 1998.
- GUILLEMAUT, Françoise; SAMSON, Martine Schutz. *Travail du sexe et mobilité en Guyane, des défis pour la lutte contre le VIH/sida*. Antilles-Guyane: Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Santé/Direction Générale de la Santé – DGS/RI 2, Bureau des infections par le VIH, les IST et les hépatites, 2011.
- PASINATO, Wânia. Oito anos de Lei Maria da Penha: entre avanço, obstáculo e desafios. *Estudos Feministas*, v. 23, n. 2, p. 533-545, 2015.
- PEREIRA, Mariana Cunha. Processo migratório na fronteira Brasil-Guiana. *Estudos Avançados*, v. 20, n. 57, p. 209-219, 2006.
- RODRIGUES, Francilene dos Santos. Configuração migratória no lugar Guayana: uma análise da migração na trílice fronteira Brasil-Venezuela-Guiana. In: ARAGÓN, Luis E. (org.). *Migração internacional na Pan-Amazônia*. Belém: Naea/UFPA, 2009. p. 223-236.
- SIMONIAN, Ligia T. Lopes; FERREIRA, Rubens da Silva. Trabalho e vida em terra estrangeira: o caso dos imigrantes brasileiros na Guiana Francesa. *História Revista*, v. 10, n. 2, p. 227-352, 2005.
- TARRIUS, Alain. Au-delà des États-nations: des sociétés de migrants. *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, v. 17, n. 2, p. 37-61, 2001.

## CHAPTER 12.

# **“Free to come and go: migration, rights, and work” – a colombian perspective**

*Flor Esther Sánchez Murcia*

### **Introduction**

“Neither do I condemn you” is the title of the research I conducted to complete my master’s degree in Gender Relations. It encompasses a comprehensive analysis of Colombian women, non-Catholic Christians, from a legal and religious perspective, and how to address GBV situations.

To talk about Christian women, it’s necessary to address our sacred text, the Bible. But the biblical perspective on women isn’t very favorable, with a few exceptions in the Old Testament and a minor one in the New. This is because it is Jesus who dignifies women, as he often demonstrated their importance through his teachings and actions, despite the cultural and religious burdens surrounding him. That’s why talking about freedom for women from that religious perspective is complex, since history continues to write and tell that women are not free and that the path they have had to travel to reach a place that belongs to them by nature and right has been very difficult, that is to say, from the

perspective of faith, understood as the Creator's original intention, woman and man are equal, created in His likeness.

Evangelical churches, as part of society, are not exempt from the social problem of violence against women. There are two aspects that I consider fundamental in relation to this topic in faith communities. On the one hand, members of the church may experience this type of violence in their homes, at work, and in various situations of everyday life. But, on the other hand, this problem is also present in the discourse of those who lead faith communities, even unintentionally; when defending, for example, a power hierarchy based on the patriarchal system.<sup>1</sup>

## Development

Humanity has always been prone to relations of power and subjugation, and history has reflected this in every aspect, leaving a record of all the struggles that each segregated minority has had to face to change these conditions, which are degrading in many cases and destructive in others. Women have not been immune to this historical reality, which even in our time (21st century) continues to plague and destroy us. Rita Segato, writer and anthropologist, offers some definitions of gender and violence, which are relevant for pedagogically understanding the true meaning of violence, in this case sexual violence:

- 1) The expression 'sexual violence' is confusing, because although the aggression is carried out by sexual means, its purpose is not sexual but rather power-based; 2) These are not aggressions originating in the libidinal drive translated into a desire for sexual satisfaction, but rather the libido is oriented here towards power and a mandate

---

1. Saracco, 2021.

from peers or male comrades that demands proof of belonging to the group; 3) what confirms belonging to the group is a tribute that, through exaction, flows from the feminine position to the masculine one, constructing it as a result of that process; 4) the hierarchically arranged functional structure that the mandate of masculinity creates is analogous to the mafia order; 5) Through this type of violence, power is expressed, exhibited and consolidated in a truculent manner before the public eye, thus representing a type of expressive and non-instrumental violence.<sup>2</sup>

In Colombia, violence against women occurs in conjunction with civil wars and the phenomena of violence that have occurred since the mid-20th century, such as the existence of guerrillas, the rise of drug trafficking and paramilitarism, along with phenomena such as globalization, the crisis of established values – among other factors, both internal and external – have generated marked and specific events such as new forms of violence, among which is the ancient tradition of rape and torture.<sup>3</sup>

Colombia has a population of approximately 50 million people, **of which 51.17% are women and 48.83% are men** – the equivalent of a population of around **25.8 million women**.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, it is classified as a Christian country. According to a 2020 study by the Swedish Church, World Vision; the Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace; and the National University of Colombia, entitled “Religious Diversity, Values, and Political Participation in Colombia”, the country remains faithful to the Catholic tradition but has been

---

2. Segato, 2003, p. 18.

3. Gomez Cely, 2017, p. 520.

4. Data from the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), 2020.

transforming toward other religious movements. According to Sebastián Portilla:

According to the document, 57% of Colombians identify Catholicism as the predominant creed, however, there is a significant number of faithful in religions of ‘Protestant diversity’ – a category that groups Christian, Evangelical Pentecostal, Protestant and Adventist denominations – which brings together 21.5 percent of those surveyed.<sup>5</sup>

For more than half a century, the Colombian armed conflict, which has social, political, and economic causes, has taken women’s bodies as spoils of war, especially in recent decades; and even more so in the post-agreement period, leaving countless victims.

Women, peasants, indigenous women, urban leaders, workers, and Afro-descendants, face gender discrimination daily and have also experienced multiple forms of brutal violence in the context of the conflict, where forced displacement is a prominent issue.

Colombia is undergoing a process that is clearly testing the world’s views. In the context of the peace accords signed between the FARC elites and the Colombian government, another battle is being waged against violence, a battle that has become naturalized by a large part of the Colombian population, who have embraced war, death, intolerant and warlike rhetoric, and everything that comes with the exercise of violence as a valid way of relating to the world. A war like the Colombian one that has been going on for so many years, accompanied by immense atrocities, “has allowed the majority of citizens to incorpo-

---

5. Portilla, 2020.

rate the discourse of violence into their habits”. Furthermore, the population continues to face violent acts that violate their human rights, hindering and jeopardizing the implementation of the peace agreement with the armed groups.

One of the situations that have arisen from the armed conflict is the displaced population; which is a phenomenon that affects individuals who, for various reasons, are forced to abandon their place of residence, their land, their properties, belongings, their occupation and, in many cases, their family and their culture, which results in moving to another territory that is completely foreign, relegated and lacking services and opportunities, in order to seek protection. In this regard, it has been established that forced displacement is due to persecution, conflict, widespread violence, and human rights violations. Of this population in Colombia, the majority are women.

In this behalf, the Constitutional Court in Auto-092 (2008) identified that, within the framework of the Colombian armed conflict, women have suffered risks that are inherent to their gender condition. It recognizes that forced displacement poses a real risk of sexual and domestic violence, and even sexual exploitation. According to the Constitutional Court, women victims of the conflict are exposed to the following risks: the risk of sexual violence, sexual exploitation or sexual abuse in the context of armed conflict; the risk of exploitation or enslavement by illegal armed groups to execute domestic work and roles considered feminine in a patriarchal society; the risk of forced recruitment of their children by illegal armed groups, or of other types of threats against them, which becomes more serious when the woman is the head of the household.

The right of women to live a life free from violence has been slow to emerge in Colombia, given that the armed conflict and many other historical circumstances have prevented it, and thousands of women are victims of actions or behaviors considered sexual violence, and are often murdered. Added to this social situation are the more recent harm (over the last sixty years) caused by the context of the armed conflict, which includes sexual violence, which sometimes had a specific objective within the conflict itself, such as terrorizing and weakening the enemy in order to advance control of territories and economic resources. Sexual violence became another weapon in the conflict. The recruitment of women and girls, whether forced or voluntary, is also accompanied by rape by members of the armed group, forced abortions, forced use of contraceptives, sexual slavery etc. All of the above is outside of follow-up and defense by the Christian Church (in this case, even the Catholic Church can be included).

Now, from an ecclesial perspective, women in Colombia have been under the shadow of men; this shadow prevents them from participating and exercising their gifts in faith communities on equal terms. These factors of subordination or exclusion of women are promoted by the conservative and charismatic bloc due to their subjective frame of reference, which leads them to misinterpret biblical texts outside their context, in addition to cultural aspects or church traditions, among others. Therefore, it is necessary to rethink, from a renewed perspective, the role that women have played throughout the history of the Church, a role that is embodied in every role where women are provided guidance and assistance in the various issues affecting humanity: family, church, and society. This emphasis on theological education and gender aims to present alternatives to women as participants in evangelization.

The story of the woman accused of adultery presents the Nazarene's devotion to the sacredness of sexuality, but from a position of equality, given the nature of the facts and actions that have been so marked and biased by society. The sexuality addressed in this biblical text is, in the deepest sense of the relationship between man and woman, a testimony in which Jesus avoids judgment of both genders, because by reaching the conscience of the men holding the stones, He floods their hearts with the power of His words: "let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone". He does not call them sinners, but rather refers to a confrontation to free them from the moralizing judgment that the Jewish people had incurred with the Mosaic tradition, which forgets the biblical text of the Old Testament, which exalts sexual desire between man and woman. But the central part of dignification is in that moment when Jesus and the woman are left alone, and it is Jesus who now addresses her, asking the big question: "Where are those who accused you?", showing the change of paradigm, of condition, a defense that entails liberation. Everyone leaves, except Jesus, everyone only cared about condemning and destroying. Jesus is interested in restoring and forgiving. The woman experiences a radical change. She was on the verge of death, but now she has a new chance at life. She had been singled out, and now she is the protagonist of a story of vindication. Jesus, who did have the moral, spiritual, and ethical authority to judge and condemn, chooses to do the exact opposite, showing the people of His time, and future generations like ours, what His proposal for divine order actually is, and His ideal of equality, despite the laws, in this case, Jewish laws, that only oppress, subjugate, and disdain women. "Neither do I condemn you" words with which Jesus ends his dialogue with the woman, and which will later

serve in that process of dignification in the midst of a highly patriarchal culture, where every crime or sexual act was related to women, and that with the passage of time, history has shown this feminization of evil, relating everything bad from the sexual perspective with women. When Jesus says these words of restoration, he is giving the position of equality of women in relation to men; That is why in the Gospels we see a Jesus accompanied by women, giving them importance, and showing their own qualities, beyond the socially adopted stereotypes.

There is also a special situation regarding the violence that indigenous and Afro-descendant women face, since the historical discrimination they suffer due to their ethnic origin is compounded by discrimination based on the fact that they are women, and in many cases, the same traditions maintain this discrimination. The remoteness of the territory has prevented rapid access to these situations of abuse, exposing the most vulnerable women to abusers who, knowing they are unsupervised, become uninhibited in exercising domination, abusing power, and reinforcing gender inequality, which has destroyed many women from these Colombian minorities.

However, the legal system establishes and regulates a very different situation. This is striking in Colombia. The legal framework is completely “detached” from social reality. In fact, it is an “advanced” right for the society it seeks to regulate. Once this division occurs, reconciliation is difficult to achieve, as it can create two parallel realities – the law and the society – that, if they remain so for long, have no reason to intersect. This, for me, is a cause for concern because it shows that something is seriously wrong. That’s why educational work in grassroots communities is essential, since it’s there that they need to be more informed about The legal framework, which, like an is-

land far removed from reality, has worked, creating laws that have done little or nothing to make the people be aware about, in this case, women. Christian organizations, which, in accordance with the law, have been more concerned with addressing these spiritual “needs” in a spirit of “detachment” from the social reality of their attendees, face the challenge of creating spaces where useful and key defense mechanisms are promoted in situations of violence. The church can be a bridge that allows women to be safe and welcomed, while the law does its part in defense and subsequent protection through its houses of refuge.

## **Conclusions**

From the analysis of results, it can be seen that one of the reasons for this failure is the lack of training for judicial bodies, primarily in gender perspective, and training and information for the general population. It is essential to raise awareness among all institutions, both governmental and Christian, about the discrimination and violence suffered by women, and to uncover the scope of processes that introduce a gender perspective into the interpretation and application of the law. It is important to contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women by the operators of legal and judicial circles; and the religious leaders, but also, and finally, to raise awareness about women’s human rights. Women themselves should know and understand that what they think is “usual” or that they should “endure” like all women is a form of violence and they should know how to defend themselves.

Christian organizations and churches must play a fundamental role in these functions. Its proximity to the population, its authority, and the respect many women have for religion can make it the ideal vehicle for learning about situations of sexual

violence and learning how to defend herself, armed with adequate information. Accompaniment from a personal meeting to workshops, presentations, forums, and training activities that provide insight into existing laws and can be used to defend themselves if necessary. Also empower women in the exercise of equality, that which God manifests through the sacred book, The Bible, where it tells us that there is no longer a slave, neither man, nor woman, but that we are all one in Christ, but not as a religious act distant from reality, but on the contrary, understanding that the tools are given, and although it seems difficult, we must grow in that pedagogy of caring for and preserving life, in this case the life of Colombian, Latin American and world women.

From a gender relations perspective, these biblical and theological interpretations encourage the community to engage in transformative dialogue, resulting in a policy where equal gender justice between women and men becomes a permanent practice within churches and faith-based organizations. As well as eliminating gender stereotypes that subordinate women, but also men, and violate the integrity and dignity that God has given them equally.

## References

- ACOSTA ALVARADO, Paola A. La protección de los derechos de las mujeres en la Constitución colombiana. *Derecho del Estado*, Bogotá, n. 20, p. 49-60, dic. 2007.
- ALMONACID GONZÁLEZ, William. Colombia: el paradigma existencial de la violencia. *Pensamiento, Palabra y Obra*, Bogotá, n. 17, p. 68-77, ene./jun. 2017.
- ALONSO SEOANE, María J. Género y Religión. A la búsqueda de un modelo de análisis. *Aposta – Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, España, n. 82, p. 124-137, jul./sep. 2019.

- ÁLVAREZ OROZCO, René; NARANJO VELASCO, Karolina. *Violencia contra las mujeres: Historias no contadas. Reflexión Política*, Colombia, v. 10, n. 20, p. 226-234, 2008.
- BAQUERO RODRÍGUEZ, Paola Andrea. *Rol de las Entidades Religiosas y sus Organizaciones en la Prevención de Violencias Basadas en el Género*. 2021. Tesis (Maestría) – Universidad Santo Tomas, Bogotá, 2021.
- BELTRÁN, William. El evangelicalismo y el Movimiento Pentecostal en Colombia siglo XX. In: BIDEKAIN, Ana María (comp.). *Historia del cristianismo en Colombia*. Bogotá: Taurus, 2005.
- CANTERO, Luis E. Educación teológica y género: desafío a las instituciones teológicas latinoamericanas evangélicas. Estudio de caso Colombiano. *Teología y Cultura*, Bogotá, año 9, v. 14, 2012.
- CARDONA CUERVO, Jimena; CARRILO CRUZ, Yudy A.; CAYCEDO GUIÓ, Rosa M. La garantía de los derechos de la mujer en el ordenamiento jurídico colombiano. *Hallazgos*, Bogotá, v. 16, n. 32, p. 83-106, 2019.
- FALCÓN CARO, Maria del Castillo. Realidad Individual, Social y Jurídica de la Mujer Víctima de Violencia de Género. In: HERRERA MORENO, Myriam (coord.). *Hostigamiento y Hábitat Social: una perspectiva victimológica*. Granada: Comares, 2008. p. 27-46.
- GALÁN CUESTA, Karen L. *Evolución normativa de la violencia de género y el feminicidio como tipo autónomo en Colombia y Brasil*. 2020. Tesis (Maestría) – Universidad de Santo Tomas, Bogotá, 2020.
- GOMEZ CELY, Javier Fernando. El porqué de la violencia intrafamiliar en Colombia. *Experiencias Humanitarias*, n. 20, 2017. p. 520.

- MONTOYA RUIZ, Ana M. Mujeres y ciudadanía plena, miradas a la historia jurídica colombiana. *Opinión Jurídica*, Medellín, v. 8, n. 16, p. 137-148, jul./dic. 2009.
- MURILLO GRANADOS, Adolfo; MUÑOZ JOVEN, Luis A. Tratamiento penal de la violencia contra la mujer en Colombia. In: CANTILLO SANABRIA, Martha G.; BUITRAGO ESCOBAR, Adriana M. (comp.). *Nuevas miradas y enfoques de nuevas investigaciones*. Cali: Universidad Santiago de Cali, 2018. Tomo II. p. 29-54.
- PORTILLA, Sebastián. Estudio revela la actual diversidad religiosa en Colombia. *World Vision*, 02 dic. 2020. Available at: <https://www.worldvision.co/sala-de-prensa/estudio-revela-la-actual-diversidad-religiosa-en-colombia>.
- RAMÍREZ VARELA, Daniela. *Guía normativa sobre la violencia basada en género en Colombia*. Medellín: Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, 2015.
- RODRÍGUEZ VÁSQUEZ, Julio; DÍAZ CASTILLO, Ingrid. Sobre la interpretación del delito de feminicidio y el enfoque de género: Análisis comparado de la jurisprudencia peruana y colombiana más importante. *Revista Electrónica de Estudios Penales y de Seguridad*, Bogotá, n. 5, 2019.
- SARACCO, Analía. La violencia de género y la Iglesia. *Protestante Digital*, 22 jul. 2021. Available at: <https://protestantedigital.com/lausana/63188/la-violencia-de-genero-y-la-iglesia>.
- SEGATO, Rita. *La guerra contra las mujeres*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2003.
- VARGAS RIVERA, Viviana A. *Mujer víctima, violencia de género y conflicto armado... Realidad que persiste*. Bogotá: Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular-CINEP, 2018.

CHAPTER 13.

## **Feminist theories, care practices and religion: an (im)possible meeting?**

*Liége Costa da Silva  
Manueli Tomasi  
Rosemarie Gartner Tschiedel*

### **Initial considerations**

This text aims to report on the experience of the powerful meetings provided by the Working Group (WG) 2 of the XVIII Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion at EST, entitled: “Women, violence, re-existences, intersectionalities: re-thinking and building care practices”. The WG intended to discuss experiences regarding interventions in the care of women in the context of the most varied forms of violence, seeking to rethink and build effective support tools and practices in the various institutions and movements in which we are involved. Furthermore, we aimed to intersectionalize the debate, raising other social markers such as race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, social class, disabilities, generation, territoriality and religiosity as fundamental for an ethical and political view of the issue.

We, as gender researchers at a public university, were initially not familiar with debates involving religiosity in our research. Soon, we realized that our group was one of the few that did not have the relationship between religion and gender as a central point, certainly a reflection of this situation. Possibly institutionalized by epistemic structures of the “capitalist, patriarchal, western, modern and colonialist world-system” as quote Grosfoguel, these arrangements systematize knowledge hierarchically with greater or lesser value and also make the diversity of knowledge invisible, including popular knowledge.<sup>1</sup> They are structured in justifications of pure, neutral and objective sciences, religions are excluded practices, stigmatized from knowledge considered more “scientific”.

However, how can we remain “neutral” on the subject of religion if, within the Brazilian context, hegemonic and fundamentalist discourses on the subject are growing? How can we not delve into the subject, given that different religions also engender our modes of subjectivation, especially in the sociability of subordinate women?

We remember the warning that Simone de Beauvoir gave us that a political, economic and religious crisis is enough for **women’s rights** to be questioned.<sup>2</sup> As social movements gain visibility, including feminist movements, which are advancing towards guaranteeing our rights, resistance from the current power and the dispute over narratives also grows. Conservative Christian theological discourse tries to impose itself with even more vehemence whenever its representatives and defenders assess that their interests and worldview are threatened and

---

1. Grosfoguel, 2016.

2. Beauvoir, 2016.

questioned. We have been noticing this dynamic since the 1970s in the United States of America, and in Brazil, it has been accentuated since the 2016 coup against President Dilma Rousseff and, with greater force, since the 2018 presidential election, in which the winning candidate, Jair Messias Bolsonaro (then from the PSL and now without a party), associated his electoral campaign on numerous occasions with the fundamentalist Christian religious narrative, using as a slogan “Brazil above all, God above everyone”<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, with the contributions of Ivone Gebara, we take an epistemological and practical position that values listening to women to understand their experiences and understand what religion is for them, even if the answer is marked by ambivalence, paradoxes and contradictions.<sup>4</sup> It is necessary to break with the universalist narrative that we would, in theory, be subjected to the same oppressions and the same silencing, we need to create bridges so that it is possible for us to walk together.<sup>5</sup>

Our aim in this text is to be able to outline a critical analysis and also to launch possible paths for dialogue between non-hegemonic religiosities, feminist theories and care practices, proposing ruptures from fundamentalist and violent discourses, which make it possible to build dialogues and value the diversity of women. Next, we will discuss the research and discussions brought by our colleagues who wrote to our working group.

---

3. Tesser, 2019, p. 74-90.

4. Gebara, 2006.

5. Diniz; Gebara, 2022.

## Development

To approach, to get closer, to become close [...] the Christian ethical tradition affirms an ethical principle of approach that has made a long historical journey in many parts of the world, up to the present day: ‘love your neighbor as yourself’, an affirmation, an order, a principle, a criterion that is difficult to understand and above all to live. In this expression marked by proximity, there are at least two subjects who meet or perhaps confront each other, or may even exclude each other.<sup>6</sup>

Inspired by the book *Feminist Hope* by authors Debora Diniz and Ivone Gebara, we ask ourselves: who is my neighbor? Who do I become close to? Which women do we approach? The questions invite us to reflect on the emotions and affections that inhabit us in the face of these approaches.<sup>7</sup> It is important to bring feelings and emotions into the equation when it comes to knowledge. We increasingly believe that knowledge of the world and of ourselves is driven by feelings and emotions, both in our approaches and in our distances. Feelings and emotions also permeate politics, science and religion.

We believe in the power of becoming close and feminist listeners. To listen, it is necessary to give up power. Listening is facing your own limits of understanding. This is how we were introduced to one of WG’s first works, about Perpetua and Felicity, that over the centuries were erased from feminine narratives in the history of Christianity. With this exclusion women lost their space and voice, being forgotten. Based on knowledge about women in Christian communities in the first centuries, the work pointed to

---

6. Diniz; Gebara, 2022, p. 77.

7. Diniz; Gebara, 2022.

a tension between this reality and traditional Roman society in the third century, marked by the blatant favoring of sexism.

The dossier on femicides in Rio Grande do Sul was presented, brought by Feminist Magnifying Glass Against Femicide, which aims to inform both the government and society about the serious situation of femicides in the state, provoking a discussion that mobilized everyone who watched the narrative. On this day, we had women from different Latin American countries watching the work and we shared stories of the murders of women as, in fact, a major epidemic in our countries. Mobilized us to hear women telling stories of women who were killed simply because they were women, at the same time it brought us closer and surprised us to witness such a critical analysis of how faith communities have positioned themselves in the face of violence against women.

Therefore, we expanded our view of gender relations in the indigenous context, the specificities of the violence suffered and the ways of coping based on an important discussion in our group. Using anthropological tools, public and collective testimony of experiences and the discussion of ethical and political issues, the silencing of these experiences on our continent was discussed, marked by the colonization of territory and bodies, especially the rape of indigenous women.

The relation between femicides, misogyny and witch hunts in contemporary times was studied in a research presented in our WG. The idea was raised that domestic violence, femicides, and the limitation of women's participation in public and decision-making spheres are necessary to maintain the patriarchal structure and would be new forms of witch hunts to which women would be exposed.

The experience report based on interventions in houses-homes carried out by Psychology students, where children and adolescents live who have experienced violence and/or family neglect, highlights the invisibility and revictimization of female bodies in institutional public spaces. Violence marks these bodies that would be treated as objects to be handled, sometimes leaving them powerless to react to the structural sexism ingrained in our society.

The demand to discuss gender violence and the Maria da Penha Law with children between eight and twelve years old was the starting point for the experience report narrated by psychology students about the intervention carried out in a university extension project in a municipal public elementary school. By creating and telling a children's story, gender issues can be addressed, social roles, violence and sexism, with the aim of "early intervention", in an investment in existential and political changes in children, provoking discursive changes, in a commitment to long-term social transformation. Another work addressed the types of violence against women through lectures, discussion groups and recreational devices with elementary school students, in addition to dynamics that provided opportunities for exchanges and debates regarding the reality of women in society, with work teams from a Public Policy Coordination for Women. Reflecting on the structural sexism that also affects women who work in public policies for women helps us to broaden perspectives and promote spaces for care.

Supporting women who experience domestic violence in the context of an expanded clinic presents significant challenges for specialized service teams, as was shown to us by a student who completed an internship at a Women's Reference Center.

Protective, supportive and listening attitudes on the part of professionals are necessary to form bonds and develop care practices in this context.

Childhood sexual abuse was the target of two presentations by the same group of students, who brought up the effects of this violence on both the individual and the family group, in addition to sensitive listening by the professionals responsible for providing care in public network services. The narration of the case as a storytelling and with an intriguing outcome caused, initially, a disturbing silence in the group that made us reflect on our discomforts and our possibilities, as professionals from different areas, when dealing with these situations.

In research presented with the aim of developing a critical reflection on understanding rape culture through a linguistic analysis of interactions between guardians and children and adolescents who are victims of sexual abuse, the data demonstrated that, in the research presented, gender identity performances are present in these encounters. Resistance movements to identity models and scripts for interpreting the experience of abuse were identified.

Narratives of women and transvestite prostitutes who raised meanings attributed to their own experience were the subject of debate in our work group, based on the presentation of results of a course completion project. Issues related to violence are very present, as are the current social discourses regarding prostitution, gender, race and class.

Challenging the naturalization of motherhood, as a social role of women, as well as the myth of maternal love is a theme under development in a research presented. The question was raised that, if motherhood is considered a certain destiny and

not a choice, this myth would contribute to a violation of women's right to freedom and self-determination.

And who has the right to motherhood? This was the central question of a paper presented in our WG that asks how much this right was denied to enslaved black women, seen only as reproducers of goods that maintained slave labor in our country. Through feminist theories, questions were raised about how this denial occurred and what forms it took, in a historical context of objectification and sexualization of black women's bodies.

Meeting with women from so many territories in Latin America, with such diverse experiences, sharing experiences that mark our bodies and those of our partners, this meeting became a powerful collective space for discussing ethical and political practices, overcoming oppression and violence, and forms of care that are truly emancipatory for all women. Ochy Curiel, Afro-Dominican feminist, invites us to rethink feminism within a global and intersectional context, recognizing the complexities of women's experiences in a world marked by inequality and the legacy of colonialism.<sup>8</sup> Her approach emphasizes the importance of solidarity among women, as well as critical engagement with the power structures that perpetuate oppression.

## **Final considerations**

Creating spaces for women to claim their own narratives and fight for social justice on their own terms, as well as recognizing the diversity of women's experiences in different cultural and historical contexts, allows us to draw new perspectives in our fields of action, both in our research, in our work institu-

---

8. Curiel, 2020.

tions, in activism or in our faith communities. Address power dynamics within religious structures, questioning how patriarchal and colonial interpretations of certain traditions have impacted women, particularly those from historically marginalized communities, in the quest to promote critical reflection on dominant religious narratives and explore ways to rescue spiritual traditions that value women's autonomy and dignity, can bring us closer to fostering practices that are intertwined with issues of identity and social justice.

Religiosity can be seen as a space of resistance and resilience, in which women can reconnect with their cultural and spiritual roots, finding strength and bonds to challenge systemic oppressions, as seen in this powerful meeting that made us so uncomfortable. In view of this, we affirm the importance of the verb share, as it was through listening to this research and sharing knowledge and wisdom that we found similarities and differences, without fear of affirming the power of the diversity of being a woman. We were affected and we also provided a space to experience the art of memory, which brings us comfort, chills and sadness in the face of the past that is often present.

Finally, we believe that the congress and the experiences of our working group were a space for “remember, narrate and subvert the story already told”<sup>9</sup>. We affirm that we are the authors of this world, that it is our right to embroider and sew our presence in spaces, to share knowledge, intuitions and perceptions that throughout history have been denied. We want our bodies to be respected and not violated, to be given back our bodies and the right to decide about it, and our voices and stories to be heard. We believe in the multiplicity of existences of

---

9. Diniz; Gebara, 2022, p. 128.

being a woman and in the multiplicity of raising new questions and trying out answers.

Our thanks to everyone who was able to spare the time and resources to share ideas, questions, experiences and knowledge with us during two mornings that brought together so many senses and so much affection.

## References

- BEAUVOIR, Simone de. *O Segundo Sexo*. 3. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2016. Vol. 2.
- CURIEL, Ochy. Construindo metodologias feministas a partir do feminismo decolonial. In: HOLLANDA, Heloisa Buarque de (org.). *Pensamento feminista hoje: perspectivas decoloniais*. Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo, 2020. p. 120-138.
- DINIZ, Debora; GEBARA, Ivone. *Esperança feminista*. 2. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Rosa dos Tempos, 2022.
- GEBARA, Ivone. Entrevista. In: ROSADO-NUNES, Maria José. Teologia feminista e a crítica da razão religiosa patriarcal: entrevista com Ivone Gebara. *Estudos Feministas*, Florianópolis, v. 14, n. 1, p. 294-304, 2006.
- GROSGOUEL, Ramón. A estrutura do conhecimento nas universidades ocidentalizadas: racismo/sexismo epistêmico e os quatro genocídios/epistemicídios do longo século XVI. *Sociedade e Estado*, Brasília, v. 31, n. 1, p. 25-49, jan. 2016.
- TESSER, Tabata Pastore. Legitimação da violência contra as mulheres no discurso religioso hegemônico. In: JURKEWICZ, Regina Soares (org.). *Teologias fora do armário: teologia, gênero e diversidade sexual*. Jundiaí: Max, 2019. p. 74-90.

## CHAPTER 14.

# **Identities, sociabilities and diversities in brazilian contemporaneity**

*Celso Gabatz  
Marcelo Ramos Saldanha*

### **Initial Considerations**

The emergence of renewed forms of religious expression calls for new theoretical perspectives. People tend to control their religiosity, no longer so dependent on family, cultural, moral, doctrinal and theological traditions. The current boundaries that permeate the religious environment are increasingly extensive and diluted. If the individualization of faith favors, on the one hand, religious identity processes at the level of individual subjects, on the other hand, it increases the difficulties in constructing social and collective religious identities. The future points to a society with a plurality of offerings without institutions holding the symbolic power to establish certain adhesions or to serve as hegemonic anchorage in the religious field.

It was proposed within the scope of the VIII Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion held in August 2023, to welcome proposals for scientific works, reports of experiences, interventions and performances that sought to uncover

relevant questions about pluralist religious paradigms in the present and their interlocution with the perspectives of gender, diversity, subjectivity, public theology, otherness, democracy and freedom. The objective was to broaden the understanding horizon regarding the processes of individualization of faith, fundamentalisms, secularism and authoritarianism and to glimpse the possible mediations, challenges and transformations of the current scenario.

### **The Challenges of Religious Identities in Brazil: Expanding Horizons and Proposing Dialogues**

According to the understanding consolidated by Darcy Ribeiro<sup>1</sup>, Brazilian history would be marked by linguistic, ethnic, racial, social and religious diversity. Diversity, however, would not guarantee the recognition of differences between subjects, in the sense detailed by Charles Taylor<sup>2</sup> or in dialogism as alluded to by Mikhail Bakhtin.<sup>3</sup> Differences could even result in conflicts and the solutions, as a result, lead to the imposition of hegemonic cultural standards.<sup>4</sup> The constitutive plot of identities can be thought of in semiotic terms. Different subjects alternate statements in different discourses, in a permanent contact between individuals, groups and societies. The imposition of cultural standards and domination occur in a dialectical interaction.

Collective behavior is [...] the behavior of individuals. It is the world that presents itself separately to each person, the world on the basis of which he must build his individual life. The description of any civilization summarized

---

1. Ribeiro, 2006.

2. Taylor, 1994.

3. Bakhtin, 2016, p. 122.

4. Weber, 2014, p. 141.

in a few dozen pages must necessarily highlight the norms of the group and expose individual behavior because it exemplifies the motivations of that culture [...] society and the individual are not antagonists. Culture provides the raw material with which the individual makes his life.<sup>5</sup>

There are several religions, each with its own dogmatic and normative systems, and, according to Severino Croatto<sup>6</sup>, presenting different catalogues of doctrines, myths, rites, symbols and languages. There are disputes and conflicts in defining what religion is. Each religion can be conceived as a particular system. Different subjects live, experience and move within these systems, producing statements and discourses. This set of experiences constitutes the identity of the subjects.

The persistent denial of recognition and dialogue between subjects belonging to different religions does not prevent contact or the resulting social transformations. The concepts of religion, identity, sociability and diversity are revealed in our approach based on historical interaction, in such a way that the elements of these systems are observed as phenomena in permanent interaction and change, which promotes relevant implications.

Just as there have been conceptual changes regarding the meaning of religion, there are also changes in the way religion is consolidated in the public and private spheres. This has been generating quite significant changes in the scope of the identities of subjects in matters related to religious diversity. Among the movements that have produced political and social tensions, making it difficult to recognize religious diversity, is religious fundamentalism, which stands out most incisively.

---

5. Benedict, 2013, p. 171.

6. Croatto, 2010.

Religions today maintain considerable strength, despite the weakening of dogmas and the decline of practices within democratic regimes. They are part of the main mobilization forces and are central elements of the symbolic identification of individuals, groups and communities. It is not around issues of political or economic interest that men generate conflicts that can lead to a fight to the death, but over symbolic values, mainly religious ones. It is on questions of symbolic order that men's lives seem less important to them than their beliefs.<sup>7</sup>

Religious identities raise borders, emphasize limits, and demand barriers. It influences behaviors, ways of thinking, and the ways in which individuals represent their human condition. There is a strong impact on the way individuals relate to the State, how the State produces laws, and how agents of the State itself interpret them. Identities and differences are translated into discourse through statements.<sup>8</sup>

By understanding the construction of discourses, we can see that the recognition of religious diversity acquires political significance when it reaches the field of political practices. In addition to giving meaning and significance to human existence, it also interferes in the social behavior of individuals. The *empowerment*<sup>9</sup> refers here to the increase in the political, social and economic strength of groups that suffer from ethnic, religious and sexual discrimination. This is a critical approach that is not limited to the recognition of diversity at the cognitive level. Hence the proposal's proximity to perspectives that address issues of power.

---

7. Zarka, 2013, p. 28.

8. Vattimo, 2004.

9. Baquero, 2006.

In contemporary society where the figure of the decentered subject predominates<sup>10</sup>, it is perhaps not so imperative to speak of religion in its relation to the reproduction of disciplinary effects in the formation of identities. The recurring challenge is to observe the relationship between religion and this plurality of places and permanent flux that characterizes society in a broader way.

The construction of identities draws on the raw material provided by history, geography, biology, productive and reproductive institutions, collective memory and personal fantasies, power apparatuses and religious revelations. However, all these materials are processed by individuals, social groups and societies, who reorganize their meaning according to social trends and cultural projects rooted in their social structure, as well as in their vision of time and space.<sup>11</sup>

It is therefore worth highlighting, according to the perspective referred to Paul Preciado<sup>12</sup>, that religion may not only represent difference, but, in a certain way, an infinity of transversalities in power relations, a diversity of life potency. Religion could be thought of as a system that raises permanent criticism and reflections on the identification itself of what is religious and its place in its relationship with current reality.

---

10. Derrida, 2002.

11. Castells, 2001, p. 23.

12. Preciado, 2011, p. 18.

## **The Multiple Contours of Religions in the Public and Private Spheres in Brazil**

As already mentioned in this approach, the constitution of the Brazilian State had, essentially, religious roots. The country was structured around a Catholic Christianity that was always concerned with the expansion of other faiths. The premise of a doctrine understood as superior to other religious denominations was recurrent. This condition was present both in the understanding of the sacred scriptures, permeated by the theology of Thomas Aquinas<sup>13</sup>, articulator of Western thought and the Catholic orders that arrived here, up to the actions and behavior of the Church in its connivance with colonial logic.<sup>14</sup>

The prerogatives of domination and segregation used in the name of Christian expansion during the colonial period are reproduced in current institutions, even though there has gradually been a remodeling in the agency of the Roman Catholic Church. With the advent of the Republic, for example, the effort and initial enthusiasm to implement a secular regime, according to Western models in a very religious society, reveals, however, the composition of a structure that gradually adapted to the values present in the daily life of society. Respect for the Catholic religion and, by extension, for this morality was a condition for following other religious beliefs. Religions other than Catholicism were simply tolerated by the State as long as they did not violate certain moral principles that were important for the sociability of the time. It is no coincidence that Catholicism gained its strength through the Christianization of countless believers.

---

13. Aquino, 2003.

14. Faoro, 2012.

The understanding of democracy has expanded over the last few decades, in a way that it has not been understood only by the demands and universal exercise of voting, but in a broader way, in what John Rawls describes as ‘the exercise of public reason.’ “Public reason is the characteristic of a democratic people: it is the reason of its citizens, of those who share the status of equal citizenship”<sup>15</sup>. The change in the understanding of democracy has been caused precisely by the development of new aspects arising from the liberal model, such as participatory democracy and deliberative democracy.<sup>16</sup>

The search for space, both in the political sphere and in any other context, reveals a character of dispute that, within the scope of many demands, makes it possible to identify a discourse that articulates common objectives, as well as differences that become part of a purpose for the realization of the common good. Discursive practices create this common objective through articulation. In this sense, we envision a relationship capable of bringing together and systematizing different aspects.

The existence of power relations and the need to transform them, while renouncing the illusion that we could completely free ourselves from power [...] If we accept that power relations are constitutive of the social, then the main question of democratic politics is not how to eliminate power, but how to constitute forms of power compatible with democratic values.<sup>17</sup>

Instead of identifying modern democracy with a place devoid of power, the author reinforces the distinction between

---

15. Rawls, 2000, p. 261.

16. Santos, 2002.

17. Mouffe, 2003, p. 14.

two fundamental aspects: on one side, democracy as a form of government and as a principle of the sovereignty of the people; and on the other, the symbolic profile in which democratic rules are exercised in a plural way. Modern democracy would have a plural character that is established in the realization of individual freedom and in the affirmation of a freedom underlined by equality for individuals through the legitimization of differences. “The experience of this democracy consists in recognizing the existence of contradictory and antagonistic logics, as well as the need for their articulation”<sup>18</sup>.

In particular, in Brazil, expressions of Christian religiosity permeated the different meanders of the constitution of a national identity, starting with the construction of certain heroes in the image of Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup> Different iconographies and episodes in history echoed certain apologies for biblical elements, such as, for example, the image of the Holy Virgin as a female figure of great importance to the Republic and the establishment of holidays for religious reasons, in addition to the change of the patron saint of the Empire (Saint Peter) for the image of the patron saint of Brazil, Our Lady of Aparecida. The republican imagination has always known how to reflect this harmony with the Christian faith.<sup>20</sup>

Another relevant aspect in the democratic construction was the striking and incisive experience of slavery which, to a large extent, had the Church in its favor by producing and legitimizing the theological defense of servitude<sup>21</sup>, shaping so-

---

18. Mouffe, 2003, p. 18.

19. Fonseca, 2011.

20. Carvalho, 1987.

21. Botelho; Schwarcz, 2012, p. 10-13.

ciety and, in effect, denying fundamental rights of freedom and equality. This legacy that persists in Brazilian society also represents many limits to the ideals of citizenship. Perhaps, because of this condition, there has always been a greater emphasis on the notion of social rights to the detriment of political and civil rights.<sup>22</sup>

What is possible to perceive when expanding the horizon of this understanding is that there are articulations of a politically conservative discourse on citizenship capable of portraying certain distinctions between those who are seen as included, and others, considered excluded. There is also, by extension, a possibility of delimiting an ‘us’ that asserts itself through discrimination or persecution of others seen as ‘impure’, ‘infidels’, ‘immoral’, ‘unworthy’. Thus, the notion of ‘citizenship’ can authorize violation of rights, certain intolerances and even racism.<sup>23</sup>

Although most historic Protestant churches have a certain propensity for exemption and the Brazilian State is, constitutionally, a secular democracy, the elections and discussions on various moral issues, especially in relation to abortion and the rights of sexual minorities, involving faith in the current political scenario, show the strength of religion and how it has advanced over the Brazilian public space to the point of that meanwhile, confusing the public with the private dimension of belief.<sup>24</sup> In theory, Brazilian religiosity is marked by undeniable plurality, inequalities and paradoxes. It is a religious identity in a country where society is organized under the tutelage of a State incapable of guaranteeing equality. Where religious demonstrations

---

22. Chauí, 2011.

23. Lamounier, 2014.

24. Gabatz, 2017.

can bring together crowds and certain religious sectors tend to behave in a conservative and exclusionary manner, promoting dialogues or clashes within the scope of social and religious plurality.

What can be seen when broadening the horizon of the issues covered here is that there are multiple articulations in the Brazilian conjunctural reality. Our social, political and religious complexity, through institutions within the State itself, has difficulty supporting a more accurate sense of citizenship. It is no coincidence that the population has been living with violations of rights, intolerance and racism. There are frequent attacks against certain civilizing ideals and achievements engendered by the Enlightenment, modernity, political liberalism, constitutionalism, democracy and the welfare state, fundamental and human rights, allied to the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity.

## **Final considerations**

Changes will always be intertwined at the intersections of secularization and pluralism processes, triggering transformations in political, social, cultural and religious arrangements, through the emergence of new subjects, new statements and new discourses. In Brazil, there have always been mechanisms of discrimination and control based on religious, cultural and moral arguments. As in a game between actors who find themselves in asymmetrical positions, those who exercise dominance use different structural and ideological devices to affirm their condition, maintaining their own supremacy.

It is important to highlight that religious diversity challenges the State's actions in the processes of claiming rec-

ognition. Considering that human relations are permeated by issues of power, it is essential to carefully analyze the actions of religious actors in the public space. This implies to say that the dialectical processes of externalization, objectification and internalization require changes in statements, but also in the behavior of subjects.

In a world in which individuals are increasingly less willing to listen to what is being said by their peers, dialogical praxis is essential to strengthening democracy based on consolidated tolerance as a prerogative aligned with human rights. By using religious principles, Brazilian republican culture outlines ways for maintaining a paradigm of coexistence.

## References

- AQUINO, Tomás de. *Suma Teológica*. São Paulo: Loyola, 2003.
- BAQUERO, Rute. Empoderamento: questões conceituais e metodológicas. *Redes*, Santa Cruz do Sul, v. 11, n. 2, p. 77-93, maio/ago. 2006.
- BENEDICT, Ruth. *Padrões de cultura*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2013.
- BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Os gêneros do discurso*. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2016.
- BOTELHO, André; SCHWARCZ, Lilia Moritz (org.). *Cidadania, um projeto em construção: minorias, justiça e direitos*. São Paulo: Claro Enigma, 2012.
- CARVALHO, José Murilo de. *Os Bestializados: O Rio de Janeiro e a República que não foi*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987.
- CASTELLS, Manuel. *O poder da Identidade*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2001. Vol. 2.
- CHAUÍ, Marilena. *Cultura e Democracia: O discurso competente e outras falas*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2011.

- CROATTO, José Severino. *As linguagens da experiência religiosa: uma introdução à fenomenologia da religião*. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2010.
- DERRIDA, Jacques. *A escritura e a diferença*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2002.
- FAORO, Raymundo. *Os Donos do Poder – formação do patronato político brasileiro*. São Paulo: Globo, 2012.
- FONSECA, Alexandre Brasil. *Relações e Privilégios: Estado, secularização e pluralismo religioso no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Novos Diálogos, 2011.
- GABATZ, Celso. Religião, laicidade e direitos sexuais e reprodutivos: a presença de grupos religiosos conservadores nos espaços públicos da contemporaneidade. *Estudos de Religião*, São Bernardo do Campo, v. 31, n. 1, 2017. p. 1-23.
- LAMOUNIER, Bolívar. *Tribunos, Profetas e Sacerdotes: intelectuais e ideologias no século XX*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2014.
- MOUFFE, Chantal. Democracia, cidadania e a questão do pluralismo. *Política e Sociedade*, n. 3, out. 2003.
- PRECIADO, Paul [Beatriz]. Multidões queer: notas para uma política dos “anormais”. *Estudos Feministas*, Florianópolis, v. 19(1), n. 312, p. 11-20, jan./abr. 2011.
- RAWLS, John. *Liberalismo Político*. São Paulo: Ática, 2000.
- RIBEIRO, Darcy. *O povo brasileiro: a formação e o sentido do Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2006.
- SANTOS, Boaventura de Souza. *Democratizar a Democracia: os caminhos da democracia participativa*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2002.
- TAYLOR, Charles. *Multiculturalismo: examinando a política de reconhecimento*. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget, 1994.

VATTIMO, Gianni. *Depois da Cristandade*: por um cristianismo não religioso. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2004.

WEBER, Max. *Economia e sociedade*: fundamentos de sociologia compreensiva. Brasília: Universidade de Brasília, 2014. Vol. 1.

ZARKA, Yves Charles. *Difícil Tolerância*. A coexistência de culturas em regimes democráticos. São Leopoldo: Unisinos, 2013.



## CHAPTER 15.

# Gender, feminisms, religion and sustainability

*Alvori Ahlert  
Graziela Rinaldi da Rosa*

### **Introduction**

The VIII Latin American Congress on Gender and Religion, organized by the Gender and Religion Research Center of the Graduate Program in Theology at Faculdades EST, took place in August 2023, addressing three central thematic axes – *Freedom, identity and criticality*. Seeking theoretical and creative inspiration in these axes, we problematized gender relations, gender equity, and gender inequalities based on practices shared by the group, in light of theorists who value popular knowledge and contributed to educational and popular, school and community practices being presented in the form of a dialogue circle, inspired by Paulo Freire’s culture circles.

In addition to the culture circles, the ethical requirements outlined by Paulo Freire for teachers inspired us. An ethic that goes against greed and neoliberal and conservative, sexist, patriarchal ideology, because we believe that “We, democratic educators, must fight so that it becomes more often and clear that education represents formation and not training. And

there is no possibility of obtaining human formation outside of ethics”<sup>1</sup>.

The Working Group Gender, Feminisms, Religions and Sustainability, coordinated by Alвори Ahlert (UNIOESTE), Graziela Rinaldi da Rosa (Federal University of Rio Grande-FURG), whose initial organization was supported by Silvana Filippi Chiela Rodrigues (UNIOESTE), Irineu Costella (UNIOESTE) and Luana de Oliveira Baccarin (UNIOESTE), and mediated by Alвори and Graziela, became as a space for dialogues and debates on gender, feminism, religion and sustainability from a popular and emancipatory perspective, valuing (bio)diversity and popular knowledge in dialogue with social and socio-environmental movements.

This dialogue was established through the themes of women and sustainability, feminism and ecology, gender relations, the leading role of women philosophers through the creation of the network of women philosophers, Gender Justice and economic autonomy, agri-food systems, women and food and nutritional security. The presentation of experience reports through the themes of women in achieving their professional emancipation, actions through popular education in extension projects during the COVID19 pandemic, Amerindian resistance feminism, and experiences of women’s organization through the peasant women’s movement also had an expressive place in the WG.

---

1. Freire, 2014, p. 99-100.

**Figure 01.** WG 11 participants



Source: Author, 2023

The construction of this text uses the inductive method, of an exploratory nature to highlight knowledge about issues of gender, feminism, religion and sustainability. “Exploratory research is developed with the aim of providing a general, approximate view of a given fact”<sup>2</sup>. As for the approach, we used qualitative analysis of the works presented and discussed in WG 11 – Gender, feminisms, religion and sustainability, published in the materials of the VIII Congress of Gender and Religion. The analysis is based on the perspective of “*Hacer historia desde abajo y desde el Sur*”<sup>3</sup>.

The research presented and discussed in WG 11, consisting of complete works and experience reports, highlighted the following themes, presented in the word cloud.

---

2. Gil, 2008, p. 27.

3. Carrillo, 2014.

**Figure 1.** Word cloud generated from the papers presented in WG 11



*It includes topics such as Social Security, Exclusion, Sustainability, Philosophy, Gender, Gender and Philosophy, Women, Disempowerment, Indigenous Women, Economy, Sustainable Development, and Community Feminism.*

The full texts and experience reports presented and discussed in WG 11 are presented here by title, authors and their objectives.

**Table 1:** Papers presented at WG 11.

<b>WORK TITLE</b>	<b>AUTHORS</b>	<b>MAIN OBJECTIVE</b>
Gender, Philosophy and the Exclusion of Women Philosophers	Graziela Rinaldi da Rosa	Highlight the importance of continuing to denounce the violence that women suffer when studying Philosophy.
Gender, rural sustainability and social security: A study with female farmers from Marechal Cândido Rondon/PR	Alvori Ahlert; Leila Patrícia Bernabe; Luana Baccarin	To investigate the socioeconomic profile, conceptions of sustainable development and knowledge of social security of family farmers who work as market vendors.

Gender and Empowerment – Gender Equality is Possible	Irineu Costella; Silvana Filippi Chiela Rodrigues; Alвори Ahlert; Ana Isa dos Reis	Revisit the Judeo-Christian Constitution, from the perspective of gender and empowerment.
Amerindian Community Feminism and Spirituality: Cultivating Re- existences	Priscilla dos Reis Ribeiro	To provoke reflection on the relationships between the ways in which indigenous women elaborate the cosmo-experience of the sacred in their experiences based on their bodies- territories.
<b>EXPERIENCE REPORTS</b>		
From Home to Diagnostic Medicine: A Journey of Emancipation and Struggle for Training and Professional Identity with Gender Equality	Leila Patricia Bernabe; Alвори Ahlert	Discuss gender identity and equality from the emancipatory experience of a woman from family farming, mother and wife, who faced gender barriers and studied medicine, becoming a professional in diagnostic medicine.
Feminisms and popular education in the pandemic	Graziela Rinaldi da Rosa	Presenting the leading role of women in the fight against COVID-19, based on the extension project: Doing Good. No Matter Who (FURG)

Source: Author, 2024.

One of the topics covered in the full article modality was *Gender, Philosophy and the exclusion of women philosophers*, highlighting the importance of continuing to denounce the violence that women suffer when studying Philosophy. The study was a rescue of a master's research carried out with Philosophy

professors during the early 2000s, and aimed to reflect on the advances in the protagonism of women philosophers in Brazil, mainly from the creation of a network of women philosophers and the Philosophy and Gender WG from ANPOF.

Another research presented, *Gender, rural sustainability and social security: A study with female farmers from Marechal Cândido Rondon/PR*, showed results that confirmed that family farmers at the market have a modest family income. Access to media and cultural goods, such as reading, is limited, which can affect their awareness of social and environmental issues. Conceptions regarding sustainability focus on topics such as pesticides, climate change and environmental preservation, but show limited understanding of these issues. It is concluded that family women farmers have limited information, cultural training and knowledge about the concept of family farming. They denote low prioritization of political sustainability indicators, which can be an obstacle to strengthening and empowering discussions and initiatives related to sustainable development and gender equality.

As for the article *Inequality, Disempowerment, Empowerment, Gender, Equality* resulted in the condition of finding in the sacred text (Holy Bible) the 'roots' for the disempowerment of women in the First Testament and their empowerment, in the Second, through the work of Jesus. It was found that in Jesus lies the possibility of gender equality, providing, in the man-woman relationship, a pleasurable life that is worth living.

The research entitled *Amerindian Community Feminism and Spirituality: Cultivating Re-existences* attested that Amerindian women, through their collective organization,

rescue their ancestral modes of resistance, by including not only individual bodies, but also the social body and the body of the earth, and this perspective is the one to investigate. Because they consider humanity as a place for planting the sacred, based on assumptions where the concept of community also extends to non-human bodies, these women enunciate their knowledge from the borders and make it echo beyond capitalist perspectives that, in their reductionism, marginalize what they cannot annihilate epistemologically. These women, warriors of ancestry, have acted for the re-enchantment of the world by inhabiting the in-between places where the fight is carried out arm in arm, with the original song-prayer on their lips and in deep connection with the biomes of their territories and from this existential territory, they propose new logics of being. In this way, this cultivation of oneself and the collective in a resilient and meaningful way has much to contribute to the expansion of our cosmoperception.

In the experience report format, the text *From Home to Diagnostic Medicine: A Journey of Emancipation and Struggle for Training and Professional Identity with Gender Equality* highlighted the life trajectory of doctor Neide Calixto as a woman, wife and mother in a rural world of large-scale commodity production; about her initial experience as a woman in inhospitable regions, her main difficulties and limitations related to gender in the rural world of that time, her main motivations for studying medicine at the University of Santa Cruz de La Sierra, in Bolivia; about her experience of gender identity in the field of medicine, since medical school, and then in medical practice here in Paraná and the role of culture in forging an identity as a woman/doctor; about their perceptions about taboos and oppressive cultures that still affect women when it

comes to exposing and caring for their bodies in the field of medical diagnoses; her views on religion and gender, that is, the role of religion in the emancipation of women and the interference of religion in women's freedom in their search for equal rights in society; on the biggest challenge at work from the perspective of women's health; and finally her opinion on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) through which the UN has challenged signatory countries to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and young people" (SDG 5). The interviewed doctor took part in Working Group 11 during the experience-sharing session, which contributed to the depth of the discussion.

Another experience report brought the text *Feminisms and popular education in the pandemic*, which narrates the execution of a university extension project during the pandemic, in a context of misgovernance, neglect and irresponsibility on the part of those who should be responsible for public health, caused irreversible damage, whose studies are not yet sufficient to measure their impacts. However, it is known that black people suffered the impacts more violently, due to racism. Women suffered more violence, and domestic violence rates increased. In turn, school-age children were violently subjected to a schooling process that excluded those who did not have access to technology and the internet, while a virus ravaged the world. But, even in this unfavorable context, carrying out the university extension project reaffirmed the role of popular education and public universities even in times of pandemic.

## Religion, sustainability and feminisms: necessary dialogues for gender equality

The Gender, Feminisms, Religions and Sustainability Working Group was based on listening and dialogue, committed to the emancipation of peoples and all forms of exclusion, silencing and prejudice. It was problematized and constructed from a feminist and ecofeminist perspective, it was attended by researchers, educators, professionals from different areas, and community leaders.

**Figure 3.** Moment of presentation and dialogues in WG 11.



**Source:** Author, 2023.

A new environmental and inclusive rationality demands knowledge from the perspective of sustainability. Enrique Leff<sup>4</sup> develops the environmental problem based on economic rationality, with the motivations being the increase in the planet's

4. Leff, 2002.

population and the accumulation of capital, as well as the maximization of short-term profits. His discussion leads us to rethink our concepts of survival on the planet, defending themes regarding the conservation and maintenance of the environment, a topic of debate since the world conferences inaugurated especially with Eco 92 held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

We know that women have played a leading role in their territories, where they have contributed greatly to the preservation of their territories and their culture. In this sense:

Ecological feminism refers to the sensitivity to realize that feminist concepts are parallel to the concept that the natural world has suffered the same abuse and ambivalent treatment given to women. Although there is a wide variety of ecofeminist positions in the studies carried out, a common point among them is that the domination of women and the domination of nature are 'intimately connected and mutually reinforcing'. Ecofeminists endorse the view that an adequate understanding of the nature of the connections of this domination requires a feminist theory accompanied by a practice informed by an ecological perspective and an environmentalism informed by a feminist perspective.<sup>5</sup>

In the work on *environmental epistemology*, Enrique Leffbrings to the debate the need for actions that must be taken to change this scenario that works against the human species itself; that is, the degradation of nature.<sup>6</sup> It is necessary to rethink future actions, aiming to improve living conditions on the planet, since it is evident that the methods used in the past are not beneficial and are limiting the maintenance of life in the

---

5. Di Ciommo, 1999, p. 139.

6. Leff, 2002.

future. To promote the integration of knowledge and overcome the negative consequences that emerge from the separation of knowledge, Leff proposes an economic rationality with the aim of questioning environmental degradation.

However, traditional peoples themselves have drawn our attention to the fact that we forget to look beyond environmental degradation, as the socio-environmental issue is even broader, and includes themes that dialogue with the thematic group presented here, such as: Ethics; Gender and work; Gender and religion; Gender equity; Gender and Land and Property Rights; Violence against women, among others.

For Leff, there is a problem with knowledge, with science, which cannot fulfill its role of promoting the social well-being of human beings.<sup>7</sup> At this point, although there is a whole apparatus of rules for the publication of knowledge, perpetuation of knowledge in the social environment, the author believes that we come up against the rhetoric of discursive practices that have at their core the maintenance of the unbridled exploitation of the environment, the pursuit of the interests of the dominant classes that aim only to maintain their profitability and, by extension, a society of gender exclusion and domination.

In view of this, Leff proposes a construction of knowledge focused on an environmental rationality that opposes current social, political and economic interests, in the search for production guided by eco-development; that is, the use of resources that do not affect nature, mitigating the high ecological cost to be absorbed by the economically less favored population. This perspective demands a scientific interdisciplinarity capable of bringing together different areas of knowledge to build environ-

---

7. Leff, 2002.

mental knowledge and foster political processes to regulate the actions of social authors. To Enrique Leff,

The integrated management of the resources of a social formation is understood and addressed by the correct articulation between cultural values (cultural determination), motivational values (ideological, political, unconscious determination) and the economic valorization of productive processes (economic determination).<sup>8</sup>

However, the confrontation and interdisciplinary work of different areas of knowledge is not an easy task, as a consequence of the fragmented sciences, developed on a theoretical paradigm which, in order to achieve the objectives of environmental management, must be reconstructed. The proposal of environmental knowledge is to confront the “strengths” of each area of knowledge, disarming its conceptual traps and its methods of applying studies.

In this sense, Leff uses the example of the economist’s impetus, raising the question: how can we restrain the actions of an individual who has been conditioned to produce on a large scale and without worrying about the effects it would cause to his fellow men, as well as to the environment in which he lives? This is the challenge that is hindering the construction of environmental rationality.<sup>9</sup>

However, this reconstruction of the totality of science, seeking to unite all areas of knowledge, from the perspective of environmental preservation and the maintenance/conservation of life on our planet, is fundamentally related to gender equity

---

8. Leff, 2002, p. 92.

9. Leff, 2002.

in all areas of knowledge and, in the context of this reflection, in the recognition of a feminist economy.

About feminist economics, Lina Coelho states:

‘Feminist Economics is a rethinking of the discipline with the aim of improving the economic situation of women’ (Strober, 1994, p. 143). Feminist authors share the perspective that economics is a social construction that has traditionally omitted the specific reality of women and, to that extent, has approached economic issues in a truncated and partial way.<sup>10</sup>

The objectives of feminist economics are to contribute to transforming knowledge about and in economics to enable more comprehensive and universal approaches, rescuing and projecting for the present and the future the specificities of the economic role of women and the family and the knowledge and experiences that they undergo and develop as economic agents.

The value of unpaid work within the family, or in the norms and values that determine a particular social contract between the sexes in different communities, is highlighted here, generating unequal forms of access to economic resources and producing economically inefficient solutions by limiting women’s participation.

According to Kate Raworth,

[...] a 2014 survey of 15,000 mothers in the United States calculated that if women were paid the prevailing hourly wage for each of the roles they perform – from housekeeper and childcare provider to van driver and cleaner – then stay-at-home mothers would earn about \$120,000

---

10. Coelho, 2009, p. 128.

a year. Even mothers who work outside the home every day would earn an extra \$70,000 on top of their actual salaries, given all the unpaid care work they also provide at home.<sup>11</sup>

The ongoing destruction of planet Earth by human presence has been fueled by neoliberalism. For Kate Raworth:

The big moment finally arrived in 1980, when Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan teamed up to bring the neoliberal script to the international stage. Both newly elected, they were surrounded by Mont Pèlerin participants: Reagan's election team included more than twenty members of the society, and Thatcher's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Geoffrey Howe, was also a member. Like the most enduring Broadway shows, the neoliberal play has been performed ever since, powerfully framing the economic debate of the past thirty years.<sup>12</sup>

The plot of the “Broadway play” chose the main actors to lead the economy: the Market, because it is efficient and therefore must have absolute freedom; Companies, because they are the engine of innovation and therefore must control everything; Financial Institutions, because they are infallible institutions and, therefore, hold the most effective methods; Trade, because “everyone” always wins in it, and therefore there should be no borders for it. However, the following actors should be left out of this stage: the State, because it is incompetent; the Household, because it is domestic and, therefore, should be left **to women**; Common Goods, because they are tragic and should be privatized; Society, because it is non-existent and should be ignored;

---

11. Raworth, 2019, p. 91.

12. Raworth, 2019, p. 78.

the Earth, because it is inexhaustible; Power, because it is irrelevant and, therefore, should not even be mentioned.<sup>13</sup>

It is clear that domestic economics, an area historically dominated by women, was excluded from economic thought and, therefore, the economy was thought of far from the perspective of sustainability. Therefore, the great challenge for the present and future generations is the development of an inclusive economy, in which equity, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are at the heart of the development of sustainable societies. “Another prominent concern of feminists has been the distinction between formal and real equality. While formal equality refers to equality of rights, real equality refers to equality of results”<sup>14</sup>.

It is therefore urgent to rescue economic history from the perspective of women. Rosa Luxemburg, in her main work, *The Accumulation of Capital*, reminds us that,

As an additional domestic occupation for the time not occupied by agriculture, handicrafts played an important role in the subsistence of the peasant economy. The development of capitalist production succeeded in tearing away from the peasant economy one by one its handicraft branches, in order to concentrate them in mass factory production.<sup>15</sup>

Luxemburgo concludes her thesis on the chapter on *The Struggle Against the Peasant Economy* by stating that “The ruin of autonomous handicrafts due to competition from capital [...]” led to the following situation: “The general result of the struggle between capitalism and the simple commodity economy is this:

---

13. Raworth, 2019.

14. Deere; León, 2002, p. 47.

15. Luxemburgo, 1985, p. 271.

after capital has replaced the natural economy with the simple commodity economy, it itself will take the place of the latter”<sup>16</sup>.

Therefore, we understand that sustainable development involves the empowerment and *well living* of women and all other groups of human beings, especially through the development of a feminist economy, not as an alternative theoretical body or as a homogeneous and unique methodology, but as an effective contribution to the emancipatory transformation of the unsustainable economic reality, towards a reality of sustainability.

In this sense, noticing moments of fruitful discussions and debates, we warn of the need for greater participation and promoting spaces for debates on gender, feminisms and sustainability in future events of the organization Gender and Religion, involving themes such as feminist economics, Latin American feminisms and sustainability, with the presence of women from traditional peoples, social movements, and especially those who have taught us to think, act and conduct research in a different way, based on feminist community educational practices, after all:

We take from feminism several clues to think about our political perspectives; among them: 1) criticism of capitalist and patriarchal domination; 2) systematic questioning of androcentric culture; 3) the reflection that points to the deconstruction of dual, binary categories; 4) the search for horizontality and autonomy; 5) the value of dialogue in the denunciation of orders that intend to discipline the field of those who resist domination.<sup>17</sup>

---

16. Luxemburgo, 1985, p. 285.

17. Korol, 2007, p. 17.

## Some final considerations

Issues such as women's well-being and well living, equality between men and women, women's empowerment and their perspectives, women's movement, human rights, land rights, pioneering women, challenges of/in motherhood and career, women's exclusion, gender and philosophy, Amerindian feminism, black feminisms, community feminism, indigenous women, women's struggle for rights, Gender and work, Gender and religion, Gender equity, Gender and Land and Property Rights, were some of the topics that appeared in our dialogue circle.

The diversity of themes and the collective's adherence, which was maintained throughout all the days of the meetings and presentations, demonstrates its relevance, especially due to the diversity of cultures and languages present in the circle. The intercultural dialogue was marked by respect, ethics and the desire for better times for *nosotras*, especially as we have recently emerged from a context of crisis/chaos, in the face of epidemiological (COVID-19 pandemic), economic, ethical, socio-environmental problems, among others.

The long-awaited *freedom* was expressed in the desire and organization/realization of an in-person meeting in a post-pandemic context. For many, it was possible to reestablish dialogues and strengthen ties, even after so many deaths and an experience of social isolation. The VIII Congress continued with its welcoming proposal, while at the same time showing itself to be critical, lively and creative.

Faced with so many challenges, we met (again) to reaffirm our identities, and we reaffirm our commitment to Gender and Religion studies, with criticality and amorousness.

## References

- CARRILLO, Alfonso Torres. *Hacer historia desde Abajo y desde el Sur*. Colômbia: Ediciones desde abajo, 2014.
- COELHO, Lina. Economia Feminista. In: HESPANHA, Pedro *et al.* *Dicionário internacional da outra economia*. Coimbra, Portugal: Almedina e CES, 2009. p. 128-133.
- DEERE, Carmen Diana; LEÓN, Magdalena. *O empoderamento da Mulher*. Direitos à terra e direitos de propriedade na América Latina. Porto Alegre: UFRGS, 2002.
- DI CIOMMO, Regina Célia. *Ecofeminismo e Educação Ambiental*. São Paulo: Editorial Cone Sul, 1999.
- FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogia dos Sonhos Possíveis*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz & Terra, 2014.
- GIL, Antonio Carlos. *Métodos e técnicas de pesquisa social*. 6. ed. São Paulo: Atlas, 2008.
- KOROL, Cláudia. *Hacia una pedagogia feminista*. Géneros y Educación popular. Buenos Aires: Editorial El Colectivo, 2007.
- LEFF, Enrique. *Epistemologia ambiental*. 2 ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 2002.
- LUXEMBURGO, Rosa. *A acumulação do capital: contribuição ao estudo econômico do imperialismo; Anticrítica*. Trad. de Marijane Vieira Lisboa e Otto Erich Walter Maas. 2. ed. São Paulo: Nova Cultural, 1985. (Os economistas).
- RAWORTH, Kate. *Economia Donut: uma alternativa ao crescimento a qualquer custo*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2019.

# **Yabás: the black and feminine sacred in dialogue with the epistemologies of macumbas<sup>1</sup>**

*Indiara Tainan*

*Lucilene Athaide*

*Margarete Fagundes Nunes*

*Yalorixá Isabel Cristina Passos (Mãe Bel de Oyá)*

## **Introduction**

The street is feminine. The bodies of women, witches and enchanted women cross the alleys in search of respect and dignity. Their strength is also present in the clay that molds our bodies in the search for an ancestral transformation that comes from our elders. Their strength is also present in the clay that molds our bodies in the search for an ancestral transformation that comes from our elders. This is the original wisdom of bodies that were once captive, but that still undergo a series of confinements in the so-called Western modernity. Modernity that carries itself epistemicides that are patriarchal, sexist and misogynistic, and that is anchored in what we understand as “knowledge”.

---

1. Translation note: Macumba is a term used in Brazil to refer to Afro-Brazilian religious practices, often inaccurately or pejoratively associated with black magic or witchcraft. but recently it has been reappropriated by followers of these practices and has been given a positive meaning.

With this in mind, the objective of this work is to critically reflect on the considerations made by the Working Group (WG) entitled *Yabás: the black and feminine sacred in dialogue with the epistemologies of macumbas* which was part of the program of the VIII Congress of Gender and Religion of the Faculdades EST. On the morning of August 23, 2023, the group met in room 102, Building F, on the Faculdades EST Campus, in São Leopoldo, in the South of Brazil.

In addition to the traditional format of Working Groups expected at conferences, composed exclusively of people from academy or linked to postgraduate programs, we chose to invite to the debate a Yalorixá<sup>2</sup> black woman, matriarch of a Candomblé terreiro, and leader in the community where she lives, in the city of São Leopoldo. This perspective of debate is based on the idea of decentralized knowledge that encompasses – and respects, above all – the knowledge that is produced by marginalized groups and that are outside of what we have understood for centuries as “the cult”.

Puerto Rican sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel says that, as intellectuals, we still live based on the vision of the five countries that shaped knowledge in the Western world-system: France, Germany, England, the United States and Italy.<sup>3</sup> A Eurocentric perspective that already starts from an epistemicidal perspective, which erases the contributions of certain groups to the construction of scientific theories.

It is no coincidence that Latin America, where European colonies were established, including the German one, for a

---

2. Yalorixá or yalorixá, also known as mother of saint and mother of terreiro [sacred place/place of religious services], is the priestess of a terreiro, be it Candomblé, Umbanda or Quimbanda.

3. Grosfoguel, 2016.

long time had its intellectuals reduced to spectators while the narratives of the colonizers were primarily studied in the great academic centers. The Social Human Sciences, and thus Theology, are part of this process.

In order to critically reflect on the WG, we consider it necessary to divide this article into brief sections beyond this Introduction. In the first section, we explain how the Working Group's proposal emerged and the regional and sociopolitical context in which it is inserted. In a second moment, we explain how the discussion took place during the Congress and the topics that were debated at the conference. Finally, we bring some final considerations on the importance of debating religious racism and religious intolerance in an academic environment, especially in spaces that propose to reflect on Theology with a focus on diversity.

Certainly, our objective is not to exhaust this theme, but rather to contribute to new WGs that propose to debate the African sacred, with different approaches, in national and international congresses.

### ***"My story is over 200 years old": A WG on race in the cradle of German colonization***

*I am African, German and Brazilian  
Originally, Lutheran, a macumbeiro  
I beat my chest, I am imperial  
My history is over 200 years old*

(Samba-enredo of 2024 from the Escola de Samba Império do Sol, from São Leopoldo).<sup>4</sup>

---

4. Samba-enredo of 2024 by the Empire of the Sun Samba School, from São Leopoldo. Composers: Vinicius Brito, Vinicius Maroni, Inácio Rios and Chico Professor. Available at: <https://prefeitura.poa.br/smc/noticias/imperio-do-sol-homenageia-sao-leopoldo>.

European colonization also constituted Brazil as a nation and, consequently, influenced the processes of production and dissemination of knowledge. Geographically, the Working Group (WG) was headquartered at Faculdades EST, an institution founded over 70 years ago and closely linked to the so-called Cradle of German Colonization in Brazil – the Vale do Rio dos Sinos region, in Rio Grande do Sul. The verses that open this section are from a winning theme song from the Porto Alegre Carnival. The Império do Sol samba school from São Leopoldo took to the avenue in 2024 with an Afrocentric version that originated from the historical processes that formed the city. Far from focusing on the German pioneering role in culture, the group chose to show the formation of the city of São Leopoldo through the lens of those who were already in this land, where now, 200 years later, we are talking about black spirituality to an academic audience.

Faculdades EST emerged at the beginning of the 20th century to provide theological training to Germans of Lutheran faith who had been arriving in Brazil since 1824. Thus, in the institution's genes, we already find the importance of bringing to the debate a spirituality that is diverse and plural. We reiterate that in the last two major congresses promoted by Faculdades EST (the International Congress and the Gender and Religion Congress), the authors of this WG proposed Working Groups that welcomed works focused on African-based spirituality, being the only WGs on this specific theme in both official programs. But we also reiterate the existence of the Identity Group: a study group currently coordinated by Professor Selenir Kronbauer that has been consolidating itself in recent years as an important space for the dissemination of knowledge produced by black people, also encompassing the African matrix in its productions.

It is also important to say that our interest in talking about the theme of the African matrix from a decolonial perspective is not entirely new in Western spaces of knowledge, despite the series of erasures that we have experienced. The exuneutics<sup>5</sup> already invites us to reflect on the logic of the world based on Exu, the central and initial figure of the sacred Afro-Brazilian. It all starts with this entity. Likewise, today we are already thinking about a “pedagogy of crossroads”<sup>6</sup>, which teaches us so much about knowledge that is born in the streets and circulates through the terreiros.

### **Dialogues on faith and society – the Working Group**

For this Working Group (WG), proposals were received that dialogue from figures – entities such as Iemanjá, Oxum, Oyá, Nanã and the phalange of street women such as the pomba-giras and the gypsies, but that also reflect on the role of the sacred African and/or indigenous people in general in the production of knowledge.

Within this Working Group, the proponents understand that colonialism and colonality determined a space of marginality for African, indigenous and Afro-Brazilian worldviews and, with this, they seek to express other perspectives within academy. Thus, a black woman of axé faith was invited to discuss the work and experience reports received. The objective was to bring the symbiosis of the streets and the terreiros to the collective dialogue at the VIII Congress of Gender and Religion. A proposal that was well received by our peers.

---

5. Silveira, 2012.

6. Rufino, 2019.

In total, four papers that directly articulated the WG proposal were accepted. We chose to hold them in a single session, on August 23, between 8:30 am and 12 pm, in person. The opening of the WG was marked by the speeches of the proponents and also by the speech of the debater, Mãe Bel de Oyá. The beginning of the WG also included a collective greeting in memory of Mother Bernadette<sup>7</sup> brutally murdered a few days before the Congress in the metropolitan region of Salvador, Bahia, in the northeast region of Brazil: yet another case of racism in a country that annually records more than two thousand police reports of religious intolerance targeting the populations of terreiros.<sup>8</sup>

Each debater had 15 minutes to present their proposal, which was then debated by Mãe Bel de Oyá and the rest of the group present (with registration of interested parties organized by the WG proponents). The WG presentations were made in alphabetical order. Thus, the works were:

Before the pearl of the colonies – Indigenous land, by Aline Gobetti Oliveira; Gender representations in Umbanda: Our everyday sexism that arrived at the crossroads, by Bruna David de Carvalho; Batuque, Umbanda and Quimbanda in Rio Grande do Sul: A report based on the experience in houses of African origin, by Laura Mallmann Marcht, João Magno Silva Ceratti and Gilmar Antonio Bedin and “Exu is not the devil”: Media representations of the Orixá of communication, by Lucilene Guimarães Athaide.

---

7. Maria Bernadete Pacífico was murdered on August 17 with 25 gunshots while watching television in the house that served as the headquarters of the quilombo association, in Simões Filho, in the metropolitan region of Salvador (Carmo, 2023).

8. Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, 2024.

The exhibition by Jader Santini and Indiara Tainan, entitled “Itan: The Creation of the World in the Yoruba version”, was also available for visitors at the site. This is a traveling illustrative project that portrays the African worldview on the creation of human beings and has already been shown at several schools and institutions in Rio Grande do Sul.

All works were presented and discussed in a physical space arranged in a circular format. This choice does not happen by chance: firstly, we understand that the circle puts all people on an equal level, with no one in front or at the head of the table, and thus breaks the hierarchy of knowledge, where everyone can contribute and advance together in knowledge. Secondly, we understand that the circle has a relevant meaning because it is an Afro-Brazilian civilizing value. It refers to movement, and as we can see, Afro-Brazilian cultural manifestations take place primarily in a circle format: such as the samba circle, capoeira, among others.

We would also like to highlight the presence of the American Reverend Dr. Beverly Wallace, who participated in the WG debates (with the help of a volunteer translator) as an observer. Beverly is a theologian and researcher, an expert in studies of Women’s Theology. The interest of this renowned researcher in the discussions proposed by this specific WG makes us reflect that we are on the right track and that we should increasingly propose initiatives like this at conferences and seminars.

Figure 1. People participating in WG 13



Source: personal archive of authors, 2023.

## Considerations

Our proposal from the beginning considered the importance of bringing the debate on African-origin religiosity to a center of theological studies. Our proximity and admiration for Faculdades EST, Identity Group and the Gender and Religion Program made this possible.

We believe that it is increasingly essential to establish dialogue between academia, race, theology and Afro-Brazilian traditions. However, this should not be done in a Westernized or stigmatizing way, but rather, it should take into account the knowledge of the streets and of traditional peoples.

During the morning, we had a rich, valuable and educational meeting. We asked ourselves whether moments like this should not be repeated more frequently in places that propose to think Theology. And our answer is: yes. Let us remain avail-

able for dialogue and for the construction of joint agendas for struggle, research and dissemination of knowledge. We understand that the approval of this WG to compose the program and its implementation is in itself a political act.

## References

- CARMO, Wendal. As motivações para morte de Mãe Bernadete, segundo a polícia. *Carta Capital*, 16 nov. 2023. Disponível em: <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/justica/as-motivacoes-para-morte-de-mae-bernadete-segundo-a-policia/>. Acesso em: 28 abr. 2024.
- GROSFUGUEL, Ramón. A estrutura do conhecimento nas universidades ocidentalizadas: racismo/sexismo epistêmico e os quatro genocídios/epistemicídios do longo século XVI. *Sociedade e Estado*, Brasília, v. 31, n. 1, p. 25-49, jan./abr. 2016.
- MINISTÉRIO DOS DIREITOS HUMANOS E CIDADANIA. No Dia Nacional de Combate à Intolerância Religiosa, MDHC reforça canal de denúncias. *Agência gov*, 21 jan. 2024. Disponível em: <https://agenciagov.ebc.com.br/noticias/202401/no-dia-nacional-de-combate-a-intolerancia-religiosa-mdhc-reforca-canal-de-denuncias-e-compromisso-com-promocao-da-liberdade-religiosa>. Acesso em: 28 abr. 2024.
- RUFINO, Luiz. Pedagogia das encruzilhadas: Exu como Educação. *Exitus*, Santarém, PA, v. 9, n. 4, p. 262-289, 2019.
- SILVEIRA, Hendrix Alessandro Anzorena. *Exunêutica: construindo paradigmas para uma interpretação afro-religiosa*. São Leopoldo, Faculdade EST, Mestrado Acadêmico, Disciplina de Hermenêutica, 2012.
- SIMAS, Luiz Antonio; RUFINO, Luiz. *Fogo no mato: a ciência encantada das macumbas*. Rio de Janeiro: Mórula editorial, 2019.



## About the Authors

**Alvori Ahlert** holds a Ph.D. in Theology (Religion and Education) with postdoctoral research in Education. He has a Master's degree in Science Education (Philosophy). He is an Associate Professor at the State University of Western Paraná (Unioeste), in the Graduate Program in Sustainable Rural Development (PPG-DRS). Researcher at the Interdisciplinary and Interinstitutional Group for Research and Extension in Sustainable Development – GIPEDES (Unioeste). Email: [alvoriahlert@yahoo.com.br](mailto:alvoriahlert@yahoo.com.br)

**Andrea S. Musskopf** holds a Ph.D. in Theology. Is a Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF). Leader of the ReGeSex Research Group – Religion, Gender, and Sexuality. Email: [asmusskopf@hotmail.com](mailto:asmusskopf@hotmail.com)

**Angélica Bernate Rojas** has been an ordained pastor for 10 years in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia. She is a theologian from the University Foundation of Colombia and holds a Master's degree in Family Counseling and Family Program Management from the University of La Sabana. Currently, at IELCO, she carries out pastoral activities at the São Paulo Congregation in Bogotá, Colombia.

**Cinthia Méndez Motta** is Guatemalan, with a Master's degree in Human Dynamics and Mental Health in the field of Psychology. She holds a degree in Theology and studied Feminist Theology

at the Feminist School of Theology of Andalusia (EFETA). She studied Theology, Psychology, and Feminism. Co-founder of the Women and Theology Collective of Guatemala. Member of Amerindia Guatemala. She currently serves as President of the Women and Theology Collective of Guatemala, coordinates extension courses on: Theology from Women's Perspectives and Ecofeminist Spirituality. She facilitates ecofeminist workshops and experiences and teaches at the Faculty of Theology at Rafael Landívar University. Email: cindu13@gmail.com

**Celso Gabatz** holds PhD in Social Sciences and Master's in History. Postdoctoral fellow at Faculdades EST. Undergraduate degrees in Sociology, Theology, and Philosophy. He is a contributing professor in the Graduate Program at Faculdades EST. Email: celso.gabatz@est.edu.br

**Daniéli Busanello Krob** holds a Doctorate in Theology from Faculdades EST. Researcher in the field of violence against women, affiliated with the Gender and Religion Research Center (NPG) at Faculdades EST. E-mail: danielibusanello@gmail.com

**Flor Esther Sánchez Murcia** is from Bogotá, with a Master's degree in Gender Relations, is a theologian by profession and has also studied Pedagogy and completed specialization courses on social movements. She belongs to the Council of Assemblies of God, where she works in Social Ministry, heading the Caja de Esperanza Foundation in a vulnerable area of Bogotá. There, they assist children out of school, migrants, and their families, developing school support, food programs, and environmental care projects. She is also part of the Gender Team of the Interchurch Dialogue for Peace (Dipaz), where she helps develop Dipaz's Gender Policy and other gender-focused peace-building initiatives in Colombia.

**Graziela Rinaldi da Rosa** is a professor of Philosophy and Popular Education at the FURG Institute of Education (IE-FURG), a contributing professor at D'Generus (UFPEL-RS), member of the Brazilian Network of Women Philosophers, member of the Gender and Philosophy Workgroup of ANPOF, collaborator with the Sexuality and School Research Group (GESE/FURG), coordinator of the research line "Gender Relations and Feminisms in Education" (GESE/FURG), member of the Popular Education, Participatory Methodologies and Decolonial Studies Research Group (UNISC-RS), and a member of the Municipal Council for Women's Rights in São Lourenço do Sul/RS. Email: grazirinaldi@gmail.com

**Indiara Tainan** holds a Master's degree from the ProffHistória Program, a Professional Master's in History Teaching at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), and a degree in Pedagogy from the Methodist Church University Center. She currently teaches elementary school in the Vale do Sinos region (RS).

**Liége Costa da Silva** is a psychologist working in the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS), a Master's student in the Graduate Program in Social and Institutional Psychology at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), and a member of the Research Group on Institutional Processes, Collectives, and Subjectivation (NEPPICS). Email: costa.liege@gmail.com

**Lucilene Athaide** is a doctoral student in Communication Sciences, with an emphasis on Media Processes in the Mediatization and Social Processes research line at the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos). She holds a Master's degree in Social Sciences, with a specialization in Policies and Social Practices in the Identities and Sociabilities research line, also

from Unisinos. She holds a BA in Social Communication with a focus on Journalism from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS).

**Manueli Tomasi** is a doctoral student in the Graduate Program in Social and Institutional Psychology at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). Psychologist by training. Professor of Psychology at the Serra Gaúcha University Center (FSG). Member of the Center for Studies and Research in Institutional, Collective, and Subjectivation Processes (NEPPICS). Email: manueli.tomasi@fsg.edu.br

**Marcelo Ramos Saldanha** holds PhD in Philosophy and Master's in Theology. Postdoctoral fellow at Faculdades EST. Undergraduate degrees in Theology and Visual Arts. He is an associate professor at Faculdades EST. Email: marcelo.saldanha@est.edu.br

**Maricel Mena-López** holds a Ph.D. and a Master's in Religious Studies with a focus on the Bible from the Methodist University of São Paulo. She currently teaches Bible Studies at the Universidad Santo Tomás in Bogotá, Colombia. Email: maricelmena@usta.edu.co

**Margarete Fagundes Nunes** holds a BA in Social Sciences from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) and a Master's and Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the same institution. From 2013 to 2021, she was a faculty member in the Program on Cultural Diversity and Social Inclusion at Feevale University/RS and part of the Creative Industry Professional Master's Program. During this time, she participated in research groups on Metropolization and Regional Development, Environment and Society, and the Creative Industry (Feevale/CNPq). She coordinated the research project "Tales of the

Valley: labor, environmental memory, and territorialities in the Sinos River watershed”. She is a full member of the Brazilian Anthropological Association.

**Marilú Rojas Salazar** holds a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. She is a feminist theologian and professor in the Ph.D. program in Critical Gender Studies at the Ibero-American University of Mexico City and in the Master’s program in Theology and the Contemporary World in the Department of Religious Studies. She is a member of TEIFEM (Mexican Feminist Theologians and Researchers), director of *Sophias* (an interdisciplinary feminist theology journal in Mexico), a founding member of the Mexican Academy of Theology at UPM, and a former member of DARE (Discernment and Radical Engagement), part of the Council for World Mission. She is also involved in the research line on theology, hermeneutics, and praxis of religious experience at the Ibero-American University and a guest professor at LaSalle University. Email: saroma24@gmail.com

**Marli Brun** – holds a PhD in Education, Master's in Theology, specialist in Social Management, theologian, philosopher. Professor at Faculdades EST, co-coordinator of the Gender and Religion Program. Pastor of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil. E-mail: marlibrun@gmail.com

**Mercedes L. García Bachmann** holds a Ph.D. in Theology from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (1999) and an honorary doctorate from Faculdades EST (2021). She is the Director of the Institute for Contextual Pastoral Work of the IELU (Argentina–Uruguay). Email: mgarciabachmann@yahoo.com

**Osvaldina dos Santos Araujo** holds a Ph.D. in Sociology. She is an associate researcher at the LISST/L’UT2J Interdisciplinary

Laboratory on Solidarities, Societies, and Territories and a member of the research line “Gender(s), Body(ies), and Sexuality(ies)” in the Eneida de Moraes Study and Research Group on Women and Gender Relations (GEPEM/UFPA). Email: osvaldinasaraujo@yahoo.com.br

**Rosângela Angelin** holds a PhD in Law from the University of Osnabrueck, Germany, with postdoctoral fellow at Faculdades EST. Professor of the Postgraduate Program in Law at the Regional Integrated University of Alto Uruguai and Missões (URI). E-mail: rosangela@san.uri.br

**Rosemarie Gartner Tschiedel** is a psychologist, holds a Ph.D. in Social Psychology from PUC-SP, and is an associate professor in the Psychology Department and the Graduate Program in Social and Institutional Psychology at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). She coordinates the Research Group on Institutional Processes, Collectives, and Subjectivation (NEPPICS). Email: rosetschiedel@gmail.com

**Silvia Regina de Lima Silva** is a theologian and holds a Ph.D. in Society and Culture Studies from UCR. She is a professor at the National University of Costa Rica and Director of the Ecumenical Research Department (DEI). Email: siljai2006@yahoo.es

**Sabrina Senger** is a feminist theologian and Master, collaborator in the implementation of the project “Dismantling Fundamentalisms: Gender Justice as a Path to a Dignified Life”, developed by the Gender and Religion Program at Faculdades EST. E-mail: binasenger@hotmail.com.

**Sofía Chipana Quispe** is an Aymara woman from the Plurinational State of Bolivia. She is a member of the Community of Indigenous Wise Women and Theologians of Abya Yala and

the Andean Theology Community of Peru, Argentina, and Bolivia. Email: [warmi\\_pacha@hotmail.com](mailto:warmi_pacha@hotmail.com)

**Waneska Bonfim** is a journalist and holds a Master's degree in Administration/Organizational Management. She is the political-pedagogical coordinator at Diaconia and author of the book *Sustainability in NGOs: from political activism to institutional development* (2015). Email: [waneska@diaconia.org.br](mailto:waneska@diaconia.org.br)

**Yalorixá Isabel Cristina Passos (Mãe Bel de Oyá)** is a 56-year-old Black woman from São Leopoldo. A reference and leader in her Egbé (terreiro community), she not only leads her spiritual community but also provides, especially for women in vulnerable situations, trans women, sex workers, and members of the Axé tradition, vocational training, income generation, and environmental care initiatives. These are all grounded in the ancestral values and teachings of Candomblé, often shared naturally in the Axé kitchen.



# Subject Index

## A

Affects 25, 143, 173, 186

## B

Biblical 28, 70-72, 76, 80-81, 84-85, 87, 95, 97, 100, 102, 107, 122-123, 169, 174-175, 178, 198

Black 5-6, 9-10, 12, 14, 16-17, 21, 34-36, 65, 69-72, 90, 124, 137, 143, 188, 212, 221, 223-224, 226-227, 239

Bodies 5, 8-9, 11-15, 17, 25, 27, 33, 36-38, 42, 44-47, 49, 51, 53, 63, 67, 71-74, 80, 83-84, 89-92, 94-97, 151, 172, 177, 185-186, 188-189, 211-212, 223

Body 12, 33-34, 36-38, 47, 51-52, 71-72, 84, 89, 91, 93-97, 211, 220, 238

## C

Church 7, 15, 70, 72, 90, 97, 107, 122, 170-171, 174, 177, 196, 198, 233, 235, 237

Colonialism 45-46, 188, 227

Coloniality 227

Community 8, 21, 36, 42, 46, 52, 54, 65, 67, 70, 72, 79, 82, 84, 91-94, 97, 106, 108, 130, 133, 151, 178, 205, 208, 210-211, 213, 220-221, 224, 238-239

Context 21, 25, 41, 50, 70, 74, 81, 90, 99, 108, 120-121, 123, 125-126, 129-130, 132, 134, 136, 167, 172-174, 181-182, 185-188, 197, 212, 217, 221, 225

## D

Decolonial 9, 39, 73, 138, 190, 227, 235

Deconstruction 220

Discourse 12, 15, 43, 45, 49, 95, 121-122, 170, 173, 182, 194, 197, 199

## E

Education 58, 73, 91, 129, 131-133, 135, 174, 205-206, 212, 233, 235, 237

Epistemologies 8-10, 15, 65, 96, 223-224

Experience	20, 29, 37-38, 41, 46, 50, 61-63, 69, 71-72, 74, 90-91, 94-96, 102, 122-123, 125, 137, 144, 146, 148, 150, 170, 181, 186-187, 189, 193, 198, 206-208, 211-212, 221, 227-228, 237
<b>F</b>	
Feminism	12-15, 46, 120-121, 138, 188, 206-208, 210, 214, 220-221, 234
Feminist	5-6, 8-12, 14-16, 23, 60, 65, 69, 73, 99, 101, 106, 108-109, 120-125, 131, 134, 152, 165, 181-185, 188, 213-214, 217, 220, 233-234, 237-238
Freedom	3, 5, 8-9, 11-17, 20, 25, 29, 33-38, 91, 94, 96, 108, 143, 152-153, 169, 188, 192, 198-199, 205, 212, 218, 221
<b>G</b>	
Gender	7-10, 12-14, 16-17, 19-21, 25, 28, 33, 57, 60, 65, 69, 71-72, 89-91, 96-97, 99, 105, 108, 119-123, 125-136, 143-144, 146-153, 159, 165, 167, 169-170, 172-174, 176-178, 181-182, 185-187, 191-192, 205-213, 215-216, 219-221, 224, 226-228, 230, 233-235, 237-238
<b>H</b>	
History	14, 29, 33, 41, 45, 49, 51, 53, 67, 82, 84, 95, 101-102, 104, 109, 167, 169-170, 174, 176, 184, 189, 192, 195, 198, 219, 225, 234-235
<b>I</b>	
Identity	8-9, 14, 17, 20-23, 29, 37, 43, 47-49, 54, 76, 81-83, 91, 93, 108, 121, 124, 136, 148, 181, 187, 189, 191, 193, 198-199, 205, 211, 226, 230
Indigenous	9, 12, 36, 42-43, 46, 58, 65, 90, 172, 176, 185, 208, 221, 227-228, 238
Intersectionality	147
<b>J</b>	
Justice	7-11, 59, 65, 70, 84, 99, 143-153, 167, 171, 178, 188-189, 206, 238
<b>K</b>	
Knowledge	8-9, 25-26, 47, 57, 61, 119-120, 122, 126-128, 131-133, 135, 138, 146, 151, 158, 166, 182, 184, 189-190, 205-207, 210-211, 213, 215-217, 223-224, 226-227, 229-231
<b>L</b>	
Liberation	72, 84, 122, 124-125, 127, 175
Life	7, 10, 12, 15, 22, 29, 35-37, 41-44, 46, 48-54, 58, 62-67, 71-72, 78-79, 82-83, 92-96, 101, 104, 106, 138, 143, 164-165, 167, 170, 174-175, 178, 192-193, 195-196, 210-211, 214, 216, 238
<b>M</b>	
Memory	42, 51, 73, 91, 93, 101, 119, 189, 195, 228, 237
<b>O</b>	
Oppression	8, 10, 22, 27-28, 95, 148-149, 188

## P

- Perspective 8-10, 14, 26, 42-43, 49, 57, 60-61, 66, 69-70, 72, 89-90, 95-97, 106, 120, 122-124, 127-128, 131, 138, 144-146, 149, 169-170, 174, 176-178, 195, 206-207, 211-217, 219, 224, 227
- Political 8-10, 12-13, 15, 17, 24, 27, 36, 44, 69, 91, 99, 105, 119-123, 126, 128-129, 132-136, 146-147, 150-151, 153, 171-172, 181-182, 185-186, 188, 193-194, 197, 199-200, 210, 215-216, 220, 231, 239
- Production 5, 119-120, 122, 124-132, 135, 138, 144-145, 148, 151-152, 211, 215, 219, 226-227

## R

- Religion 7-8, 10, 12, 17, 19-20, 25, 28, 33, 46, 48, 57, 71-73, 76, 79, 82, 84-85, 89, 104, 119, 123, 127-128, 130-132, 136-137, 177, 181-184, 191, 193, 195-196, 199, 205-207, 212-213, 215, 220-221, 224, 226-227, 230, 233-234, 237-238
- Religious 8-9, 12-13, 15, 27, 43, 47-49, 51, 53, 57, 62, 71, 76, 78-79, 82, 99, 105-106, 120, 122-125, 127-129, 131-133, 135-138, 169, 171-172, 177-178, 182-183, 189, 191-196, 198-201, 223-225, 228, 233, 236-237
- Resistance 8-9, 21-23, 28-29, 51, 53, 71, 74, 91, 93, 97, 134, 182, 187, 189, 206, 211

## S

- Sacred 10, 43, 46, 49, 53, 62-63, 72, 82, 93, 169, 178, 196, 210-211, 223-225, 227
- Sexuality 8, 54, 91, 133, 136, 147, 175, 233, 235, 238
- Social 8-9, 19, 22-24, 27, 31, 36, 44, 47, 59, 65-66, 69-70, 74, 79, 82, 84, 86-87, 95, 100, 104-107, 120-124, 126, 128-129, 132-133, 135, 138, 144-148, 150, 153, 156, 165-166, 170, 172, 174, 176-177, 179, 181-182, 186-189, 191-195, 197, 199-200, 206, 208, 210-211, 215-217, 220-222, 225, 234-238
- Spirituality 17, 49-50, 61, 81-82, 89, 210, 226, 234

## T

- Territory 36, 45, 47, 52, 72, 92, 146, 156, 173, 176, 185, 211
- Trans 12, 16-17, 239

## V

- Violence 8, 10-11, 13, 15, 21, 25, 28, 46, 49, 59-60, 62, 65-67, 89-97, 107, 131-132, 148, 153, 155, 159, 162, 164-167, 170-174, 176-178, 181, 185-188, 209, 212, 215, 234

## W

- White 47-48, 71, 137
- Women 7, 9, 11-12, 14-16, 21-23, 43-46, 49, 52-53, 57-61, 63-67, 69-72, 74, 78-80, 83-84, 89-95, 100-101, 105-108, 122, 133, 137, 143-144, 147-153, 155-159, 163, 165-167, 169-178, 181-189, 206, 208-212, 214-215, 217-221, 223, 227, 229, 234-235, 238-239

Acesse nosso site e conheça  
toda a nossa coleção.

[www.editorarecriar.com](http://www.editorarecriar.com)

