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notes on María Lugones' and Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí's
contributions**

AN Original

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AN Original - UNPOP Series

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AN Original - Alice Comenta

O Alice News assinala o Dia Internacional para a Eliminação da Violência Contra as Mulheres ao publicar este artigo da série Alice Comenta, da autoria da equipa do Programa de Investigação Alice - epistemologias(...)

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Forging decolonial feminisms: notes on María Lugones' and Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí's contributions

AN Original

2021-12-09

By Laís Rodrigues

The conquest of the Americas took place in several fields: from territorial colonization to cultural, economic, religious, and knowledge impositions. Based on the conquerors' logic, language, memory, and the imaginary are forged, organizing time and space as absolutes, within a linear and universal narrative. Such universal narrative is maintained and reproduced by global linear thinking, which inaugurated the idea of modernity and Westernization.

Thus, modernity is not a universal concept, but regional, with the limitations that its historical, cultural, political, and geographical contexts impose. The limitations intrinsic to colonial-Eurocentric paradigms, however, did not prevent modernity from imposing itself as a universal process on plural realities and its parts, allowing only one logic to govern peoples. The production of knowledge becomes homogeneous and detached from local realities and their (internal and external) relationships.

Such hierarchies of knowledge (mainstream/dominant knowledge versus subaltern knowledge) can also be noticed in feminist studies, particularly between dominant/mainstream feminisms, generally from the Global North, and subaltern feminisms from the Global South, considering that the Global North and the Global South encompass geopolitical and ontological hierarchies. Mainstream feminisms are generally produced by privileged (white) women from dominant social groups, and those feminisms work according to these women's interests and agendas, without engaging in a solid dialogue with marginalized women, such as proletariat workers, women of color, immigrants, lesbians, transgenders, prisoners, and other subaltern women.

Decolonial feminism on the other hand, is focused on the discussions of feminism that is centered on coloniality and colonial differences. Therefore, decolonial feminism seeks to unmask the colonial-social-racial-geopolitical limitations of mainstream feminisms, which are devoted mainly to white, Eurocentric, bourgeois women, denouncing their (intentional or not) silencing of diverse issues faced by marginalized women.

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Within the decolonial perspective, gender issues are focused on coloniality, which naturalizes power structures that produce the subjugation and sufferance of women and LGBTQ+ people. Coloniality of gender also incorporates debates on intersectionality and intersexuality, including critical discussions on the limitations of binary sex logics, hegemonic heteronormativity, hierarchies of race and social conditions. María Lugones explains the proposed feminist agenda for the decolonial perspective, "as I move [...] to a decolonial feminism, I think about feminism from and at the grassroots, and from and at the colonial difference, with a strong emphasis on ground, on a historicized, incarnate intersubjectivity".

Feminism from a decolonial perspective thus questions and brings to light women's issues with a broader, more inclusive field of action, which is not limited to discussions, for example, of neoliberal feminists (usually White, middle-class women based on liberal, neoliberal and/or modern paradigms), whose struggle is focused on the under-(or problematic-)representation of women in different contexts, such as the workplace, politics, or international organizations. Without questioning the relevance of these and other struggles fought by mainstream feminism, which do not encompass a decolonial view, mainstream feminisms create new hierarchies, this time between privileged and underprivileged feminists. In fact, they have been proved incapable of discussing issues such as systemic racism, violence against women of color and social and historical issues that are of core importance particular to Latin American plural realities.

María Lugones is considered one of the most important representatives of Latin American feminisms who belongs to the decolonial debate. She is an Argentinian researcher who focuses on the gap in



decolonial debates on gender, starting from a critique of Anibal Quijano, thus proposing the notion of a colonial/modern gender system, in which gender itself is a colonial and violent imposition (and, in some cases, gender itself is a modern-colonial creation, as will be briefly discussed in this text, on the considerations of Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí's contributions), "consistently and contemporarily used to destroy peoples, cosmologies, and communities as the building ground of the 'civilized' West". Her analysis on feminism is mainly on race-and-gender-based oppressions, centered on the colonial difference.

Lugones unmasks ontological (gender) hierarchies naturalized by the colonial/modern system. Modernity organizes the world ontologically in terms of atomic, homogeneous, separable categories, including (Western) men and (Western) women. The colonial "civilizing mission" was represented by the brutal access to people's bodies through exploitation, sexual violation, control of reproduction, and systematic terror, also using hierarchical gender dichotomy as a

judgment. Gender differences were introduced in some places in which no form of gender hierarchy existed before: the gender system imposed through colonialism includes the subordination of females in all aspects of life.

Such colonial subordination encompasses cultural realities, religious beliefs, language, and sexuality, themes explored, for instance, by Gloria Anzaldúa, a great influence to María Lugones. However, it is worth mentioning that not all women from the Global South suffer the same forms of coloniality; there are women who experience different dimensions and contexts of oppression and violence creating Norths within the South. Just to cite recent examples in Brazil, the country has been struggling to rescue poor domestic workers, often Afro-Brazilian, from slavery, at the same time, national and international media has exposed stories of abuse involving one of the most famous Brazilian businessmen in the world, Samuel Klein, who sexually explored young poor girls. Lugones thus seeks to forge a feminism from the borders, focused on women who are marginalized and subalternized by such system.

Perhaps one of Lugones' main contributions to the decolonial perspective was also her understanding on the field's gap on gender discussions. Despite adopting Quijano's coloniality of power as the base of her decolonial feminist theory, María Lugones does not consider Quijano's analysis on gender satisfactory to comprehend potential decolonial feminism discussions. The author considers Quijano's gender analysis reductionist; his discussions, according to her, are limited to the assumption that women are resources, and the exclusively male dispute for the control of sex. In doing so, Lugones believes Quijano reiterates, at least in part, certain Eurocentric understandings about gender and sex, especially with regard to their biological logic, and decolonial feminism should go beyond Eurocentric limitations.

Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, a Nigerian sociology professor, who researches from an African perspective, is also an academic who has greatly contributed to the decolonial discussions on gender. In 2020, she published as a chapter in the same book Lugones published her "Coloniality and Gender" paper, entitled "Conceptualizing Gender: the Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies", in which she re-forges gender and co-related concepts based on African cultural experiences and epistemologies.

But perhaps one of her main contributions to feminist discussions from a decolonial perspectives is related to her idea on "non-gender equality", found in her own culture and community, Yorubá. As Oyěwùmí explains, colonized peoples were not as homogenic (in sex, sexuality and gender dimensions) as the colonizers' narrative implies. Modern-colonial history is focused on the male perspective, ignoring women's participation, even though colonization impacted both men and women. Oyěwùmí argues that, from the beginning of the colonial process, colonized women were excluded from state structures, which were:

in sharp contrast to the state organization Yorùbá, in which power was not determined by gender. The isolation of women from state structures was particularly devastating because the very nature of the state was undergoing a transformation. Unlike the Yorùbá state, the colonial state was despotic. The African males appointed as chiefs by the colonizers had much more power over the people than was traditionally conferred upon them.

Oyěwùmí thus questions the cross-cultural category validity of patriarchy itself, since Yorubá society did not consider gender as a principle to organize itself before the colonization. Therefore, patriarchy, as we know it, is a Eurocentric construct that is not natural or even universal. Western domination not only imposes its interpretation of culture, economy, and knowledge, but also of gender, and the exclusion of

women from the political life in societies such as Yoruba facilitated colonizers' control on the globe. Gender, therefore, is an essential device of dominance, producing hierarchies even where there was none.

As briefly explored in this text, María Lugones and Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí are essential authors to better understand the discussions on gender from a decolonial perspective in African and Latin American plural and subalternized realities. Historically, mainstream feminisms have excluded subaltern women through a universalist discourse, further marginalizing women who suffer with colonial differences, including, women of color, poor women, lesbians, among many others. Additionally, within the decolonial perspective, gender discussions were scarce and, as Lugones in particular has shown, sometimes even replicating Eurocentric paradigms of gender. Therefore, their works' contributions are vast and essential to a better understanding of feminisms from the Global South.

Laís Rodrigues is a PHD student at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra and a PHD candidate at the Business School of PUC-Rio.



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“Defending the Motherland”: The Rise of Female Leaders in Right- Wing Populism

AN Original - UNPOP Series

2021-11-30

By Federico Stefanutto Rosa

In less than a decade, the radical right populist party (RRPP) Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia - FdI) went from being a small and little-known movement to becoming one of Italy's major political forces. While conceived as a post-fascist party, FdI has always played with the ambiguity of its historical roots. This is strongly exemplified by the intentional selection of Italy's tricolor flame as the party electoral symbol, formerly used by the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI). However, compared to their right-wing predecessors, FdI has differentiated itself through a young female leader who has played a key role in rendering mainstream and electorally viable the party platform.



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giorgia_Meloni_Quirinale_2019.jpg.

Giorgia Meloni, the founder of Brothers of Italy, is an increasingly undisputed protagonist in the Italian political scene. Under her leadership, FdI carved out a prominent role for itself as the primary opposition party to the broad national unity government led by former European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi. Meloni's political rise has thus prompted many respected newspapers to wonder if, in the near future, she could really become Italy's first female prime minister.

The woman who is now closest to breaking Italy's longstanding glass ceiling for female leaders is therefore the founder of an RRPP that promotes anti-gender equality policies and discourses. Indeed, FdI has close ties with the most conservative Italian associations and in several occasions has actively opposed the implementation of abortion rights. But how is it possible that the most important woman in Italian politics came out of the male chauvinist RRPP family rather than from a leftist movement? To understand this apparent paradox, it is necessary to partially reframe the relationship between women and right-wing populism.

For starters, right-wing populism has been predominantly perceived and widely studied as a male phenomenon. As such, the rise of RRPPs has often been portrayed as an affirmation of masculine identity politics aimed at preserving the traditional gender order against liberal progressiveness. The typical profile of RRPP's supporters has thus been framed according to the concept of "*Angry White Men*" coined by the American sociologist [Michael Kimmel](#). Kimmel interprets the surge of right-wing populism as a form of male-centric activism fueled by feelings of rage and humiliation. In Kimmel's American case studies, there are two factors that are thought to be the triggering elements of this sort of countermobilization. First, the gradual entry of women into the job market; and secondly, the increasing participation of ethnic minorities in the labor force. This combination calls into question the societal role of white men who perceive their social status as threatened.

This seemingly solid relationship between right-wing populism and traditional masculinity is also supported by the widespread academic definition of RRPPs as *Männerparteien*, meaning parties which are mainly led and represented by men. I argue however that considering right-wing populism as a strictly male phenomenon is very limiting, particularly in recent years as women are increasingly assuming leadership positions in RRPPs. To name but a few relevant women in addition to Meloni: Marine Le Pen of French National Rally, Pernille Vermund of Danish New Right and Alice Weidel of the Alternative for Germany.

However, the intersection of women and right-wing populism remains under-researched. The vast majority of studies concentrate on RRPPs' backlash against gender equality and on the gender gap in voting behavior, but very few discuss the role of women within these parties. Likewise, [several studies](#) examine female activism in far-right extremism, but barely any cover mainstream party politics. [Susie Meret](#), [Birte Siim](#), [Cynthia Miller-Idriss](#), [Donatella Campus](#) and [Dorit Geva](#) are among the small number of scholars that have effectively addressed this topic, focusing on the image that these leaders construct around themselves.

Despite its deficit of investigation, the subject is anything but marginal. To address this gap in the scholarship, I mapped leaders of Western European RRPPs that since 2000 had gained parliamentary representation in at least one national general election (lower chamber) or one EU Election. I thus identified a total of 90 RRPPs leaders, 14 of which are female. This significant presence of female leaders (15.5%) in the most relevant RRPPs ultimately questions the assumption that being male is a precondition for an effective populist leadership.

I then examined which factors have favored the emergence of these women through the speeches and the visual communication materials of several leaders, with a particular attention to their politicization of gender identity. This analysis revealed three primary emotion narratives through which women in RRPPs mobilize their followers and delineate adversarial boundaries between "us" and "them". By evoking a variety of positive and negative emotions female leaders indeed cultivate a sense of belonging among their supporters in a political project framed as collective mission.

1. Victimization

Blaming the system is a common expedient used by populist leaders to frame themselves and their supporters as victims of the establishment. This discursive strategy is particularly fruitful when applied to female right-wing populist leaders that leverage their gender identity in a David vs. Goliath dichotomy. Women's historical exclusion and marginalization from political life ultimately makes them more credible when speaking on behalf of the common people. Moreover, female RRPP leaders present themselves as being outcast by mainstream media and cultural elites as compared to leftist female politicians. This narrative of victimization makes them appear as perfect outsiders in the eyes of their supporters.

"This is what happens every day in left-wing groups, without anyone being scandalized or Facebook intervening. Right-wing women covered with insults, including sexual ones, are met with absolute silence from feminists, politics and the media. Can you imagine what would have happened if the roles were reversed?"

Giorgia Meloni, leader of Brothers of Italy (Fdi), 10th October 2019.

2. Dramatization

As political scientist [Benjamin Moffit](#) argues, the performance of crisis is one of the core features of populism and populist leaders consequently assume center stage in these dramas. The issue of migration is certainly the most strongly exaggerated and inflated crisis by RRPPs. Immigration, especially from Muslim-majority countries, is framed as a threat to national identities and sometimes even to the Western ideas of freedom.

Women once again play a pivotal role in this strategic game of "building the enemy". Through their visual communications and their discourses, female RRPP leaders portray themselves as emancipated and empowered women, in an implied opposition to "oppressed" Muslim women. In doing so, they set themselves up as "defenders" of democratic liberties from the alleged menace of the Islamization of society.

"Catastrophic immigration policies have destroyed our society's sense of security. Women are raped, Jews are persecuted, the lives of artists and politicians are threatened, men are

stabbed in the street, homosexuals are being discriminated against”.

Pernille Vermund, leader of the Danish New Right (NB), 12th September 2016.

3. Normalization

Some studies have shown that female-led parties are perceived as more moderate by the electorate, no matter how extreme the organization platform actually is. This is precisely the function that women play inside RRPPs. The presence of a female leader boosts the party’s normalization strategy causing it to appear more presentable and straying it away from the image of a movement made up only of violent and belligerent men.

It is not accidental that women have played prominent roles in the few instances in which European RRPPs have assumed government control. For example, in 2000 the right-wing populist Austrian Freedom Party (FPO) appointed the female parliamentary member Susanne Riess Passer as vice chancellor and new party chair when forming a coalition government with the center-right Austrian People Party (OVP). Indeed, the long-term charismatic leader George Haider stepped down in favor of Riess Passer to facilitate the organization’s attempt to gain institutional legitimacy.

This normalization scheme emerges clearly in the discourses of RRPP leaders that often use motherhood and sisterhood narratives to soften their party image.

“I have five children, Merkel has none. Children help you to look beyond your own backyard.”

Frauke Petry, Leader of Alternative for Germany (AfD) between 2015-2017, 14th September 2016.

“Upon reflection, the electorate liked me for having overturned the caricature of the Front National. A normal woman in a movement described as a gathering of sexist and violent individuals.”

Marine Le Pen. Leader of the French National Rally (RN), 2011.

In essence, these three emotion narratives have contributed significantly to the creation of a more open structure of political opportunity for women in RRPPs. Victimization and dramatization are mainly fueled by negative feelings like anger, bitterness and fear. Their function is therefore to reinforce the opposition between in-group (“the pure people”) and out-group (the political elite and immigrants). The normalization narrative instead leverages positive emotions such as altruism, kindness and benevolence.

Today, as a result of the interplay between these narratives, female politicians, like Brothers of Italy leader Giorgia Meloni, have greater traction in right-wing populist organizations. These women in fact represent the ideal “new face” of RRPPs for their unique positionality as political outsiders that can at once strengthen the populist divide between ‘us’ and ‘them’ while also lending institutional legitimacy to right-wing populist extremism.

Federico Stefanutto Rosa - Political communication consultant and researcher. Earned his Master’s degree from the Political Science and Sociology department of Scuola Normale di Pisa He holds a Bachelor’s degree in International Relations from La Sapienza University of Rome and a Master’s degree in Politics, Institutions and Markets from the University of Florence. His topics of research interest include the right-wing populism in Europe and in the US, the transnationalization of the far right and electoral campaigns.



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Are New Educational Reforms in Latin America an Old Recipe for Failure?

AN Original

2021-11-28

By Nadejda Marques

In the 1990's, education was part of a political project in Latin America. In part hoping to modernize the state and the economy but also to respond to global market demands, several Latin American countries introduced changes in their national educational policies. The top-down changes that took place in the decades that followed were part of reforms supposedly intended to address different needs and issues such as low quality of education, absenteeism, high dropout and repetition rates, ideological textbooks, educational materials of little relevance for students, lack of teacher training and lack of involvement of parents and communities in local school affairs but, instead, focused mainly on access to primary and secondary education.

There have been some successful reform programs in many countries including Brazil where significant changes were introduced in the education system following the Minas Gerais reform in 1991 and, later the implementation of a federal cash transfer program for families with school age children Bolsa Família, renamed after modifications to the original program, Bolsa Escola, first implemented in 1995 in the country's capital, Brasília. However, whenever reforms were not clear about their goals of enhancing quality as well as access, and when results were not as immediate as politicians desired, populist practices of partially improving infrastructure prevailed.



Photo: Nathan Dumlao on Unsplash

Successful reforms along with other factors such as increased life expectancy and greater market demand for skilled labor have enabled more students to complete primary and secondary levels and be eligible for a higher education degree. In a region where access to education has been a traditional divide in society, it should not come as a surprise that once more students have access to basic education and complete those first and secondary levels, higher education becomes the next paradigm. However, these reforms were introduced in an era of economic crisis in the region. Though figures show that in Latin America there was a significant increase in net enrollments and literacy rates, governmental expending in education was rapidly decreasing. These countries faced negative GDP growth, high inflation, large fiscal deficits, and were pressured to implement neoliberal reform initiatives. The economic crisis rapidly decreased government expenditure in education and the recurrent focus on enrollments in basic education and literacy rates caused higher education systems to erode. Investments in primary education competed with other priorities within the education budget and, while primary education was the focus of educational efforts, higher education was always regarded a second position.

Public universities also faced public scrutiny based on the misconception that they only served the elites. Those in favor of a private education system argued that, to begin with, many public universities in the region never envisioned mass enrollment. Many campuses were built in areas of difficult access and facilities were in decadence. Provisions for housing and transportation are thoroughly inadequate, thus rendering attendance at university difficult for anyone other than children of affluent families who reside with their parents. In addition, entrance exams hold standards much higher than elementary education schools. The completion of this process usually takes weeks for the exam and months for the final result. It is not uncommon for students from the public education system to fall behind those that can afford private education in elementary school.

Though this might have been the case in the past, this argument can no longer serve to label public universities as servants of the wealthy. In recent decades, despite consistent reduced government funding, Latin American public universities have experienced a period of expansion, including many young people entering the higher education system as the first in their families (first-gen students). The [World Bank estimates](#) that, thanks to regional incentives, university enrollment rates rose from 20% of the university age population in Latin America in early 2000 to about 50% before the COVID-19 pandemic. This expansion in public universities was felt among low-income students, women, indigenous, Blacks, rural students, and those farther away from large urban centers. An achievement worth celebrating but if, on one hand this positive expansion could result in social advance that would lift entire communities out of poverty, on the other hand, the setbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic when thousands of college students [dropped out of school](#) may have long lasting effects in the economy of these countries perpetuating an economic cycle based on natural resource extraction, exports of primary goods and dependence and importation of technology-based products. At a time when technological developments are taking place at an exponential rate, setbacks of this nature can generate pervasive socio-economic costs for Latin American countries and societies.

There were many reasons for dropping out from university during the pandemic but, above all, they are due to circumstances of confinement, widespread unemployment and the economic crisis that reduced the income of large groups of students who found themselves unable to afford tuition, computers, cell phones, internet connections or electricity to carry on with their studies even if remotely. In addition, [according to a study](#) carried out by UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC), teachers and students' lack of digital competence was the main difficulty posed for remote learning platforms used by universities in the region. The COVID-19 pandemic and this situation made it clear: access per se does not solve the problem of inequality, poverty, or discrimination. In fact, it may contribute to the perpetuation or [aggravation of the disparities](#) between the wealthy and the disadvantaged. Access needs to be accompanied by quality reforms that in turn must be inclusive, democratic, and modern.

While public opinion still sees education as the main mechanism to overcome poverty and inequality, political will, and political interest in education in the region has winded down, in particular, regarding higher education. What has changed? In terms of reform, not much as they still focus on access and privatization, not on quality of education. One of the trendsetters of new educational reforms in the region, Brazil, with its *Novo Ensino Médio* program promotes technical and professional education offered by private initiative while undermining public higher education with more budget cuts and restrictions. Right-wing authoritarian governments across Latin America work against public universities because they provide an environment and key critical thinking tools for civic and democratic participation. These governments implement an antidevelopment agenda with reform against research and scientific knowledge. Against educators and students. In fact, it is not a new reform at all. It is a worse version of the same old reform implemented all over again.

Nadejda Marques' research at the University of Coimbra - CES addresses the Effects of COVID-19 Public Health Policies on Migrants and Refugees in the European Union. This project partners with the UFRS Rede Covid-19 which aims to produce knowledge and unable the understanding of the impact of the pandemic in Brazil. She received her PhD in Human Rights and Development from the University Pablo de Olavide (Seville, Spain) and has worked in human rights for over two decades. She is the author of *Nevertheless, They Persist: How Women Survive, Resist and Engage to Succeed in Silicon Valley* (2018) about the history of sexism and current gender dynamics in Silicon Valley; and coauthor of *The Cost of Inaction: Case Studies from Rwanda and Angola* (2012). This study presents and implements Amartya Sen's methodology to account for the consequences, and to estimate the costs of the failure take steps to respond to the basic health needs of children and their families. She has written on a range of topics, including resettlement of refugees, internally displaced and former combatants in Angola, public health in sub-Saharan Africa, human trafficking in Europe, and school health services in the United States. Marques has served as Angola researcher for Human Rights Watch and as a frequent consultant for leading Angolan and Brazilian rights centers. She has worked as a special correspondent for the Washington Post in Latin America and taught and/or worked at Harvard University, Bentley College, the University of Massachusetts, Stanford University, and the University of Colorado at Boulder. Marques is fluent in English, Portuguese, and Spanish.



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Será que sou formiga?

Ensaio feminista

AN Original - Alice Comenta

2021-11-25

Por Teresa Cunha

O Alice News assinala o [Dia Internacional para a Eliminação da Violência Contra as Mulheres](#) ao publicar este artigo da série Alice Comenta, da autoria da equipa do Programa de Investigação Alice - epistemologias do Sul (alice-ES), publicada com cadência semanal.

Estávamos todas sentadas à sombra de um grande cajueiro. O dia estava muito quente, muito quente mesmo. Eram umas 11h da manhã. A hora do maior calor. Levámos água e bolachas pois sabíamos que estaríamos dispostas a conversar por várias horas. Éramos todas muito diferentes: camponesas, deslocadas, professoras, trabalhadoras, pesquisadoras, activistas, artesãs, vendedeiras; mais velhas, mais novas, umas mães, outras não, algumas avós; dizemos obrigada de muitas maneira: ndilombolela, kihosukuro, khanimambu, asante; algumas gostam de cobrir a cabeça com capulana, outras usam chapéu, outras deixam o cabelo ao vento cortado curtinho, amarrado em tranças ou arranjado com mechas longas. Importaram pouco as nossas diferenças à sombra do grande cajueiro naquele dia. Pelo menos pareceu-me assim. Todas éramos formigas. Pelo menos, pensava eu, que éramos todas formigas. Mas agora pergunto-me muitas vezes: será que eu sou formiga?

Todas nós queríamos falar de nós e das nossas vidas que afinal se cruzam com as vidas de muitas outras mulheres que nós conhecemos e, até, com a vida de outras que nós nunca vimos mas sentimos que fazem parte dessa nossa irmandade que os sofrimentos comuns parecem engendrar. No início, a vontade de falar era tanta que nos atrapalhámos um pouco umas às outras mas, rapidamente, sobrevieram os silêncios, cada vez mais profundos, dependendo da intensidade da dor. Parecia, como nos contou a Latifa (e claro que este nome foi arranjado agora), que estávamos num buraco de fogo onde tínhamos sido condenadas a morrer. Mas de cada vez que uma de nós falava, era como a saliva do passarinho, que voava perto, e que caía no fogo e o ajudava a apagar. Percebemos que não só a nossa condenação estava condenada a não acontecer como de pingo em pingo de saliva fomos dominando o fogo até que ele se extinguiu.

O meu objectivo para esta crónica *Alice Comenta* era escrever um texto sobre feminismo. Na melhor das hipóteses, sobre feminismo que se pudesse adjectivar de pós-colonial. Porém da minha cabeça não saem nem as imagens, nem os cheiros, nem o calor, e muito menos as palavras de todas nesse final de manhã, lá em Mahate. E não me saem da cabeça porque tudo aquilo fez e faz muito mais sentido para mim do que muitos dos artigos publicados que leio e que, confesso, até gosto muito. Sou *kakata*: não deito nada fora, por princípio. Mas confesso que há coisas que me entusiasmam muito mais do que outras.



Foto da autoria de Teresa Cunha: Estrutura das casas em Cabo Delgado antes de serem maticadas, ou seja, antes de serem cobertas com uma mistura de barro com água para as tornar mais impermeáveis. Mas depois de maticadas, como os heróis da guerra, não fica à vista o quanto de pedra sobre pedra e bambu (o trabalho das mulheres e o seu sofrimento) foi preciso para as construir (a nação). Uma boa parte das casas na província está assim, com a estrutura à mostra tal como são as mulheres que zungam de um lado para o outro nas ruas e caminhos para fazerem a vida.

Falámos de coisas muito tristes mas que precisam de ser faladas. Falámos de como matam as mulheres cortando-lhes as mamas, abrindo os seus ventres para lhes retirarem os fetos. Falámos de como as raptam para as obrigar ser espias, a carregar as armas, a cozinhar, a fazer a machamba, a *atender um batalhão inteiro por dia*.

Não preciso de explicar o que isso significa. Para elas o pudor no uso das palavras é muito importante, é sinal de respeito. Então não quero impor a crueza das palavras com que costumamos designar essas coisas.

Falámos de como as dividem entre 'Arroz Lulu' *porque são boas para comer*, e as escolhem para servir como esposas de comandantes - mais uma vez, o uso das palavras é uma forma de diminuir o trauma e a vergonha. Tenham isso em atenção

enquanto lerem estas palavras – e as outras, consideradas feias, são ‘mapira’ e só servem para trabalhar. Há lá coisa mais cruel que estas qualificações?

Falámos das mães que se recusam a amamentar as crianças nascidas dos estupros. Falámos do pavor de ver entrar em casa um filho que se sabe ter matado, ou ter sido obrigado a comer carne e a beber sangue humanos e que nunca mais recuperará a paz nem o sono. Chorámos quando falámos das mães que se entregam aos insurgentes para protegerem as filhas dos estupros. Falámos e chorámos dessas e de muitas outras coisas.

Enganam-se se pensam que a conversa foi um desfiar de lágrimas e gritos. Não. Pelo contrário. Na realidade, estas passagens pelas dores foram sempre entretidas com análises e reflexões políticas profundas e certeiras, a meu ver. Foram abordados e discutidos assuntos como: a militarização e as suas consequências, especialmente na forma como as crianças e as/os jovens estão a ser ensinadas/os a pensar que a resolução de todos os problemas se consegue com fardas, armas, obediência sem réplica e violência; os mega-projectos extractivistas e a cobiça nacional e internacional que lhes permitem transformar montanhas em pedra triturada para fazer cimento, minas em campos de concentração, campos de cultivo em crateras, bases logísticas em caminhos do mar fechados para os pescadores, as florestas em campos de refugiadas/os, as pessoas em IDPs – Internal Displaced People - e assim por diante. Falámos de como a primeira vítima da guerra é a verdade, de como a guerra não terminou, *só parou um pouco*, como Mocimboa da Praia, não importa a propaganda, *está em silêncio, não se ouve nem uma galinha, nem um cabrito e as tropas ruandesas estão encostadas à praia*. Falámos de que é preciso negociar para chegar à paz e de que as Forças de Segurança de Moçambique conhecem quem está do outro lado e até, em alguns momentos, já fizeram acordos com eles para dividir despojos, territórios e evitar mútuas emboscadas. Falámos que sim, a guerra tem rostos e nomes que são conhecidos mas parece que não há vontade de acabar com ela. Falámos de como esta guerra não é religiosa e de como o capitalismo extractivista tem sido a medida de todas as coisas e de como a ganância destrói o país e a vida das pessoas e inventa a ideia de que para se ser alguém se tem que ter muito dinheiro, a qualquer preço. Falámos de como soldados e polícias roubam, matam, torturam, estupram e de como é ter medo de falar, de denunciar porque *chega lá com dinheiro na mão e o tribunal fecha as portas e não acontece nada*.

A nossa conversa foi carregada de emoções, informação, reflexão e conhecimentos. As vozes, foram autorais e firmes, usando as suas próprias palavras sem nunca se desconectarem dos corpos, das comunidades e dos territórios. Não correu uma única lágrima porque a força de estarmos juntas e sabermos que temos razão foi muito maior do que a ameaça do bufo que passou de mota, vezes sem fim, pelo caminho à beira da sombra onde estamos sentadas para ir relatar às autoridades a nossa subversão: conversar e dizer alto e bom som o que sabemos, pensamos e queremos que se saiba sobre esta guerra maldita.

Há momentos que são como os raios de um relâmpago, breves mas muito intensos, em que as nossas vidas, tão diferentes, se cruzam, se juntam e os corações parecem bater ao mesmo compasso. Mas é preciso dizer quem sou eu naquela sombra, de onde venho e de onde o meu coração bate com o delas. É que eu que vivo num mar de privilégios e posso vir-me embora enquanto elas continuam lá, no calor e no fogo das balas e das porradas.

Passaram-se uns dias e o cenário mudou radicalmente. Estávamos numa sala sentadas em cadeiras com mesas à nossa frente, tínhamos ar condicionado e tudo. Computadores ligados, *smartphones* sempre na mão prontos a responder às mensagens do *whatsapp* ou do *intragam* que estão sempre a entrar, tudo menos urgentes e tudo menos importantes. Recitaram-se todas as ladainhas do género, revisitou-se o repertório aprendido sobre os *direitos humanos das mulheres* enquanto muitas partilhavam fotografias dos últimos modelos de roupa que é preciso comprar para as festas do fim do ano.

Certeira foi a observação final que ouvi em modo de desalentada impaciência: isto para mim é o feminismo das cigarras. Ela, a que falou assim, tinha estado à sombra do cajueiro.

Eu cá fiquei a perguntar-me, e eu? Não sou eu uma cigarra?

Mas eu quero ser uma formiga ou então a saliva do passarinho que voa sobre o buraco de fogo.

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