

“#queroviajarsozinhasemmedo”: new registers of the relations between tourism, gender and violence in Brazil*

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Abstract

The title of my article refers to one of the various hashtags that circulated [in Portuguese] on *Twitter*, in Brazil, reacting to the disappearance and death of two Argentine tourists in Ecuador in early 2016. I will consider the conditions of production of this reaction, which is unusual in a country that for decades has paid little attention to violence against women tourists, related to the recent movement that was called the “feminist spring” in the country. Using them as a reference, I propose to explore methodological issues to be faced in studies about the relations between gender, violence and tourism. I consider the conditions that turn certain violences particularly relevant for feminisms. I then analyze the analytical tools that feminist frameworks offer to reflect on those relations.

Keywords: Violence, Gender, Sexuality, Feminisms, Female Foreign Tourists.

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Presentation

The title of this article refers to one of the various hashtags that circulated on Twitter in Brazil in reaction to the disappearance and death of two Argentine tourists in Ecuador in early 2016.¹ I begin with these reactions to make some comments about one of the new registers of the articulations between gender, sexuality and violence involving tourism that have disseminated on the internet, in feminist and mass media in Brazil. This is noteworthy because until a short while ago the problematic of violence aimed at women tourists was little contemplated by academic production in Brazil² and did not attract the attention of feminist activists.

My interest in these registers is linked to concerns about the understanding of how these articulations affect women from other places, frequently foreigners, who travel without company of men in tourist locations in various countries, including Brazil. This interest is associated to a study that explores how, in the realm of

¹ I would like to thank the organizers of the Simpósio Especial 003 “Gênero, sexualidade, intolerância e violência”, at the 30 *Reunião da RBA* (João Pessoa, 2016), Horacio Sivori, Regina Facchini and Maria Filomena Gregori, for the opportunity offered to present a first version of this work, the generous debate conducted at this time by Cynthia Andersen Sarti, the comments and observations of the participants of this symposium and the broad and careful review of Brazilian and international media by Maira Del’Evore, with the support of Fapesp. I am also grateful to the participants of the workshop “Cultura do Estupro”, held at Unicamp in December 2016, and particularly to Adriana Vianna, for her instigating comments. I am also grateful to Regina Facchini and Maria Filomena Gregori for the substantive contributions to the development of this text, and to Carolina Branco Ferreira, Natalia Corazza Padovani and all those who participated in the class that we taught together, “Post-colonial and decolonial thinking and feminisms” at Unicamp in the first semester of 2017, for the immense disposition to discuss “strategic essentialisms” and the relations between theoretical formulations and activist practices”.

² This became evident in the surveys conducted for the initial studies that I did about the problematic at beach communities in Ceará, late in the decade of 2000 and in master’s and scientific initiation studies conducted by Fernanda Leão Antonioli (Piscitelli, 2011, 2015; Antonioli, 2008; Motta, 2002)

the imbrication between tourism and sociality,³ the intersections between gender, sexuality, age, nationality/regionalty and social class feed different modalities of agency, including those in which tensions and conflicts materialize in hostility and violence.⁴

In the reactions to the death of the Argentine tourists, the activisms mobilized a series of notions, which are frequently synthesized in the expression “rape culture” and are part of the feminist framework for combatting sexual violence against women. These notions and the assumptions on which they are based also permeate studies found internationally about gender and tourism that have treated violence against women who travel without male company. I refer to studies about sexual and romantic relations established between women travelers and local men, which tend to be encompassed in the studies about “romance tourism” and about “female sexual tourism”. I do not establish relations between the death of the Argentine tourists and these modalities of travel, but allude to this literature because, until now, it is the work that most directly looks at situations of violence against women tourists.

The framework that is manifest in the concept of “rape culture” is certainly productive in terms of political mobilizations. Nevertheless, and this is my first argument, the assumptions on which this notion is based present problems when applied for purposes of analysis. This is evident in the literature about gender and tourism that I mentioned. These studies involve readings that, updating lines of radical feminism in which centrality is given to the patriarchy (Dworkin, 1976; Brownmiller, 1975), analyze violence in terms of gender inequality, granting a secondary place to other inequalities. And ignoring differences between contexts, power

³ In the sense granted to this concept by Marilyn Strathern (1988), such as creation and maintenance of social relations.

⁴ This project is being prepared in collaboration with professor Susan Frohlick of British Columbia University, in Canada, an institution that supported my trip to this country to develop the first formulations. The study involves articulations between violence, gender and tourism that affect foreign women tourists from countries of the North in the region of the Caribbean, Costa Rica, Ceará, Brazil and the coast of Ghana, in Africa.

dynamics and dimensions of violence they use the model of “domestic/conjugal” violence to consider violence perpetrated against tourists (Jeffreys, 2003). My concerns are related to the formulations of these approaches, which wind up operating as an analytical prison.

Considering the reactions to the deaths of the Argentine tourists in Ecuador, I raise two points that allow us to dialog with the broader debate about relations between gender, sexuality and violence. The first point, developed in the first section of this article, relates to the conditions that make certain registers of violence particularly relevant to feminisms. I consider the visibility acquired by the case of these tourists, using various on-line sources, including articles in the major media and by more independent media, without examining in detail differences between these sources. I pay particular attention to the feminist media, taking into account the fundamental importance of the internet when considering the current activisms (Alvarez, 2014; Rentschler, 2014; Ferreira 2015; 2016; Modelli, 2016). Nevertheless, I did not work with this material with the methodological rigor used in the studies aimed at understanding the modalities of political action made possible by spaces of on-line sociability (Falcão, 2017). Interested in the concepts triggered in the visibilization of these deaths and seeking to explore how the ideas “behave” (Strathern, 1992: xxviii), I treated the material disseminated by a variety of sources as if it had an ethnographic continuity.

The second point refers to the analytical tools that the feminist theoretical approaches offer for reflecting on these relations. I develop this point in the two final sections of the text, in which I consider how international studies about tourism have treated violence against women tourists and reflect on the methodological problems presented by these approaches. My second argument is that these studies, as well as some broader discussions about the relations between gender, sexuality and violence, still face the challenge of accounting for the various dimensions present in these relations, particularly when they

involve violence that is manifest in interpersonal relations, in the realm of intimacy.

The construction of a case

In November 2016, two Argentine tourists, 21 and 22 years old, disappeared in Ecuador. According to the articles disseminated in the international media, mainly in Latin American countries, these youths left with backpacks on their backs to get to know South America, and after having separated from a larger group, were assassinated in the beach community of Montañita. According to these narratives, two suspects were arrested, around 30 years old. One of them confessed to having killed one of the girls with a blow to the head, after trying to “abuse her”,⁵ and accused the other of killing the second youth by stabbing her with a knife.⁶ According to some reports, the women had agreed to sleep in the home of one of the men because they had been assaulted and had no money. These versions were immediately questioned and according to later reports, the toxicological exam of the bodies showed that the youths were drugged with a hypnotic, which would make clear the intention to “abuse them”.

The articles that circulated in the international press and the reactions to them are interesting because by opening a discussion about the “sexual harassment” that women suffer when they travel without male company,⁷ show a dispute between antagonistic positions. Articles presenting a negative reading of women who travel without male company were produced in various countries.

⁵ In this text I use quotations marks when referring to emic concepts.

⁶ Entierran a las dos turistas argentinas que fueron asesinadas en Ecuador, Redacción, BBC Mundo, 1/04/2016 [http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2016/04/160401_entierran_dos_turistas_argentinhas_asesinadas_montanita_ecuador_dgm, consulted in June 2016].

⁷ Por que mulheres “viajando sozinhas” são um problema para o mundo, Nexo, 5/03/2016 [<https://www.nexojornal.com.br/expresso/2016/03/05/Por-que-mulheres-“viajando-sozinhas”-são-um-problema-para-o-mundo>], accessed on 29 August 2016].

In Ecuador, the vice-minister of tourism, referring to the youths demise, declared: “this would have happened sooner or later”, because they “were hitchhiking and looking to party”.⁸ In Argentina, a psychiatrist considered these women tourists “propitiatory victims”. Affirming that this does not remove the weight of responsibility from the aggressors, he described them as women who assume a high risk and in some manner play a role in what mobilizes the crime.⁹

Readings contrary to these perceptions were expressed in various parts of Latin America. In this line of debate, the assassination of the women tourists was related to a feminist discussion about the right of women to travel alone, which culminated in the dissemination of the hashtag [#ViajoSola](#) and in various protests in Latin America.¹⁰ The reaction in defense of the young women was evident in the feminist media, that is, in the media integrated to activism that give a political response to gender conflicts (McClintock, 2010) and propose increasing the power of women (Shohat, 2001). Nevertheless, in a convergence between medias (Modelli, 2016), these responses, involving notions that are repeated in feminist social networks, blogs, homepages, and twitters, were quickly reproduced in articles in the major media. In this interlinking of media, the defense of the youths was

⁸ Blog *escrevalolaescreva*, 5/03/2016

[<http://escrevalolaescreva.blogspot.com.br/2016/03/a-sina-das-mulheres-que-ousaram-viajar.html>]. According to the articles consulted, these declarations forced her from her position. “Ministra de Ecuador renuncia por declaraciones sobre turistas argentinas”, *Noticias 24*, 10 mar. 2016 [<http://www.noticias24.com/internacionales/noticia/111903/renuncia-funcionaria-ecuatoriana-por-declaracion-sobre-chicas-argentinas/>]. Accessed on: 30 Aug. 2016].

⁹ *Las mochileras, antes de morir: "Viajamos en las cajas de las camionetas"*. Bigband news, 1/03/2016 [<http://www.bigbangnews.com/policiales/Las-mochileras-antes-de-morir-Viajamos-en-las-cajas-de-las-camionetas-20160301-0007.html>].

¹⁰ *pcvasconcellos*, “#NiUnaMenos”, Blog “Pela rua virando lata”, 9 mai. 2016 [<https://pelaruavirandolata.com/2016/05/09/niunamenos/>]. Accessed on: 15 Aug. 2016].

articulated to calls for justice and that women be able to travel safely without male company.¹¹

These texts describe how in Mendoza, the women's home city, thousands of people marched in silence, to demand justice¹², carrying signs with the feminist slogan "Not one less".¹³ The cities of Montañita and Guayaquil, in Ecuador, were also the scene of marches.¹⁴ In Peru, the impressive dissemination of the case on the social networks stimulated the production of articles that analyzed the hashtags and messages through which were defended the rights of women to travel without male company.¹⁵ The impact of the texts on the theme and of the hashtag #viajosola diffused by this network were enormous. Some weeks after the news of the deaths, this demand was considered to be viral and global,

¹¹ #Viajosola: cómo el asesinato de dos turistas argentinas desató un debate sobre el acoso a las mujeres. Redacción, BBC Mundo, 5/03/2016 [http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2016/03/160304_america_latina_turistas_argentinas_montanita_ecuador_viajosola_ppb.shtml].

¹² "Argentina: Marcham exigiendo justicia para dos turistas asesinadas en Ecuador", Correo, 3 mar. 2016 [<http://diariocorreo.pe/mundo/argentina-marchan-exigiendo-justicia-por-dos-turistas-asesinadas-en-ecuador-657907/>]. Consulted on 30 Aug. 2016].

¹³ "Ni una menos" [Not one less] is a feminist slogan that has expanded transnationally and in Argentina, is the name of a collective that, reacting to the feminicides, organized multiple campaigns since June 2015. [http://niunamenos.com.ar/?page_id=6. Consulted in April 2017].

¹⁴ "Confirman identidad de turistas argentinas muertas en Ecuador", Colombia.com, 16 mar. 2016 [<http://www.colombia.com/actualidad/internacionales/sdi/133544/confirman-identidad-de-turistas-argentinas-muertas-en-ecuador>]. Accessed on: 29 Aug. 2016].

¹⁵ "No viajaban 'solas', así responden en redes al asesinato de turistas argentinas", Perú 21, 5 mar. 2016 [<http://peru21.pe/redes-sociales/no-viajaban-solas-asi-responden-redes-asesinato-turistas-argentinas-2240623>]. Accessed on: 12 Aug. 2016].

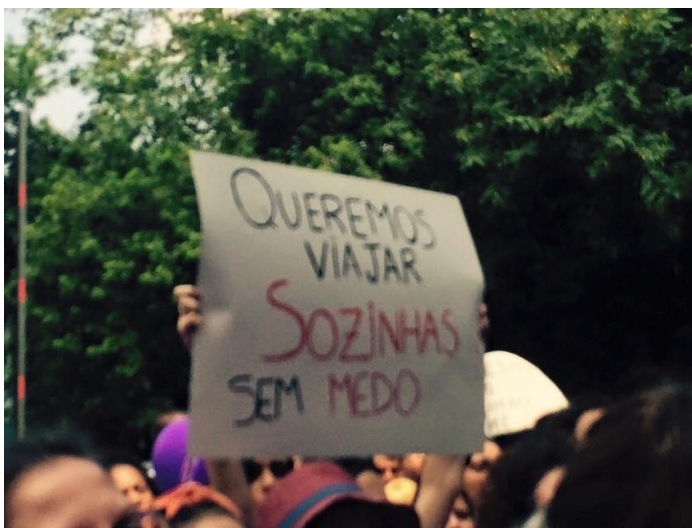
appearing as hashtags in other languages such as *#I travel alone e #Je voyage seule*.¹⁶

In this context, the Paraguayan student Guadalupe Acosta, who borrowed the voice of one of the girls, wrote a letter that began with the words: “Yesterday, they killed me...”. It is a beautiful and creative text that denounces the inequality of gender and the blaming of the victims of sexual violence and, at the same time, calls on women to react and to multiply actions to change this situation. This letter went viral on social networks, reaching 600,000 shares in less than 10 days. The point that I would like to highlight in relation to these reactions is that they were also manifest strongly in Brazil, where the hashtags that circulated in other countries were quickly disseminated, such as **#QueroViajarSozinhaSemMedo**.



¹⁶ “Yo sí viajo sola”, María Fernanda Ampuero, *Mujer Hoy*, 10 Aug. 2016 [<http://www.mujerhoy.com/vivir/ocio/201608/03/viajo-sola-mujer-20160803141235.html>]. Consulted in August 2016].

This *hashtag* circulated intensely on Facebook pages on International Women's Day, March 8, and became a slogan in the celebrations and protest on this day in 2016, as in those held by the network "USP não cala" [USP won't be silent].



Demonstration of USP não Cala, São Paulo, 8/03/2016.¹⁷

And various Facebook pages promoted the letter of Guadalupe Acosta which, translated into Portuguese, was also published online by the magazine *Capricho*¹⁸ and in the newspaper *El País/Brasil*.

¹⁷ Posted by Laura Moutinho, on the facebook page of the Rede USP não Cala, 8/03/2016

[<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10208441381893555&set=pcb.10208441425054634&type=3&theater>. Accessed in August 2016].

¹⁸ "Só morta entendi que para o mundo não sou igual a um homem", Isabella Otto, *Revista Capricho*, 4 mar. 2016 [<http://capricho.abril.com.br/vida-real/so-morta-entendi-mundo-eu-nao-sou-igual-homem-939700.shtml>. Accessed on: 12 Aug. 2016].

The material produced and or disseminated in Brazil is not homogeneous. Some reflections written by women on travel blogs present indignation with the killings, but the comments are above all aimed at offering practical advice for increasing security and decreasing the vulnerability of women travelers.¹⁹ Feminist *blogs* and online magazines highlight revolt in relation to the idea disseminated in foreign newspapers according to which the young women “were alone”. These posts emphasize the fact that two women were involved, and therefore the fact that they were not alone was ignored because they did not have male company.²⁰ These posts also expressed revolt in relation to “machismo that kills” and the blaming of the “victims”.²¹ Articles in the major media reiterated various ideas from feminist posts that circulated in the social networks. In the magazine *Capricho*, the author of a text about the assassination affirmed that the young Argentine women traveled “together” and not “unaccompanied”²² and, reacting to blaming the victims, related this assassination to the sexual violence to which women and girls are subject to in a wide variety of spaces, tourist locations or refugee camps, calling attention to

¹⁹ Camila: “Quando um mochilão de amigas argentinas termina em tragédia”, Blog “MustShareBR”, 1 mar. 2016 [<http://mustsharebr.com/2016/03/01/mochilao-argentinas-tragedia-america-do-sul/>]. Accessed on: 17 Aug. 2016; Janira Borja: “Mulheres deveriam viajar sozinhas pelo menos uma vez na vida”, Blog “Burocrata Viajante”, 6 mar. 2016 [<http://www.burocrataviajante.com.br/2016/03/mulheres-deveriam-viajar-sozinhas-pelo.html>]. Accessed on: 15 ago. 2016; “#ViajoSozinha: assassinato de jovens turistas não pode intimidar viajantes”, Blog “Lado B Viagem”, 8 mar. 2016 [<http://ladobviagem.com.br/?p=1108>]. Accessed on: 11 ago. 2016].

²⁰ Letícia Bahia, “Elas estavam sozinhas”, 4 de marco de 2016, página facebook da Revista AZMina [<https://www.facebook.com/revistaazmina/photos/a.548351111970610.1073741829.541675135971541/654491004689953/?type=3&theater>].

²¹ Lola Aronovich: “A sina das mulheres que ousaram viajar ‘sozinhas’”: Blog “Escreva Lola Escreva”, 5 mar. 2016 [<http://escrevalolaescreva.blogspot.com.br/2016/03/a-sina-das-mulheres-que-ousaram-viajar.html>]. Accessed on: 12 ago. 2016].

²² See note 16.

the situation of vulnerability to violence common to all women, elderly or adolescents, regardless of their age or location.²³

The controversy stirred by the indignation caused the “case” of the Argentine women went beyond the ephemeral character of many denunciations that circulate on the internet. The tweets related to the death of the Argentine tourists in Ecuador were concentrated in the month of March. However, the episode continued to be evoked for several months.²⁴

Media and political wefts: between the registers of violence and the social cause

The reaction to these assassinations in Brazil is unusual, considering that during the decade of 2010, murders and or rapes of tourists reported in the media have not provoked similar responses. Among these episodes, it is worth mentioning the rape that took place in April 2013 in Rio de Janeiro. In this month, the

²³ “Só morta entendi que para o mundo não sou igual a um homem”, Isabella Otto, *Revista Capricho*, 4 mar. 2016 [<http://capricho.abril.com.br/vida-real/so-morta-entendi-mundo-eu-nao-sou-igual-homem-939700.shtml>]. Accessed on : 12 Aug. 2016].

²⁴ In May 2016, in an piece published in the blog “Pela rua virando lata”, the author affirmed that women will continue to travel without men, Family and even without other women friends. She recals the murdered Young women appealing to the community of experiences among women: “they were you and I, and they cannot be forgotten. We are all together, not one less”, Pcvasconcellos, #NiUnaMenos”, Blog “Pela rua virando lata”, 9 May 2016 [<https://pelaruavirandolata.com/2016/05/09/niunamenos/>]. Accessed on: 15 ago. 2016]; And in July of that year, in an article posted on the page of *Blogueiras Feministas*: “Duas mulheres viajando sozinhas... Como assim? Como uma mulher quer viajar sem companhia” a woman in her twenties reflects on the experience of traveling without male company interlinking her recent travel experience with the history of the Argentine tourists. Text by Lara Ramos for *Blogueiras Feministas*, 28/07/2016 [http://blogueirasfeministas.com/2016/07/duas-mulheres-viajando-sozinhas-como-assim-como-uma-mulher-quer-viajar-sem-companhia/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+BlogueirasFeministas+%28Blogueiras+Feministas%29]. Accessed in: June 2016].

news reported the attack on a foreign couple, a 21-year-old U.S. woman tourist and her French boyfriend. According to the reports, she was robbed and raped by men who had gone out to “hunt gringos”, while her boyfriend was beaten and forced to watch the rapes. The woman was even offered to a drug dealer who had rejected her because she was in “bad condition”.²⁵

One of the main points raised in the Brazilian media in relation to this episode is that it would raise fears about the security of visitors to the World Cup in Brazil the following year. The reports had comments about the comparisons made by international media, including *CNN* and the *The Guardian*, between this case in Rio de Janeiro and the rape and violence against a Swiss couple the previous month in India. In that country, the flow of foreign tourists decreased 25%, after it came to be the subject of international news about violence against women, and the drop in visits by women was even more intense: 35%.²⁶ In August 2013, according to some reports, Brazil was one of the most dangerous countries for women, together with India, Turkey, Colombia, Mexico and Kenya.²⁷ After the rape of a 16-

²⁵ American tourist was raped eight times in the van of terror, 8/04/2013, Veja.com [http://veja.abril.com.br/brasil/turista-americana-foi-estuprada-oito-vezes-na-van-do-terror/. Accessed in: June 2016].

²⁶ Marcos Prates: “Estupro de turista assusta mídia internacional antes da Copa”, Revista Exame, 1 abr. 2013 [http://exame.abril.com.br/brasil/noticias/estupro-de-turista-assusta-midia-internacional-antes-da-copa. Accessed on: 24 Aug. 2016]. These impressions and analogies with the collective rape suffered by a young student in India were reproduced in newspaper articles and in a review of feminist media in Brazil. “Imprensa Americana repercute estupro de turista em van no Rio”, Geledés, 4 April. 2013 [http://www.geledes.org.br/imprensa-americana-repercute-estupro-de-turista-em-van-no-rio/. Accessed on 26 Aug. 2016].

²⁷ “Brasil é considerado um dos lugares mais perigosos para turistas mulheres”, Bahia no ar, 12 Aug. 2013 [http://bahianoar.com/brasil-e-considerado-um-dos-lugares-mais-perigosos-para-turistas-mulheres/. Accessed on: 29 ago. 2016]. In this context was reported the news of the rape of a 55-year-old Argentine tourist in Búzios, “Turista argentina diz ter sido estuprada em Búzios, no RJ”, Portal G1, 2 set. 2013 [http://g1.globo.com/rj/regiao-dos-lagos/noticia/2013/09/turista-argentina-diz-ter-sido-estuprada-em-buzios-no-rj.html. Accessed on: 29 Aug. 2016].

year-old U.S. woman in Porto Seguro, in 2015,²⁸ this updated list was published once again disseminating the idea that Brazil is the second most dangerous place in the world for women travelers, exceeded only by India and followed by Turkey, Thailand and Egypt.²⁹

In Ceará state, where I conducted studies about international tourism in the second half of the decade of 2000 (Piscitelli, 2011; 2015), the news about rapes and murders of tourists multiplied in the decade of 2010. According to various articles, in late 2014 an Italian tourist who traveled alone was killed in Jericoacoara.³⁰ A year later, in the same location, a German tourist was assaulted and raped, she was accompanied by an Austrian man.³¹ In 2016, a Lithuanian tourist became separated from a group of cyclists on route between Jericoacoara and Fortaleza and was assaulted and raped.³² In the same year, a Japanese woman tourist was hit over

²⁸ “Turista Americana de 16 anos é estuprada em praia de Porto Seguro”, *Tribuna da Bahia*, 3 ago. 2015
[<http://www.tribunadabahia.com.br/2015/08/03/turista-americana-de-16-anos-estuprada-em-praia-de-porto-seguro>. Accessed on: 25 Aug. 2016].

²⁹ “Brasil é 2º em lista de piores países para mulheres turistas”, *Portal Terra*, 24 fev. 2015 [https://mulher.terra.com.br/brasil-e-2-em-lista-de-piores-paises-para-mulheres-turistas,01a2df104acbb410VgnVCM3000009af154d0RCRD.html. Accessed on: 24 ago. 2016].

³⁰ “Turista italiana é encontrada morta na praia de Jericoacoara”, *SINAIS DE VIOLÊNCIA*, *O povo on line*, 26/12/2014
[<http://www20.opovo.com.br/app/ceara/jijocadejericoacoara/2014/12/26/notijjoca-dejericoacoara,3368267/turista-italiana-e-encontrada-morta-em-praia-de-jericoacoara.shtml>, Accessed in: abril de 2017].

³¹ Turista alemã é assaltada e estuprada na Praia de Jericoacoara, 27/12/2015, *Tribuna do Ceará*
[<http://tribunadoceara.uol.com.br/noticias/segurancapublica/turista-alema-e-assalta-e-estuprada-na-praia-de-jericoacoara/> Accessed in: June 2016].

³² Turista da Lituânia é estuprada no Ceará, *Tribuna on line*, 30/05/2016
[<http://www.tribunaonline.com.br/turista-da-lituania-e-estuprada-no-ceara/>. Accessed in: June 2016].

the head, robbed, and suffered an “attempted rape” at the Praia do Futuro, in Fortaleza.³³

The assassination of the Italian tourist in Jericoacoara provoked the mobilization of social movements in a more concerted manner. Nevertheless, this reaction was in defense not of the dead woman, but of a black Brazilian woman who was held as a suspect. She was a pharmacist, a graduate student in Rio de Janeiro, who had contact with the victim and was considered suspect by the police. Her arrest, considered arbitrary, unjustifiable and due to prejudice, mobilized human rights movements, black movements and black feminists.³⁴ My comments do not intend to question or relativize the importance of the defense of this black woman, who was unfairly detained. My point is that until the case of the Argentine women killed in Ecuador, violence against women tourists had not become an important issue for sectors of feminisms in Brazil.

How did the violence involving these tourists become particularly important for feminisms in Brazil? The construction of the “case” in the realm of the complex formation of feminism today in Brazil is certainly a central factor in the outstanding attention that it has acquired. Sonia Alvarez (2014) addresses this complexity by considering feminisms as discursive fields of action. Alvarez perceives these fields as marked at this time by a horizontal flow of plural discourses and practices that expands in various parallel sectors of civil society and beyond it, multiplying the

³³ Turista japonesa sofre tentativa de estupro em plena luz do dia na cidade mais violenta do Brasil e a 12º do mundo”, *Ariquemes online*, 31 Jan. 2016 [<http://www.ariquemesonline.com.br/noticia.asp?cod=300185&codDep=22>]. Accessed on: 26 ago. 2016].

³⁴ Cidinha Silva. *Diário do Centro do Mundo*. A lição da libertação de uma carioca acusada da morte de uma turista italiana, 26/08/2015, in: <http://www.diariodocentrodomundo.com.br/a-licao-da-libertacao-de-uma-carioca-acusada-da-morte-de-uma-turista-italiana-por-cidinha-silva/> accessed in April 2016; Two months later: Quem matou Gaia Molinari? Interview with Mirian França, 26/02/2015 [<http://www.geledes.org.br/doi-meses-depois-quem-matou-gaia-molinari-entrevista-com-mirian-franca/#gs.Y7hKjgo>]. Accessed in April 2016].

feminist fields, leading to a geometric proliferation of actors who identify with them and to a decentering within these plural feminisms. According to Alvarez, these fields are articulated through nodal points, through political-communicative networks and languages, feelings and worldviews that are at least partially shared. And in this expansion and popularization of feminism, the so-called “feminist youths” who are extremely heterogeneous, have acquired a particular visibility and the Internet has acquired a place of prominence.

Considering this importance, Ferreira (2016) observes that in Brazil, since 2011, to understand the feminist manifestations it is necessary to consider the mediated relations between activists on and off line. According to Ferreira, in this period, the Internet has had a central role in the articulation of people and in the translation of feminist terms, ideas and struggles. The web has allowed the constitution of networks that have deepened contacts in and between existing groups, and simultaneously created other communication networks as an instrument of identification and a resource for political engagement in actions that, without requiring a previous feminist “consciousness”/ militancy, considerably expanded the number of people reached.³⁵ Nevertheless, the violence against women tourists in Brazil during the decade of 2010 did not capture the attention of these networks.

Paula Lacerda (2013:154) calls attention to the way that “the cases” are constructed. Lacerda affirms that the credibility of a charge is associated to the fact that it involves a cause with a collective interest that by producing empathy arouses the capacity to raise awareness. This awareness, therefore, is part of social processes that must be analyzed considering the agents who

³⁵ The “Marcha das Vadias”, the Brazilian version of the *Slut Walk* which originated in Canada, in 2011, in response to a police officer who in a talk about rape prevention at the University of Toronto warned women that they should not dress like “sluts” (Modelli, 2016: 85), is considered by Ferreira (2015) as one of the most important feminist events in Brazil, in the first half of the decade of 2010, and as a notable example of the articulation between digital networks and occupation of public space.

participate in them, the time in which they take place and the history of the actions to which they are linked.

The feminist reactions to the death of the Argentine tourists, in Brazil, acquired meaning considering the particular political situation in which they took place. The responses to the murder of the Argentine tourists in Ecuador, mediated by the internet, took place in the realm of a particular moment of expansion of feminist activism that the media denominated as the “feminist spring in Brazil”. This expression alludes to the organization of various types of campaigns and large street demonstrations, organized mainly over the web by feminist networks, since 2015.³⁶ The expression “feminist spring” can perhaps be problematized. This, however, does not remove the importance of having called attention to the explosion of feminist manifestations that took place during the long political process, marked by a growing conservatism,³⁷ and an alarming rise in the destabilization of guaranteed rights, which took place concomitantly to the grave political crisis in Brazil that culminated with the removal of elected President Dilma Rouseff.

In the first half of the decade of 2010, the web mediated the intensification of debates and campaigns about sexual violence. It is worth mentioning the discussions about charges of sexual violence on university campuses³⁸ and the campaigns #EuNaoMerecoSerEstuprada, reacting to the promotion of a study

³⁶ Primavera feminista no Brasil, El País, 12/11/2015 [http://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2015/11/13/opinion/1447369533_406426.html].

³⁷ In the reading conducted by Lia Zanota Machado (2016) this conservative rise had begun earlier, considering that the great tension that changed the terms of negotiation between feminism and the state began in 2005/2006. Beginning with the denunciation of the “Mensalão” congressional vote selling scandal, in an exchange of political currency, the government had maintained support from the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil as long as it would not promote the legalization of abortion.

³⁸ Violência sexual é mais comum em festas e trotes, diz professora da USP, Globo.com, 23/08/2014 [<http://g1.globo.com/educacao/noticia/2014/08/violencia-sexual-e-mais-comum-em-festas-e-trotes-diz-professora-da-usp.html>].

by the Instituto de Pesquisas Aplicadas/IPEA, held in 2014³⁹ (Modelli, 2016:56) and #meuprimeiroassédio, in April 2014.⁴⁰ In 2015, however, the campaigns rapidly grew in reaction to the attacks of conservative politicians to the rights of women and LGBT people.

Bila Sorj (2016) summarized these offensives in the national congress. Sorj maintains that the attacks operated on two planes. The first refers to legislative reforms that represent setbacks in sexual and reproductive rights, such as that which creates obstacles to care, by the public health service, of women who get pregnant after a rape, reducing access to legal abortion. The second plane refers to a conservative offensive about the new visions of citizenship that were constructed by feminist, black and LGBT movements in recent decades. In 2014, under pressure from conservative parliamentarians, a portion of the National Education Plan was removed that they affirmed would promote the ominous “ideology of gender”. The passage removed said that schools must promote equality of gender, race and sexual orientation as well as actions to fight sexual, gender and ethnic-racial prejudice in public schools. In this way, the conservatives denied the plurality and diversity of social positions demanded by social movements.

Sorj (2016) and Modelli (2016) both indicate that the climate of moralizing campaigns and of setbacks to individual rights triggered feminist activism among youth. Demonstrations called over social networks, particularly the “Women against Cunha”,⁴¹

³⁹ According to this study, whose data were corrected shortly after their release, 65.1% of the people interviewed agreed with the affirmation that “women who use clothes that show their body deserve to be attacked”. According to the correction, it was only 26% (Modelli, 2016; “Ipea errou: 26%, e não 65%, concordam que mulheres com roupas curtas merecem ser atacadas” [<http://veja.abril.com.br/politica/ipea-errou-26-e-nao-65-concordam-que-mulheres-com-roupas-curtas-merecem-ser-atacadas/>]).

⁴⁰ The campaign requested that women reveal their first case of sexual harassment or the first time that they remember having suffered some form of abuse (Sorj, 2016).

⁴¹ These manifestations are opposed to the approval in the Commission of Constitution and Justice (CCJ) of the Chamber of Deputies, of the law proposed

in October and November 2015, had strong support and impact in the media (Sorj, 2016). In reaction to these attacks on women's rights there was increased interaction with older blogs, while new blogs and feminist pages appeared on the internet (Modelli, 2016). The responses to the assassination of the Argentine tourists in Ecuador took place in this context of political effervescence and unprecedented expansion of feminist manifestations.

In Brazil, this “case” acquired the status of a feminist social cause in this time of a geometric expansion of the discursive fields of heterogeneous feminist action, in the terms of Alvarez (2014), from extreme agitation mediated by the web, based on posts that mobilize the collective empathy, activating notions of gender inequality “machismo”, sexual violence, and blaming of the victims and stirring emotions by appealing to a vulnerability common to all women, in extremely different contexts.

Violence, gender and sexuality

The concepts triggered in the dissemination of the “case” of the Argentine tourists in Ecuador, which are significant for various feminisms, relate to a conceptualization that had already circulated in the country and was spread intensely in 2016,⁴² that of “rape culture”. This term was created in the United States in the 1970s, and marked differences between readings of rape conducted by liberal and radical feminisms. According to Rebecca Whisnant (2013), the liberal readings tend to consider rape as a neutral assault, in terms of gender, on individual autonomy, being analogous to other forms of assault and or illegitimate appropriation. These readings focus particularly on the damage

by then president of the chamber Eduardo Cunha, which would make access to abortion and emergency contraceptives even more difficult for victims of sexual violence (Sorj, 2016).

⁴² Adolescente é vítima de estupro coletivo no Rio de Janeiro, 26/05/2016, Band notícias
[<http://noticias.band.uol.com.br/brasilurgente/videos/15875174/adolescente-e-vitima-de-estupro-coletivo-no-rio-de-janeiro.html>. Accessed in July 2016].

that rape causes to individual victims. According to Whisnant, the more radical readings affirm that rape should be understood as an important pillar of the patriarchy, linked to patriarchal constructions of gender and sexuality, in the context of broader systems of male power. These radical readings highlight the damage that rape causes to women as a group.

In the realm of these discussions, in 1975 Susan Brownmiller published a book that is considered a divider of the waters in discussions about the issue.⁴³ It worked with the idea of the need to examine the elements of culture that promote and diffuse violent attitudes, offering men who are part of the population of potential rapists the ideology and psychological stimulus to commit acts of aggression (Brownmiller, 1975:391). The book also denounces the blaming women of victims of sexual attacks. In the same year, a documentary was produced called “Rape Culture”,⁴⁴ to which is attributed the first definition of this concept and, in the first half of the decade of 1990 the book “Transforming the culture of rape” was published (Buchwald et alii, 1993). As a whole this compendium is perceived as having as a target cultural practices that reproduce and justify the perpetration of sexual violence (Rentschler, 2014).

There are some differences in the conceptualizations of this concept that currently circulate in Brazil on the web, but they tend to follow the conceptualization of the UN Women office in Brazil, ONU Mulheres.⁴⁵ In a re-elaboration of the previous formulations,

⁴³ *Against our will* (Brownmiller, 1975).

⁴⁴ “Rape Culture”, film from 1974/5 by Cambridge Documentary Films, produced by Margaret Lazarus and Renner Wunderlich, which examines the relations between sexual fantasies in the United States and rape, through films and other media [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ew3Pqjw5D8>].

⁴⁵ Porque falamos de cultura do estupro? ONU mulheres, 31/05/2016 [<https://nacoesunidas.org/por-que-falamos-de-cultura-do-estupro>]. Accessed in julho de 2016]. I refer to this conceptualization because it maintains close relations with the material surveyed on the internet, but recognize that more nuanced concepts of “rape culture” circulate in academic studies and work documents (Engel, 2017).

this conceptualization considered “rape culture” as “the ways by which society blames the victims of sexual harassment and normalizes the violent sexual behavior of men”.

One aspect to be highlighted is that various notions and assumptions on which this conceptualization are anchored are also central to analytical perspectives from various part of the world that treat relations between gender, sexuality and tourism and consider the violence against women tourists who travel without male company. This involves studies about “female sexual tourism” and about “romance tourism”, problematics that, as I indicated in the presentation of this text, have no relation with the travels of the Argentine tourists, but integrate the literature that deal more directly with violence against women tourists.

Rapes, beatings and robbery in relations between local men and foreign women travelers, particularly from “richer” countries or regions, have been considered in socio-anthropological studies conducted in different parts of the world, in analyses aimed at “sexual tourism”⁴⁶ protagonized by women. Approaches that we now call “intersectional” pay attention to how gender, race, nationality and class operate in the differentiated distributions of power in tourist locations, allowing women to consume sex, permeated by racialized fantasies of exoticism, offered by men in poor places (Kempadoo, 2004; Davidson, 1999). These studies register episodes of violence against tourists, but this violence does not acquire centrality in analyses that highlight how the power of these women makes it possible for local men to be objectified and even “sexually exploited” in “female sexual tourism” based on privileges conferred by the intersections between race, class and nationality (Taylor, 2006).

⁴⁶ I use the term “sexual tourism” in quotes, considering the differences about this concept, which encompass various aspects, mainly involving the limits of a conceptualization that was initially formulated to analyze the massive tourism seeking commercial sex in Southeast Asia, and the perceptions about how the differentiated distributions of power and the dynamics of gender operate in the relationships between visitors and native populations (Truong, 1990; Opperman, 1999; Piscitelli, 2007; Fosado, 2004; Cabezas 2009)

Authors who, to the contrary, consider gender codes as determinant, develop a different notion: that of “romance tourism”, which affirms that “Western” women tourists travel to “poor” places to seek romance and long-lasting relationships and not to consume sex (Pruitt and Lafon, 1995). There are intermediary positions concerning the sexual and romantic practices of women tourists who travel without male company to poor regions of the world.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the notion of “romance tourism” is relevant because the analyses about tourism and gender, which until now have given centrality to violence against women tourists, are anchored on presumptions that have affinity with these ideas.

One important author in relation to the analysis of violence against these tourists is Sheila Jeffreys (2003). She affirms that independently from privileges linked to race, class and nationality, gender configurations inevitably have the effect of locating the women travelers from “rich” countries in subordinated positions, and therefore make them targets of violence. Jeffreys considers the arguments based on intersectional readings to be neutral, in gender terms, because they obscure the dynamics of male violence. This author observes that these arguments were formulated by Marxist feminists who do not perceive the patriarchy as primary and emphasize the oppressions of class and race over that of gender. To demonstrate the insuitability of these approaches in terms of the relations established by these tourists, Jeffreys uses as a reference analyses of “domestic violence”⁴⁸ in

⁴⁷ These intermediary positions, highlighting the diversity of relationships between foreign women from rich countries and men in poor regions, consider that the focus of the relationships can be on sex, on romance, on a combination of both, or even on a search for companionship (Herold, Garcia and DeMoya, 2001). These approaches have not given attention to violence perpetrated against the women tourists, but without denying the racialized imaginaries and the structural advantages of these travelers, underline the fluidity present in relationships in which desire and control are permanently negotiated, in the space of intimacy (Frohlick, 2007, 2011, 2013a; 2013b).

⁴⁸ I use the expression “domestic violence” in quotes to highlight that it is a term used by the author, and also considering the critical analyses conducted by

“Western” contexts. This violence is considered to be an effect of the construction of the sexuality of men in the realm of male domination, which leads them to confirm their masculinity through practices of objectification and aggression – while the sexuality of women, constructed from a position of absence of power, would be expressed in very different manners. This interpretation would also apply to the analysis of violence against women tourists. For Jeffreys, appropriate analyses about this problematic would work with the idea of an encompassing patriarchal structure as an explanatory framework.

One point to be highlighted is that this reading creates a near equivalence between the violence to which women are subjected to by their partners/spouses in their places of origin to violence to which are subject foreign tourists who travel without male company to “poor” regions of the world. The idea is that the racial and economic privileges are much more fragile than the (universal) privilege conceded by “gender or sexual status”.

The recourse to an appeal to “domestic/spousal violence” to consider different modalities of violence against women perpetrated in various contexts is problematic. Nevertheless, it is far from original. Debert and Gregori (2016) observe that Brazilian studies about gender and violence show how conjugal violence has been the practically exclusive reference for violence against women, and according to Gregori (2010), has been constituted as the paradigmatic case for describing the violence against women in general. Aspects of this relationship are also visible in international studies. In this sense, recent proposals guided by intersectional perspectives are particularly interesting.

A special issue about violence published by the journal *Feminist Review* in 2016 is significant. The articles by authors from various countries present the heterogeneity of studies that analyze violence against women. Some approaches concede to this violence the status of a category of analysis, defining it in a broad

Debert and Gregori (2016) who situate this term historically in the realm of Brazilian production and problematize it.

or narrow manner. Other studies seek to establish “scientific parameters” to measure this violence and, based on them, conduct comparative studies. Finally, other perspectives consider violence against women based on culturally and politically specific terms (Jones, 2016). In the introduction to this issue of the journal, the organizers opted to define violence against women in broad terms, to be able to encompass different types of violence in various parts of the world⁴⁹ (Gill; Heathcote and Williamson, 2016).

These authors consider the violence against women as a highlighted aspect of gender inequality on a global scale and also use the idea of patriarchy, but differently from Sheila Jeffreys (2003), they affirm that this violence is also linked to other systems of inequality based on sexuality, race and class. In addition, they consider that the multiple experiences of violence, whose methods, perpetrators and agendas are diversified, are inter-related, they are co-constitutive and mutually reinforcing on various planes: individual, institutional and on the plane of the state. They also suggest caution in reference to the transposition of local, national, regional and international understandings of violence against women, warning of a risk of universalizing it and of articulating responses and interpretations that, going beyond local conditions, would be poorly effective for the specific needs of women. Nevertheless, they also wind up focusing on the analyses of “domestic violence” (Gill; Heathcote and Williamson, 2016).

The important point here is that even in intersectional approaches that intend to give attention to the diversity of contexts and to different modalities of violence, violence against women acquires the status of a category of analysis and is represented by the category “domestic violence”, which continues to operate as paradigmatic. And the patriarchy persists as an explanatory framework, although its centrality is altered by other inequalities.

⁴⁹ Violence against women is defined by these authors as encompassing any physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial or social harm, caused to a woman by individuals, groups, institutions or states, based entirely, or in part, on the fact that she is a woman.

In terms of studies about gender, violence and tourism, analyses like those of

Jeffreys present the problem of operating with an essentializing and universalizing perspective of gender and power that, using as a reference analyses of “domestic and “conjugal violence”, separate the relations between gender and violence from the complex political dynamics present in the contexts in which they take place and from the eventual articulations between different dimensions and modalities of violence. The persistence on the focus on “domestic violence” and on the patriarchy as an explanatory framework, even in perspectives that, like that of Gill, Heathcote and Williamson (2016), affirm the need to consider this complexity, is intriguing, considering the history of feminist studies about the relations between gender and violence.

In the first academic studies about “violence against women” in Brazil in the 1980s, this was considered as an act in which women were in the position of victims and men as operators of violence (Franchetto, Cavalcanti and Heilborn, 1984). This perception maintains relations with the idea that violence is a result of a structure of domination whose social and symbolic base is the pater-families, as Debert and Gregori (2016) show when they analyze the formulations of the Brazilian feminist author Heleieth Saffiotti, and help to understand how violence against women is reduced to conjugal and domestic violence. This perspective was also current in the international feminist literature. Dworkin (1975:26) attributed violence against women to the patriarchy, an institution whose basic social unit was the family. This term was associated to the idea of pater-families – understood to mean slave owner. According to Dworkin, in the “old days”, the rapist of a woman would occupy the place of her father as her owner. However, analyses about relations between gender and violence rapidly became more complex.

It is worth remembering the efforts of theorization in the late 1980s among “Third World”, “post colonial” and “transnational” feminists, who contested, as did Chandra Mohanty (1988), the idea of an international male conspiracy and of an hierarchy of

ahistoric power, in the form of a monolithic notion of patriarchy or male domination. In the early 1990s, Henrietta Moore (1993)⁵⁰ called attention to the need to think of the relations between gender and violence from an intersectional perspective and to consider the social dynamics in the interlacing of national and international planes.

In the decades of 2000 and 2010, a wealthy explosion of Brazilian and international studies about relations between gender and violence demonstrated the fertility of these observations. This was a literature that, distant from circular explanations about interpersonal relations, opened new analytical paths. I refer particularly to studies related to state administrations (Vianna and Farias, 2011), to ethnic territorial re-organizations in the process of formation of new states (Das, 2011; Schwartz Peres, 2011), to new characteristics assumed by armed conflicts in which violence against women was not a collateral effect, becoming a strategic objective in these situations (Segato, 2014) and in broad terms, to violence that takes place in spaces and situations that are beyond the realm of the private, as that perpetrated by men who did not know the victim of a brutal collective rape on a bus in New Delhi in 2012 (Roy, 2014).

This diverse group of approaches about the relations between gender and violence point to a methodological problem that is present in various perspectives, on violence that affects women, including those who travel without male company. I refer to the model of “domestic/conjugal” violence used to analyze different modalities of violence linked to interpersonal relations, independently of the context and of the dynamics and dimensions of violence involved. In this sense, the more complex readings of the relations between gender and violence provoke the impression that only some “types” or modalities of violence would allow

⁵⁰ Seeking to reflect on gender and violence in a variety of contexts and levels, both national and international, the author considered how gender and race relate to very real differences between groups and individuals, and also became languages that represented power as being sexualized and racialized, imbricated in political and economic processes that are beyond the control of local communities (Moore, 1993).

breaking these analytical frameworks, challenging the applicability of the model of “domestic/conjugal” violence, such as collective conflicts and or those distant from the realm of intimacy. Rita Segato (2014) makes a distinction between crimes of war and crimes of sexual motivation, ordinary crimes of gender or intimacy, and highlights differences between gender violence that is materialized in impersonal situations separated from intimacy, and violence sparked by personal motivations. The challenge that is still to be confronted appears to be to articulate this complexity in the violence against women in interpersonal relations and in the realm of intimacy.

These approaches also point to internal tensions in the political/academic field concerning relations between gender and violence, which are particularly visible in analyses conducted in intersectional perspectives. The field of violence against women was shaped decades ago, and basically considered it as an expression of male domination. As Debert and Gregori affirm (2016), when this field was constituted in the 1970s, the “condition of women” was interpreted through universalizing assumptions, considering oppression as a situation shared by them, beyond their differences and in the historic and cultural contexts they inhabit.

Over the decades, these assumptions were incisively problematized in various areas of feminist action, imploding the idea of the “feminist condition” and of universal male domination (Piscitelli, 2002; Corrêa, 1999). Nevertheless, the relations between violence and gender appear to place a particular challenge to these problematizations: how should we look at a phenomenon perceived as having a global scope, while considering cultural specificities, without stereotyping them, without generalizing, but considering that sexual and physical violence against women, as a permanent threat, appears to have impacts on all women?

Faced with these questions, various feminist authors, even some who try to work with intersectional approaches, wind up affirming the idea that women throughout the world - beyond other considerations - continue to face the effects of unequal

power relations between men and women and appeal to the notion of patriarchy (Jones, 2016).

In the realm of this tension, in the articulation between activism and theory (Mohanty, 1988) and in the exercise of theoretical practices as forms of activism (Spivak, 1990), various slogans and affirmations of feminisms – such as those used in the reactions to the “case” of the Argentine tourists killed in Ecuador, in other demonstrations protesting violence against women and also in academic works - renew feminist assumptions referring to gender and power that are either universalizing or essentialist.

Feminist practices and essentialisms

Years ago, Spivak (1990) responded to a question formulated by Elizabeth Grosz about the use of universalization to discuss the oppression of women. At this time Spivak affirmed the importance of strategically choosing a discourse that is not necessarily universal but essentializing, at least occasionally. For Spivak, it was necessary to oppose both essentialist and universalist discourses. Nevertheless, strategically this would not be possible, because essentialism operates as a recourse that can offer power to struggle against “the other side”. Therefore, it would be more important to use these resources than to repudiate them, although being vigilant in terms of the theoretical practices.

These observations contribute to the understanding of the triggering of essentialisms in the theorization and confrontation of violence. Notwithstanding, it is worth observing that if essentialisms can be productive, because they create opportunities for individual and collective action, they also involve risks, above all in theoretical terms. In this sense, in the realm of discussions about relations between gender and violence, concepts and assumptions linked to “rape culture”, which maintain relations with notions triggered in the denunciations of the murder of the Argentine tourists, offer an example.

The notion of “rape culture” that circulates on the web is informed by a feminist concept in which it is seen as an expression

of male power. The materials used to explain how it operates, relating to an idea of male domination that crosses frontiers, consider it as a result of a “male socialization” linked to violence that, at times, also appears to be beyond time, and to acquire various material and symbolic expressions, in the production of propaganda and in the production and consumption of pornography and prostitution. And the blaming of the victim is repeatedly related to “machismo” and to the “patriarchy”. The political use of this notion is certainly effective considering that it offers a language and relates to a shared world view. In Brazil it allowed an impressive debate about violence and the inequalities that permeate daily practices, considered to be innocent, such as the “fiu fiu”. Nevertheless, this notion is complicated in conceptual terms. And this is a point ignored in feminist analyses that use this notion without problematizing it.

One of the problems with this expression is the use of the notion of culture. In a suggestive text published 20 years ago, Lila Abu Lughod (1996) raises as a central point that in anthropology the concept of culture, used to explain and understand difference, had been the essential tool to create an “other”, in processes that contribute to producing this difference, making it fixed and creating separations that inevitably carry a sense of hierarchy.⁵¹ One of the advantages attributed to the concept of culture was that it would remove difference from the realm of the innate, the natural, to be perceived as learned and as something that changes. But, despite this anti-essentialist intention, this concept winds up nearly freezing differences, conceding to them and to the separation between groups of people that promote them an air of the self-evident. Orientalism is an example, for tracing differences between inhabitants of the “West” and East in such a way that they can be considered innate. And this fixation of differences involves various analytical procedures: the emphasis granted to cultural coherence; to situate the “others” outside of time; often

⁵¹ She refers to the practice of anthropology as the study of “others” by a “Western” self, that is not problematized and not marked.

ignoring both historical processes as well as, national and transnational connections and interconnections of people, cultural forms, media, techniques and goods.

This concept erases important differences between masculinities, crystalizing men in the position of assailants and women in the position of victims, feeding the re-creation of the affirmation of Andrea Dworkin (1976:20), for whom there exists a single model of male sexuality: ““Under patriarchy, every woman’s son is her potential betrayer and also the inevitable rapist or exploiter of another woman”. Moreover, as Sorj (2016b) observes, the concept “rape culture” also denies the perception that rape is not only a weapon of gender domination, but of racisms, colonialisms and nationalism.

In political terms, one of the problems of this notion resides in how it lends itself to tracing hierarchies between feminists and feeding confrontations between them. I take as an example the recent attacks, in Brazil, on the “putafeminists”, organized prostitutes who make collective demands as feminists to other feminists and who struggle for the regulation of prostitution. Feminists who are against this position – and who renew ideas against the exercise of this activity formulated by authors such as Dworkin (1976) and Catherine Mackinnon (1982)⁵² who consider this activity as inherently violent - have attacked the demands of these prostitutes in actions marked by an intense symbolic violence, expressed from notions linked to “rape culture”. The accusations go beyond denying the rights demanded by the prostitutes as the rights of women: they convert the objects of these demands – decriminalization of the situation of prostitution and labor regulation of prostitution – practically into the cause of

⁵² Catherine MacKinnon (1982) considers heterosexuality as an institutionalization of male sexual domination and of female submission. MacKinnon affirms that male sexual supremacy combines the eroticization of domination with the social construction of the feminine and masculine. And prostitution, rape and pornography are the sharpest expressions of this institutionalization and of the institution of gender it realizes.

violence against women and the putafeminists into accomplices of the “rape culture”.

What I would like to highlight is that, in the realm of the disputes that are constitutive of the feminist field, these reactions trigger the concept of “rape culture” by exercising a violence that perhaps is intrinsic to the conceptualization of culture, when it represses or ignores other forms of difference. And that, in this case, is materialized in a cruel attack on other feminist voices.

Final considerations

I used as a starting point to this article the (uncommon) feminist reactions in Brazil to the violence perpetrated against the young Argentine tourists who were killed in Ecuador. To analyze the conditions of production of these reactions and the notions and presumptions that they triggered offered me a focus for reflecting on the analytical tools used to examine relations between gender, sexuality and violence in the realm of tourism. By accompanying activism and theoretical production, this route displayed how concepts that are revised in the complex formation of current feminism in Brazil “dialog” with those that permeate theoretical production about gender, violence and tourism and about gender and violence, in broader terms.

The path taken suggests that the problems present in the studies about gender, violence and tourism are analogous to those that are found in other analyses of violence against women that use “domestic/conjugal” violence as a paradigmatic model, regardless of the inequalities and dimensions of violence involved. These problems relate to other theoretical difficulties when the force of the intersectional analyses are diluted before the strength acquired by the patriarchy as an encompassing structure, particularly when violence takes place in intimate relations. Finally, the counterpoint between the concepts and presumptions activated in the theoretical formulations related to violence against women and to activism – using as a reference ideas linked to “rape culture” present in the defense of the Argentine tourists – points to

a fusion between the concepts triggered in these two political dimensions, marked by a certain essentialization.

To conclude this text, I return to the comments by Spivak about the use of essentialization in various realms of feminist practice, recalling her warning about the importance of vigilance concerning theoretical practices. Perhaps exercising this vigilance would allow problematizing a fusion, without creating an analytical distancing, between concepts and presumptions used in collective mobilizations and in theoretical work.

If radical politics, as Strathern affirmed (1988), seeks elements of identity to produce changes, radical academic production questions the grounds on which the experiences are shared and identity is constructed. In this sense, for Strathern, radical politics is “conservative” because it is required to operationalize concepts or categories that are already understood or accepted. The critical reflections of Mayan anthropologist Aura Cumes about essentialisms converge with this comment by Strathern.

Cumes observes that temporarily using and accepting an essentialist position may be necessary to give greater strength to political discourse and actions, perhaps because hegemonic logic only understand its own terms. The problem would be that a “defensive essentialism” is produced as a function and in reaction to other essentialisms, in a path that sacrifices the constant observation of reality and also sacrifices the production of knowledge itself. There are no guarantees that essentialism, even if it is used temporarily, does not become a type of truth, leading to the neglect of a critical and inquisitive look at social processes. This takes place even if the essentialisms are shaped more in a political than analytical focus, in order to describe and problematize reality. Cumes emphasizes that she does not want to say that a “political” concept is less important than an “analytical” concept, but that she is referring to what happens when the two are confused.

Perhaps, then, vigilance over our theoretical practices can help to open fertile routes in future analyses about the various

dimensions present in relations between gender and violence, even when this violence is manifest in interpersonal relations, in the realm of intimacy.

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