

ARTICLE

Pregnancy interruption, coloniality and patriarchy

Interrupción del embarazo, colonialidad y patriarcado

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Abstract

This article proposes a contribution to critical social work by approaching pregnancy termination from a Latin American intersectional perspective. Focusing its analysis on the Argentinean case, it synthesizes the agenda of legal conquests in terms of women's rights and questions the resistance to the legalization of abortion. It recovers theoretical elements of the decolonial and feminist critique of relevance for the analysis of the interruption of pregnancy in Argentina. It sustains the hypothesis that the expropriation of the capacity to decide on gestation is one of the central dispositifs for the establishment and reproduction of racia-

Keywords:

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lly structured patriarchal capitalism. It offers mediations that contribute to the debates and interventions of social work around the interruption of pregnancy, from a critical perspective both of patriarchal colonial conservatism and of the nor-eurocentric liberal gender positions.

Resumen

El artículo propone un aporte al trabajo social crítico abordando la interrupción del embarazo desde una perspectiva interseccional nuestroamericana. Centrando su análisis en el caso argentino, recupera elementos del estado de la cuestión. Sintetiza la agenda de conquistas legales en materia de derechos de las mujeres y se pregunta por las resistencias a la legalización del aborto. Recupera elementos teóricos de la crítica descolonial y feminista de relevancia para el análisis de la interrupción del embarazo en la Argentina. Sostiene la hipótesis de que la expropiación de la capacidad de decidir sobre la gestación, se configura como uno de los dispositivos centrales de instauración y reproducción del capitalismo patriarcal racialmente estructurado. Ofrece mediaciones que aporten a los debates e intervenciones del trabajo social en torno de la interrupción del embarazo, desde una perspectiva crítica tanto del conservadurismo colonial patriarcal como de las posiciones de género liberales nor-eurocéntricas.

Palabras Clave:
Interrupción del embarazo;
colonialidad;
patriarcado;
interseccionalidad;
trabajo social crítico situado

Introduction

This text approaches the debates surrounding the interruption of pregnancy in Argentina, from a critique of coloniality and patriarchy. It explores the gender/race crossover and the appropriation of bodies with the capacity to gestate, as a nodal part of the colonial enterprise that persists even today. The interest is to contribute to critical social work, from evidence of elements of understanding and transformation from feminist and decolonial perspectives.

This implies navigating through a set of questions: What are the vectors that explain the deep resistance to legalize or implement processes to guarantee the right of women to decide about their bodies? How was and is coloniality articulated with patriarchy, on this specific point that involves gestation, as an achievement or interruption? What processes of textual and sexual cleansing have occurred in the stories still in force about the conquest of bodies and territories of our America? What tensions have been produ-

ced in the history of our country in relation to the politics of reproduction and the racial dimension? How can we rehearse a genealogy that explores the contradictions between the nineteenth-century eugenic hygienist mandates of whitening the population, the politics of (non) reproduction, the interruption of pregnancy as a feminist horizon, and the resistance of racialized women in our America to the intervention of liberal law and the nor-eurocentric gender approach?

Abortion is at the forefront of the debate. On 12/29/20, the bill that was finally sanctioned as Law 27.610, on access to the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy (IVE, for *Interrupción Voluntaria del Embarazo*, in Spanish), was approved with a close vote in the Argentine Senate. In Chile, it will be a relevant issue in the current constituent processes.

In turn, the termination of pregnancy has been the subject of discussion in a wide range of disciplines for decades, which has led hundreds of intellectuals and activists to analyze the multiple facets that support (and resist) legislative progress in this area.

Finally, it is an issue that brings with it discomfort, and entails political costs insofar as it reorganizes the grids of support and confrontations, with logics that do not fit the traditional mappings of left and right. Let us consider that very few political parties have an official and unified position on the issue.

Why then write about this issue, and are there still some facets to be glimpsed? Is it the time to continue analyzing, or to devote ourselves fully to activism and dissemination of what has already been said, in theoretical, normative and statistical terms? And I say statistical because it is difficult to think of a more weighty argument than the number of women who die in clandestine abortions, in order to place the discussion on the level of public health policies. We are well aware that “illegality does not influence the decision to terminate a pregnancy, but rather the differential conditions of its clandestine practice” (Petracci et al., 2012, p. 165); which implies that “contrary to what its opponents say, decriminalization protects the health and saves the lives of women, who would have resorted to clandestine and unsafe abortions, risking their lives and health.” (Ortiz Millán, 2009, p. 10).

Although not without reservations, I believe that writing on the subject is still worthwhile. And as a gesture of resistance to the extractivist logics of the academy, I want to express that the materials circulating here come from fellow activists, militants, from



the territory and from the academy. My task was listening, questioning, reflecting, assembling. I also take up here debates that arose in the project that I integrate, “Feminismos del Sur e intervención social: genealogías, diálogos y debates” of the Research Group on Sociocultural Problematics of the National University of Mar del Plata, UNMDP. The successes are debts to others. Mistakes, of course, are our own. And the bets are collective.

In the following sections, I will give an account of various plots of the interruption of pregnancy-coloniality-patriarchy-social work articulation. The first deals with elements of the state of the question on abortion in the Argentinean academy. The second explains the conceptual warp that theoretically sustains the assumptions explored. The third presents a historiographic synthesis of the legal disputes and achievements of the feminist agenda in Argentina. The fourth section attempts a *genealogical approach* to the long colonial/postcolonial period in terms of appropriations of gestating bodies, succinctly recovering tensions and events that illustrate the complex nature of the problem I address. In the last section, I make explicit some challenges in terms of *intervention and research in social work, around the interruption of pregnancy*.

The discussion of abortion in the Argentinean academy: interweaving background and questions

Approaching abortion from a critical and situated social work requires mentioning those contributions that have been made in Argentina from gender studies regarding the right to decide.

The path of feminism in our country is long, rich and complex. Texts such as Andújar, Grammatico and Rosa (2010) explore the processes of politicization of women, organizational experiences and agendas in the normative, social and cultural fields in the recent past on our continent. Barrancos (2020) synthesizes the processes of shaping feminisms in different Latin American countries from the beginning of the 20th century to date, characterizing current movements such as “ni una menos”.

Focusing on abortion, Tarducci (2018) offers a periodization relative to the actions deployed in Argentina for the right to decide, which begins in the seventies with the pioneers, returns with the recovery of democracy and the creation of the Commission for the Right to Abortion; continues in the nineties with the Mujeres Autoconvocadas



por el Derecho a Decidir, and the Asamblea por el Derecho al Aborto, until reaching the Campaña por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito, which achieved the entry of the bills to Congress in 2018 and in 2020, where it was finally approved. Femenías (2018) complements these historical readings by pointing out the great absentees of the debate: the women themselves. She thus denounces the hegemony of a patriarchal reason that makes us invisible as agent subjects, and hinders us from building a locus of enunciation-other with respect to hegemonic androcentric perspectives.

This agenda, which colleagues from different disciplines are recovering, is not alien to our profession. A good part of our disciplinary collective has accompanied these initiatives in programs, institutions and territories. From the first support mechanisms for women victims of violence, consultancies, sexual health programs, articulations with first aid workers, to the procedures to access the Legal Termination of Pregnancy (ILE) and now the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy (IVE), many of these instances were and are promoted from social work. This rich experience of intervention has not always had its correlation with written production and publication. This can be explained, among other reasons, by the late entry of our professional cadres into the national science and technology system. However, we have recently seen the emergence of materials from Argentine social work that contribute to gender discussions from a feminist disciplinary perspective (Guzzetti et al., 2019; Hermida, 2020b, Martínez, 2019; Riveiro, 2019). This article attempts to approach what emerges as an area of vacancy within the debates of the feminism-social work crossover in Argentina: that of a disciplinary, critical and situated gaze on the termination of pregnancy.

And from this transdisciplinary and undisciplined perspective, we recover the contributions of Bellucci, who analyzes the place of abortion in the feminist agenda and agency as a history of disobedience. This position supports the arguments that I develop in this article. “Regardless of what the church, governments, parliament, the medical and legal corporation aim, women implant our own decision to abort as a gesture of disobedience in the face of the compulsive mandate of motherhood” (Bellucci, 2014, p. 24). The political mapping that the author traces clearly shows how institutions, which from my point of view are the heirs and perpetuators of the colonial mandate, stand as representatives of the pater against which disobedience emerges as a strategy of resistance.

Bellucci asks: “Against whom do we insubordinate ourselves? Basically, we disobey heterosexuality as a political regime, just as our beloved Monique Wittig taught us.” (2014,

p. 24). I take up this idea of heterosexuality as a political regime, as a device of subjectivization and disciplining, and not only as a sexual orientation. Maternity and heterosexuality are intertwined, generating the fiction of a natural adequacy that is actually historical. In this framework, I understand that the intervention from a critical and situated social work should aim at the meticulous effort of deconstruction of multiple oppressive mandates that bring installed the hegemonic way of understanding heterosexuality.

I think in this framework that disobeying the patriarchy should not be read linearly as a univocal option or a mandate to abort or disavow heterosexuality in toto. Ester Vivas' (2019) wager on a feminist motherhood returns to the notion of disobedience, but in this case not to disavow motherhood but to reinvent it. This is also another way of disarming schemes of domination over our bodies and enabling multiple repertoires of existence where desire and not obedience are the distinctive sign.

The study of images of campaigns for the right to decide is also a relevant line. Vaccarezza analyzes very pregnant communicational objects. Among them the parsley and needles (2018), as objects that synthesize the precariousness of clandestine practices of access to abortion in contexts of non-recognition of pregnancy termination as a sexual and (non-) reproductive health issue. And also the so-called “first transnational symbol of the struggles for abortion rights in the Southern Cone: the “voting hand” (Vaccarezza, 2020, p. 37). These contributions allow us to approach the dimension of affect in the visual production in favor of the legalization of abortion.

Finally, Ana de Miguel Álvarez (2018), converging with the hypotheses of this text, points out that the prohibition of abortion should be read in the key of appropriation by males of women's reproductive capacity. While in his text he looks to the present and the future, analyzing surrogacy and surrogate gestation as processes where a patriarchal symbolic framework is hidden, in this article I try to look at the present and the future from a past that is still alive, to analyze in colonial devices such as miscegenation, this operation of appropriation.

Coloniality, patriarchy and intersectionality: interweaving categories and problems.

In this section I will synthesize contributions of theoretical categories coming from situated thinking to look at the IVE from the perspective of social work. I start by de-

fining the idea of coloniality as the “pattern of power (...) that endures, even once the relationship of (explicit) subjugation disappears. Therefore, coloniality is that which still survives today as the inscription effect of colonial power on bodies and narratives.” (De Oto, 2012, p. 53). I speak then of coloniality in the present tense, as a dimension of the current social order that is rooted in conquest and colonization, and endures.

For its part, the notion of patriarchy encompasses the issue of gender(s), sexual orientation and adultcentrism. The pater is the figure that condenses the power of the modern family, having the power to use force over women, children and the elderly. He is also the founder of violence against gender dissidence, since the pater is the first custodian of heterocentric morality, and the first beneficiary of mechanisms that distribute the territories of legality and illegality, of protected and unprotected work, of day and night, of the center and the periphery, of rights and their absence. These differential cartographies between the world of men and the world of women, the world of adulthood and the world of childhood, the cis world and the trans world, allow the pater (as a metaphor of a hegemonic order usufructuated by certain privileged sectors) to have bodies of women, children and dissidences, available for use, control and exploitation, in a discretionary manner. The figure of the pater is also that of the patron, which is why patriarchy is a nodal system for interpreting class oppressions.

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Coloniality and patriarchy are inseparable processes, configuring “racially structured patriarchal capitalism” (Bhavani and Coulson, 2004, p. 60), the basis of the social question in which social work intervenes.

The normative corpus that governs our profession globally and in each country emphasizes Human and Social Rights as the legitimizing field of our profession. We can think of rights as conquests that we wrest from the system through the consistent and organized struggle of subalternized collectives. Or as concessions that the system grants once the capacity of agency or transformation that the exercise of these rights entails has been neutralized. In any case, it is reasonable to think that neither one nor the other premise can give a complete account of complex historical processes. That is why I am interested in reviewing the struggle for the conquest of the right to decide, in the context of the IVE, situating ourselves in our America, in Argentina, and in the processes of conquest, colonization and coloniality.

Anibal Quijano (2014) argues that the colonial matrix of power, structured from the invention of race, colonizes each of the structures of social existence: in the control of



labor, there is the capitalist enterprise; in the control of authority, the nation-state; in the control of intersubjectivity, Eurocentrism; and in the control of sex, the family. María Lugones (2008) makes these ideas more complex by incorporating the coloniality of gender. She disagrees with Quijano's idea of encapsulating the gender issue in the sphere of family, sex and reproduction. Gender, for Lugones, is transversal to all domains of coloniality, as is the invention of race. It is a mistake to place it as just another dimension. Following this author, I derive the premise that the conquest of women's bodies (and their reproductive capacity) does not impact only one dimension of the pattern of power, linked to the family, but is systemic in the effects it produces.

“Neither the land nor women are conquest territory”, says the slogan that has been written all over our America, on walls, papers and banners, and which refers to a debate that we will not be able to address in its entirety, but at least mention: the knotting between women's bodies and the land. I will point out only two of the feminist currents that allude to this relationship.

On the one hand, Latin American ecofeminism, which, according to Ress (2006), emerged in the heat of the liberation theology debates, proposes a spirituality based on the earth, which would not imply an individual experience, but rather a collective one, questioning the androcentrism and anthropocentrism of patriarchal capitalism. Ecofeminism, linked to the feminism of difference, criticized for its (potential) biologist de-essentialist bias and for its perception of the sacredness of the female body, celebrated for its capacity to incorporate environmental issues into the political agenda, and to point out the mechanisms of inferiorization of differences in Westernism, is reinventing itself and is prolific along various lines.

For its part, community feminism has given an account of diverse indigenous cosmologies that explain the connection between women and territory in philosophical, political, social and cultural terms. Cabnal (2010) states that it arises from the experiences of Bolivian Aymara women, and the Xinka women of Guatemala, from the experiences of their body-earth territory, within the framework of their struggles against the ancestral native patriarchy and the modern western patriarchy. According to the author, the body-territory is crossed by the violence of the patriarchal connection, being the land territory violated by the neoliberal extractivist model. Paredes (2015) affirms that this current aims at the decolonization of feminism, betting on the autonomy of the long memory of the peoples of Abya Yala, of their bodies and sexualities.

What I want to emphasize regarding the connection of women's bodies with the territory, is not so much linked to the spiritual dimension that some feminisms address, but to material and historical aspects: the conquest of women's bodies was necessary to achieve the conquest of the "pre-intrusion world" (Segato, 2015). The systematic rape of women, but also the kidnapping, purchase or delivery for arranged marriages (Cattelli, 2020) has occupied a determining place in the processes of conquest, colonization and coloniality. Diversified strategies with a common point: the sexual reproductive dimension of women is co-opted by the colonial enterprise and put at its service. Therefore, I understand that each battle to expropriate and restore freedom and will to these bodies-territories, puts in check, or at least pierces, the architecture of racially structured patriarchal capitalism.

The intersectional perspective also contributes to thinking about the contours of the debate around the interruption of pregnancy in our America. As Hermida (2020a) points out, it was introduced in the academy by black feminism (Crenshaw, 1991) in the last two decades of the 20th century (taking the experience of African American women's activism), questioning the invisibility of the place of oppression of these bodies that were not contemplated either by the agenda of the struggle of white feminism (which pursued the concerns of white heterosexual middle-class women) or by the agenda of the rights of racialized subjects (which was subsumed centrally to the struggle for the rights of black men). The focus was on pointing out a set of categories (race and gender first, and then sexual orientation, disability and age) and how they intersect. Lugones (2008) points out the risk of the notion of "category", its essentialist character. It is that these marks of subalternity interpenetrate each other, to the point that they do not represent pre-existing categories that intersect, but open processes that cannot be conceived if not in and through their links.

In the history of our American history this point is nodal. We will see to what extent race/gender intersect in very different processes, such as the eugenic policies of the times of the first Argentine centenary, and the bets of feminisms situated in processes of autonomy and emancipation.

The agenda of the legal dispute of feminism in Argentina: interweaving history and politics.

Since it is impossible to separate the analysis of theoretical categories from historical and political processes and their condensation in the legal sphere, I offer a very brief review of those struggles that tried to restore what was appropriated by the colonial patriarchy.

In Argentina, the legal fight for us to be able to dispose of our money and belongings was a long one. In 1926, law 11.357 was passed, which modified the civil code that declared women as incapable of administering our own property. This “advance” would only apply to married women.

In 1947, with Eva Perón, women’s suffrage was consecrated. Our political rights are still in dispute. Law 24.012 of 1991, known as the Quota Law, requires that 30% of the electoral lists be made up of women. However, in the political, legislative and executive scenario, we are still underrepresented. In 1985 and 1987, the discussion was no longer about the right to manage our assets, but about our ties; to be able to have parental authority over our children, and the Divorce Law.

In 2006, Law 26.150 of Integral Sexual Education (ESI), advances on the right to know our bodies and make our own decisions. But to date it continues to receive setbacks from conservative sectors and their campaign #conmishijosnosemetan.

I do not want to leave aside the rights of dissidents, since I understand the feminist struggle from a non-essentialist perspective, where the axis is the dismantling of patriarchy and not the vindication of the signifier woman. I am talking about struggles against patriarchal violence that are centrally instrumented on women’s bodies, childhoods, sex-gender dissidence, and also on nature within the framework of the anthropocentric character of patriarchy (and even, although in a differentiated manner, on masculinities themselves, an aspect that our discipline has been addressing -Artiñano (2012). Law 26.618 on equal marriage, of 2010, and Law 26.743 on gender identity of 2012 are nodal achievements of a rights approach with a gender perspective(s).

In terms of social, economic and labor rights, in 2013, Law 24,844 on domestic workers remedied one of the most aberrant cases of legislative labor discrimination (previous regulations indicated that women working in the so-called “domestic service” could



not demand certain rights). Special mention must be made of the colloquially called “retirement of housewives”, which recognizes in the law that “what they call love is unpaid work”. Key here are the moratoriums that allowed the realization of these retirements through Decree 1454/2005, which reactivated Law 24.476 and Law 26.970 of 2014, which broadened the spectrum, achieving access to cover 96% of the population of retirement age.

If we were to peek into the parliamentary debates of those different laws, we would see with surprise (and indignation) how history repeats itself. There is a hard core of misogyny. But to what can we attribute this persistence in limiting the life and freedom of women? What materials is this hard core made of, silent, omnipresent, hidden under masks of multiple argumentative fallacies, which in the last century we see deployed every time we try to discuss the legal recognition of a right for us? What is this unsaid? And why does it come back? It is not enough to say that it is misogyny. It is necessary to try to understand the root of this hatred, and what powers are competing underneath these positions.

Let us dwell on the recently discussed bill on abortion. The discarding of embryos is not illegal in Argentina, when they are generated in vitro. But when those same embryos are in a uterus and not in a test tube, there a large group of political and religious referents are equipped for their crusade in defense of those embryos. What is being discussed, then, does not refer to the embryos but to the gestating body and its right to decide. Where is the root of these resistances? Moreover, why were these other struggles won in the 20th century and the right to decide on our gestating bodies was left pending for the 21st century? Why were we able to dispose of our goods before we were able to dispose of our bodies and our desire?

“Women are not conquest territory”: weaving genealogies of appropriations of pregnant bodies.

Why has the legalization of abortion been the issue on the feminist agenda that has met with most resistance? Some of the edges of this problem have been unveiled by the contributions. But I am going to dwell on one facet of the problem, which is central to critical and situated social work. I refer to the device of miscegenation (Catelli, 2020), a nodal strategy of the conquest, first articulator of sexuality and race. The body of women, its appropriation and use by the conquest enterprise, was the first territory, the central gear through which various techniques of control, ordering and classification of



the colonized populations were implemented. It cannot be defined as the mere “mixing of races”, but rather as the privileged strategy of power, political without a doubt, and in the same movement, sexual and reproductive. Miscegenation implies “practices and discourses on love, gender and sex in situations of colonial domination” (Catelli, 2020, p. 85).

Reinserting that legal agenda of 20th and 21st century feminism in the long time of conquest and colonization, provides a deeper analysis of that power that resists giving us back what it extirpated from us: our bodies.

Mestizaje was implemented by means of an alliance device that according to Catelli (taking up Foucault) configures the system of marriage, kinship, and transmission of surnames and inheritance. I understand that this device is combated by a good part of the legal conquests of the 20th century, which I described in the previous section as rights to dispose of our goods and our ties.

This device of alliance lost relevance as the political structures were modified, with the emergence of the device of sexuality, which Foucault (2009) locates in the 18th century and Catelli from the 15th and 16th centuries. It does not totally eliminate that of alliance, but it is superimposed on it, determining the relationship of subalternity of women’s bodies. The control of the capacity to gestate is totally captured by the patriarchal colonial enterprise and its devices.

This genealogy of the intersection of coloniality, patriarchy, gestation, would be truncated without an outline of the complex historical plot that followed the times of conquest and the colonial era to which I alluded. If we advance in the historical line, we see that between the end of the 18th century and the mid-19th century, the different independence revolutions in Latin America will take place, discontinuing colonialism as a political system, leaving in force coloniality, internal colonialism and economic neocolonialisms. The colonial question goes beyond the “Spanish conquest of 1492”, and demands an archeological reading of the twists and turns of history in order to locate differential (and even opposite) uses and meanings of abortion in the past and present.

Reflecting on the interruption of pregnancy from a situated perspective places us in a variegated present where the civilization-barbarism tension continues to beat in Argentina. The racist maxims that Sarmiento wielded in his *Facundo* of 1845, endure and have a direct impact on the debate I raise here. The defeat in the Battle of Caseros



(1852), the War against Paraguay (1864-1870) and the Generation of Eighty, which implemented the “Conquest of the Desert”, express the consolidation of racial and gender oppression, impacting on the processes of construction of meaning and state intervention around the policies of reproduction.

Among the ingredients of this racist and misogynist ethos I point to nineteenth-century positivism. The influence of the doctrines of Cesare Lombroso, Italian physician and criminologist, regarding crime as the result of innate tendencies, of a genetic order, as well as the positions of Francis Galton, British polymath, founder of eugenics, a (pseudo)discipline that had such an impact in our country and in our profession, stand out (Basta, 2008). The “infamous decade” (1930-1943) was the scenario that saw the birth of two emblematic organizations of this crossroads: in 1930 the first School of Social Service was inaugurated, dependent on the Argentine Social Museum, and in 1932 the Argentine Association of Biotypology, Eugenics and Social Medicine, to which the Argentine Social Museum itself adhered along with other universities and organizations.

As Scelsio states, within the framework of eugenics and biopolitics “we locate the emergence of new professions such as the Social Hygiene Visitors, ‘destined’ to work from their origins, primarily with health policies aimed at children and pregnant mothers in situations of social vulnerability” (2020, p. 14). In turn, the normative tutelary framework in relation to childhood of the so-called “Agote Law” of 1919, is an expression of the impact of the Lombrosian perspective in our country.

In the health and social professions, a classist and racialized view is consolidated regarding which bodies can and should mother, how they should do it and what the State should do from a tutelary conception regarding childhood, fathers and mothers when those phenotypical and behavioral repertoires are not the normative ones.

I summarize this process of overlapping of racist policies and their impact on social intervention in the evocation of a place: Martín García Island, a scenario that illustrates in a stark way the colonial appropriation of the bodies of others. An indigenous concentration camp operated there (during the period 1871-1886), where the State implemented practices of control, physical exploitation and distribution of the subjected indigenous people (Nagy and Papazian, 2011). And on that same island, the physician and legislator Luis Agote proposed, in the first decades of the twentieth century, to confine some ten thousand minors whom he described as vagabonds to be regenerated through work and moral vigilance.

The concern for the “improvement of the race” of the eugenic perspectives extended to the immigrant masses. From the ships came down poor Spaniards, Italians and Jews, expelled by the war, without formal education, with union experiences linked to socialism and anarchism, who did not resemble the immigration that the generation of the eighties expected, those enlightened Saxons from Northern Europe of whom Sarmiento dreamed, and who would hypothetically promote industrial and cultural development in the country.

In this complex plot, abortion did not always operate as a slogan linked to the “right to decide” of women, but from the late eighteenth century and until the mid-twentieth century, it was largely part of the repertoire of eugenic perspectives in vogue worldwide, of race improvement. Miranda (2018) argues that unlike Anglo-Saxon eugenics, a proponent of mass sterilizations, Argentine eugenic hygienism, due to its conservative Catholic imprint, denied, at least in its official positions, this type of procedure. Nevertheless, it implemented very sophisticated devices to intervene on bodies with gestational and maternal capacity.

We see that reproductive policies were historically understood with divergent meanings. On the one hand, the strategies of control over gestation promoted by eugenics, operating as a racist device of appropriation of the body of certain women (supposedly pernicious in their genetic, racial, political or cultural charge), with the correlate of motherhood as the only and necessary destiny for the growth of the population in other women (white, civilized, propagators of the good genetic and moral inheritance of the nation). On the other hand, abortion, as wielded by situated feminisms, is configured as a device radically opposed to this initiative: that of restoring the power to decide (which was appropriated by the judicial, medical and political corporations) to pregnant bodies.

Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy: interweaving feminisms, decolonization and social work.

I place myself unequivocally in the vindication of the right to decide about our bodies. And for this very reason, I insist on building mediations for a critical and situated approach to the processes of pregnancy termination from social work. That is why I



ask myself: How can we contribute to the achievement of this right and, in the same gesture, try to criticize the agenda of white institutional feminism?

Following Bidaseca (2011), I am concerned about the gesture of “white women trying to save brown women”. A good part of the so-called non-eurocentric liberal feminism has participated and participates in campaigns of “promotion and prevention” of sexual and reproductive health in “third world” women’s communities; programs orchestrated by international or state agencies, which seek to “raise awareness” or “educate”, through the intervention of middle or upper class literate professional women, women from popular sectors, indigenous or rural areas, and “guide” them in their “family planning” processes. Arias (2012) already alerted us to how problematic this model of promotion can be, which sometimes even requires subjects to participate in “training” in order to access “benefits”. I fall into this abuse of quotation marks, revealing that a good part of our concepts, associated with a certain citizenship approach, contain a problematic dimension when we look at them from a decolonial lens. Doing critical and situated social work involves locating the colonial bias that can represent the deployment of devices that, presented from a semantics of rights and promotion, conceal a logic of disciplining and control.

For this reason, when I speak of IVE, I want to tie the notion of “voluntary” to two dimensions: undoubtedly to that of decision, non-coercion and freedom, but also to that of desire, from a logic of restorative justice. The notion of decision is almost directly linked to cognitive capacity. The notion of desire allows us to visualize not only minds, but bodies, bodies that think but also feel, desire, enjoy, have illusions and the right to recognize them and act accordingly. This respect for this will, which is decision and desire, does not imply declining all intervention. Rather, it means promoting a non-violent intervention, of listening, of reweaving ties and supports, deconstructing both the biases of enlightened and messianic avant-garde interventionism, as well as the unimplicated bias that excuses its inaction in the supposed perversity inherent to everything that is state-run.

To affirm that bodies with the capacity to gestate cannot continue to be territory of conquest implies understanding that colonial relations are sexed, bodily relations, which acquire diverse contours in different historical moments. My hypothesis derived from these readings is simple: without the almost seamless power that the conqueror/colonizer had over women’s bodies (sexed bodies with the capacity to gestate) and that the legal/health/disciplinary parapet (as a present mediator of patriarchal coloniality)

continues to have, the (neo)colonial architecture falls. The device of sexuality operates by circulating racial and patriarchal power, because these biopolitical techniques, when it comes to reproduction, never have the final word on the gestating body. In effect, women have much less possibility of living our sexual desire freely, and almost no possibility of deciding on the final outcome of this meeting of bodies in reproductive terms. It is not necessary for me to dwell, for example, on the many situations in which contraceptive methods are not enough to prevent an unwanted pregnancy. Giving back to the gestating body the decision about gestation implies disarticulating the device of sexuality as it was instrumented by the patriarchal colonial order.

I believe that this is the reason why, even in the 21st century, we are still disputing these legal tools. Measures such as Comprehensive Sexual Education and the Interruption of Pregnancy, encounter these resistances because they offer a different cartography for the circulation of the power of this determinant device of control that is that of sexuality.

To maintain that neither the land nor women are territory of conquest supposes, as I have previously stated (Hermida, 2018), to encourage a problematization of the State, in the contradiction that inhabits it, as a constitutive element of Colonial Modernity, but also as a field of dispute to occupy (García Linera, 2010) and reinvent (De Sousa Santos, 2006). As Segato warns: “the role of the State will be, therefore, to restore to the peoples the material and legal means for them to recover their usurped capacity to weave the threads of their own history” (2015, p. 173). In this line, I understand that an intervention from the critical and situated social work will be to accompany and promote processes that restore the decision to gestate (or not to gestate) to the thread of desire and not to exogenous mandates of various kinds.

Conclusions

This text placed the debate on abortion in the field of the problems of coloniality and patriarchy in our America. The hypothesis that I explored states that the establishment of the colonial capitalist system had as a condition that the capacity to gestate is decoupled from the will of the gestating body (either in terms of accessing a sexual relation or continuing a pregnancy). The devices of alliance and sexuality (Foucault, 2009)

and that of miscegenation (Catelli, 2020) operated in this sense. The conquest of the territory-land (Cabnal, 2010) would not have been possible without the conquest of the territory-body (Paredes, 2015) of women. The sexual and reproductive use of these bodies, and the annulment or control of the desire and decision that this same body could exercise, was and is a condition of the capitalist colonial enterprise. In response to these mechanisms of subalternization we saw how feminism invites us to different paths of disobedience, which implies in some cases insubordination to the heterosexual regime of obligatory motherhood (Bellucci, 2014) and in others the rehearsal of a motherhood disobedient to the hegemonic mandates (Vivas, 2019).

Motherhood in racially structured patriarchal capitalism operates as an assigned and distributed place with variations according to the historical moment and the gendered and racialized expressions of bodies. The decision of how many children to have, when and with whom, will be regulated according to the interests of the system, via diverse material and cultural devices. During the conquest and the colonial period, the mechanisms of control were the mestizaje and the devices of alliance and sexuality. The eugenic hygienist perspective that structured the country's project at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century operated by usurping women's decision on gestation, under racist ideas of population improvement. Institutional white feminism at the end of the 20th century also configured processes of intervention on the bodies of racialized women that we cannot fail to problematize from a critical and situated social work. The issue then is not abortion itself, but the legal, safe and free possibility of deciding and desiring, which I understand we must promote for the restitution of gestating bodies.

The right to decide on the capacity of gestating bodies is undoubtedly a public health issue. But, in its scope and genealogies, the problem is even deeper, and central premises of the current order are at stake. There is much debate on the right of the gestating body to decide, but it is not clear who has been exercising this right of decision for 500 years in our America. Thus, although it is true that in debating the IVE the parliament deliberates about us, our capacities, our desires, our rights, I believe that, perhaps without knowing it, they are deliberating about something else.

Analyzing the IVE from a feminist perspective from our American feminist perspective allows us to reinstate on the scene all the violence that was cleansed by the story of the "meeting of cultures". I make a small gesture of historical-epistemic justice, making visible with Bolaños (2002) and Catelli (2020) the perverse operation of textual/sexual cleansing. While what took place was war, rape and coercion, what prevails in the story

about the conquest and colonization is the idea of encounter and melting pot. The scene of the crime is cleaned up, the sexual and reproductive dimension of the crime is annulled, and the taking of women's bodies as the first territory of conquest and plunder. I propose to call things by their name, not only to make visible new violence (since these practices are still in force in expressions such as chineo, or institutional police violence that is reproduced with impunity on the bodies of racialized women) but also to have some chance of dismantling this system of inequalities that is disguised with euphemisms and nor-eurocentric looks.

When I state that what is at stake is to restore the will to give birth to the gestating body, I am not placing this statement in a liberal individualistic perspective, but in a political, collective and situated perspective. Because the challenge is to denounce this capture, the function of which was to found a profoundly violent and unequal system. How can we think of critical social work without taking on the problematization of this dimension of the current order? I believe that our profession needs to place on its agenda the efforts to restore the emergence of life to the thread of desire and not to the interests of a patriarchal capitalist colonial system, which perversely appeals to life to maintain the uncoupling that allows it to continue to reproduce a death society.

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