

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUÇÃO

Bem sei que a revolta da mulher é a que leva à convulsão em todos os extractos sociais, nada fica de pé, nem relações de classe, nem de grupo, nem individuais, toda a repressão terá de ser desenraizada, e a primeira repressão, aquela em que veio assentar toda a história do género humano, criando os modelos e os mitos das outras repressões, é a do homem contra a mulher. (...) Tudo terá de ser novo, e todos temos medo. E o problema da mulher, no meio disto, não é o de perder ou ganhar, é o da sua identidade.

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Novas Cartas Portuguesas [extracto de *Diário de Ana Maria*] (1972)

The present issue of the journal *Diacrítica* has been organized as an editorial outcome in the context of the FCT funded project *Women, Arts and dictatorship – Portugal, Brazil and Portuguese speaking African Countries* (<http://cehum.ilch.uminho.pt/womanart>) which is currently developed by the research group in *Gender, Arts, and Post-Colonial Studies* at CEHUM, University of Minho (<http://cehum.ilch.uminho.pt/default/gaps/en>).

The main target of this research project is to make visible the presence of women artists in Portugal and in Portuguese speaking countries, within the frame of a very particular historical context – dictatorships – as creators of artistic and literary canons, through the analysis of situated case studies which will allow us to propose a critical *history of the histories of art and literature*. Set in a transversal and comparative perspective, this project focuses primarily on the following areas: literature, the visual arts, narrative and documentary film, theatre and performance. Thus, taking into account the invisibility of women as artistic creators and their representation in the history of art and literature, we intend to contribute to a revision/reconfiguration of the artistic and literary canons of the 20th century, having Portugal as axis and conducting contrastive or complementary case studies with the former African colonies and Brazil. Our main focus is centered on the following guidelines: censorship, political repression, historical silencing, colonial war, education, gender politics, feminism, emigration, exile and diaspora. We want to reflect on the modes and strategies through which the dominant ideology, in the mentioned dictatorial contexts, indelibly marked the female artistic practices and the forms of resilience and resistance engendered by women in their creative practices. Our chronologic frame of analysis comprehends women artists who experienced dictatorial regimes directly and exhibit or explore that experience in their work; and women from a younger generation who have produced (or are producing) work critically reflecting on/ resonating with those regimes.

From the methodological point of view, this project is framed by the revisionist wave of the existing relationship between artistic movements and totalitarian regimes

with the concomitant emergence of a localized historical perspective and a re-vision of artistic and literary canons.¹ The research we are undertaking is anchored in this line of enquiry, which is also primarily defined by the recovery and inscription of cultural memory in today's reality, through a crucial unveiling process of the homologous ideology of secrecy, mutism and censorship performed at the crossroad of feminist and gender critical thought. In this assumption, as Griselda Pollock has written, a dialogical "reframing" of Feminism is at stake here, "not as an essential or static category", but as a self-reflexive analysis, ethically and politically situated, engaged in an "historical retrospect", and a "constant projection into the future", signifying a "*poiesis* to come, a becoming".²

The 1970s marked a significant upsurge in the studies of artistic practices in the intersection with feminist and gender studies, from literary studies to Art history, performance and film studies. In the context of the resurgence of feminism in the current economic and social crisis, this line of enquiry is, in our view, more than ever pertinent and necessary. In this sense, the project we are undertaking wants to implement new perspectives to this global framework by focusing on the specificities of women's practices, namely in the context of Portuguese and Brazilian authoritarian regimes, in order to understand and contextualize the ideological implications in women's artistic practices today.

As Manuela Tavares has argued, in Portugal during the dictatorship, the space to introduce the specificity of women's rights amidst the opposition was very limited³, for, by then women's rights were seen as subsumed under the universal rights.⁴ We have learnt that, unfortunately, that concrete problem still remains to be solved. Moreover, in contrast to what happened in democratic contexts throughout the 1960s and 1970s (particularly in the French and Anglo-Saxon contexts), Portugal did not experience the same impact of militant feminism either in social terms, or in the arts, with few but very notorious exceptions, being *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* published in 1972 a paramount example of national and international visibility and influence.⁵

Therefore, editing the present issue of *Diacrítica* in the second year of our project means for us a crucial step towards the comparative analysis concerning the invisibility of women, erasure and censorship under authoritarian regimes, as well as the processes of resistance, historical reverberation and critical *re-vision* engendered, from within a diversity of geopolitical contexts. Amongst the many questions that could be addressed we proposed a few concrete guidelines to our contributors to this volume, which would

¹ Meskimmon, M. (2010). *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*. London and New York: Routledge; Nochlin, L., & Reilley, M. (Eds.) (2007). *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art*. London and New York: Brooklyn Museum/Merrell; Pejic, B. (Ed.) (2009). *Gender Check: A Reader. Art and Theory in Eastern Europe*. Vienna: Mumok, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien.

² Pollock, G. (2008). What is it that Feminist Interventions Do? Feminism and Difference in Retrospect and Prospect. In A. Kokoli (Ed.), *Feminism Reframed. Reflections on Art and Difference* (pp. 248–280). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.

³ Tavares, M. (2011). *Feminismos: Percursos e Desafios*. Lisboa: Texto.

⁴ Amâncio, L. (Ed.). (2007). *O longo caminho das mulheres. Feminismos 80 anos depois* (1.^a ed., 1.^o vol.). Lisboa: Dom Quixote.

⁵ Barreno, M. I., Horta, M. T., & Costa, M. V. da (2010). *Novas Cartas Portuguesas*. (A. L. Amaral, Ed.) (annotated edition). Lisboa: Dom Quixote.

enable a wide comparative analysis of diverse situations and case-studies. These included the following: what characteristics define the creative work of these women as a reaction to a dominant authoritarian ideology, either as a symbolic system of representation that reflects a given historical situation of domination, or as a structure of values that shapes a certain reality? What is the role of women and their artistic practices as a mode of resistance to such repressive ideology? What is the impact of these artistic practices as instrumental forms of representation and denunciation of a system that has been imposed over several decades? How do the recent generations of women artists revisit that particular historical moment in their art, through which means and strategic practices?

In sum, the present issue of *Diacrítica*, in line with our project, proposes a localized, comparative and interdisciplinary framework anchored in the articulation between different art forms and the interweaving of feminist, gender, and post-colonial studies as an intersectional methodology. Our main target is not just to challenge the canon, so as to make women more visible, but to question the canon itself by introducing different issues and variables that emerge when looking transnationally across the disciplines, from within a situated praxis.

In the light of this framework, we believe that to confront the Portuguese dictatorship (1933–1974) – marked by repression, censorship and the colonial conflict – in dialogue with the Brazilian Military Junta (1964–1985) and the context of the Portuguese speaking African countries can introduce significant new perspectives in the analysis of women's artistic creation and resilience strategies.

We are therefore extremely grateful to all the contributors to this issue of *Diacrítica* for generously accepting our challenge and producing such wide scope essays and in depth analyses with a focus on a diversity of aesthetic, geographical, political and social contexts.

The Editors,

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