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Woman as colony

Abstract

This chapter tries to make sense of the cruelty and reification that underlie femicide, an area in which the notion that critical criminology today needs to be a criminology of conflict and social movements can be validated.

Counter-pedagogical cruelty teaches how to turn a living entity into a thing. It implies the capture of what is itinerant and unpredictable, like life itself, and its transformation into something inert, sterile, measurable, purchasable, something to be possessed and consumed. Women's sexual exploitation is an act of robbery and consumption of a body, a precise event that expresses the reification of life (Segato, 2018). This chapter tries to make sense of the cruelty and reification that underlie femicide, an area in which the notion that critical criminology today needs to be a criminology of conflict and social movements can be validated.

Homicide is a gender-neutral term, whereas the term femicide indicates that the violent death of women is a distinct event, a crime in its own right (Radford and Russell, 1992). The way we designate conduct influences our perception, spreads awareness, and once that conduct is named, a new social meaning emerges. Femicide is the killing of women motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure or sense of ownership that occurs in contexts of overall gender oppression (Corradi et al, 2016). Men may be killed more frequently, but rarely are they killed because they are men.

'Femicide occurs in patriarchal societies, characterized by male dominance and female subordination, through social and political construction of masculinity as active and aggressive and the social construction of femininity as receptive and passive' (ibid: 977).

Tolerance peddlers, it is argued, do not see heterosexual masculinity as part of the problem; as for Marx, he was wrong: sex, not religion is the heart of a heartless world (Wypijewski, 2020).

There are marital femicides and femicides committed by strangers, racist and homophobic femicides, but femicides also occur when female babies are killed more often than their male counterparts or when they are neglected and starved (Radford and Russell, 1992). The phrase 'intimate partner homicide' restores a sense of gender neutrality to the killing of women, who indeed are often killed by their intimate partners or in family settings. However, the phrase is insufficiently descriptive and falls short of providing an overall social context in which specific victims are targeted and why.

General interpretations of violence focus on fear, anger and excitement as intertwined human emotions that play a key explanatory role in theories of interpersonal conflict. From this perspective, the killings of women may be regarded as emotional events that arise from acute antagonistic confrontation (Collins, 2008). Violence, in brief, is supposed to be a property of a contingent,

situational field, not the property of a group or of a social and cultural setting. The concept of femicide, instead, implies that violence is triggered by a predisposing set of beliefs and principles, from learned norms of conduct and a specific vision of the world.

An alarming phenomenon

A United Nations report on the killing of women and girls as a result of gender norms offers some tentative data about the phenomenon (UNODC, 2018; UN, 2019a). It sets off with the definitional controversy around the term femicide, suggesting that gender-related killings are in many cases episodes of 'intimate partner violence that culminate in the killing of women, even when perpetrators have no specific (misogynistic) motives' (UN, 2019a: 8). In brief, it argues that not all female homicides are gender related, although a specific, considerable share can be labelled as femicide.

The killings are committed in a variety of contexts and can be divided into those perpetrated within the family and those perpetrated outside the family sphere. Data available at regional and global level show that the vast majority of cases fall into the first category. National statistics are at times incomparable, due to distinct legal definitions of specific homicides, therefore the general picture provided may be incomplete. Most countries do not incorporate the category femicide into their national legislation, while many do not even specify the gender of the murder victims. Nevertheless, the phenomenon, it is stated, is reaching alarming proportions. The following are the key findings.

A total of 87,000 women were intentionally killed in 2017, compared with 48,000 in 2012. More than half of them (58 per cent) were killed by intimate partners or family members, meaning that 137 women across the world were killed by a member of their own family every day. More than a third (30,000) of the victims in 2017 were killed by their current or former intimate partner or someone they would normally trust. Leaving aside national differences, the global rate of female homicide in 2017 was estimated to be 2.3 per 100,000 female population. As expected, even though men were the principal victims of homicide globally, women continued to bear the heaviest burden of lethal victimization as a result of gender stereotypes and inequality. Victims of femicide were not only killed by their current and former partners, but also by fathers, brothers, mothers, sisters and other family members.

Being successfully concealed, many femicide cases are not recognized as such. The dynamic of the homicide, in such cases, is unclear or undetected to researchers and investigators alike. Some are camouflaged as accidents, others, after a period of concealment, are later revealed as homicides, yet others remain forever under the category of suicides. Altering the scene is the practical mode used by murderers to divert suspicion, particularly if the killing takes place at home: 'the law still struggles when called upon to apply to a person's most private sphere, traditionally perceived as sacred' (Bitton, and Dayan, 2019: 1057).

These killings, in general, are not the fatal outcome of sudden explosions of anger, uncontrolled onrushes of hostility, but are the final stage of a trajectory of gender-related abuse and violence that long predate homicide.

One large area in which women's killings occur, but are unreported and unacknowledged by UN reports, pertains to femicide in wars. In itself an acutely pathological expression of masculinity, war is a specific form of crime against women. Statistics will never account for such violent crimes, which are part of the rules of war and, at the same time, are modes of communication among men: hostility towards enemies takes the form of killing their women. The killings designate hegemonic and subordinate masculinities. Throughout the twentieth century wars have increasingly targeted civil populations. In some cases armies have avoided fighting one another, going straight for the cities and their inhabitants, raping and destroying. There are examples of genocidal rape across the world, while torture and murder also target displaced women and girls gathered in refugee camps. Conflicts, in brief, reveal the discriminations visible during peacetime, while killing, justified by war, proves the most effective modality for the production of gendered identities, an extreme way of maintaining power relations (Ruggiero, 2020a).

Beyond 'Spotlight Initiative'

The UN has repeatedly encouraged countries to take action to tackle the issue. Listed among the recommendations are innovative legislation, early intervention, multi-agency efforts and the establishment of training programmes for dedicated units. In 2019, a partnership involving the UN and the European Commission launched an ambitious programme 'to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls worldwide' (EC, 2019: 2). Known as *Spotlight Initiative*, the programme intends to direct large-scale investments to Asia, Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean regions (UN, 2019b). Several aspects of violence against women are addressed, including harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. Support for women fleeing war zones is offered and funds are provided to initiatives against gender-based violence in 'forgotten crises', in countries that include Yemen, Iraq, Palestine, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Sudan, Mali, Chad, Ghana and Liberia. In Latin America, the programme targets Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. Below are some of the results of these initiatives as officially highlighted.

In Argentina, groups of young people have undergone digital training aimed at preventing online sexual abuse. Male youths in El Salvador are attending sessions meant to boost their self-esteem and modify their views on women. Domestic violence laws have been introduced in Liberia, where many traditional community leaders have declared a stop to female genital mutilation. Norms that prohibit perpetuating gender discrimination in places of faith have been introduced in Malawi, while a wide-ranging, inspiring sex educational programme is being run in Mozambique. In Uganda, police officers and taxi drivers have been involved in discussing toxic masculinity and the responsibility of men and boys to end violence against women and girls.

It is with a sense of regret that the promoters of Spotlight Initiative acknowledge their failure to make countries provide specific services for women and guarantee their access to justice. On the other hand, they appear to look with optimism at popular mobilizations which demand action against femicide and request 'broader efforts to ensure women's economic empowerment and participation in all aspects of society' (ibid: 4).

Limiting our scope to Europe, most countries have broken promises with regard to the protection of women or are substantially behind the commitments taken. They fail to properly respond to 'the reality of inequality, harassment and violence so many women face on a daily basis' (Archer, Namubiru and Vesser, 2020). For example, only four countries, over the last decade, met the key target to increase shelter spaces, while all other programmes in support of female victims of violence have been under attack by conservative politicians and campaigners. Approximately 13 million people in Europe keep facing domestic violence, a figure that equals the entire population of countries such as Austria or Switzerland. The situation became even more dramatic after the lockdown imposed as a response to the coronavirus pandemic (more on the pandemic in Chapter 7).

The first binding treaty to prevent and fight violence against women, ratified in the Istanbul Council of Europe Convention in 2011, was signed by 34 countries, which took it on themselves to guarantee the necessary numbers of easily accessible shelters. The minimum requirement was indicated as the availability of one protected space for a woman and her children for every 10,000 inhabitants. The shortfall in the signatory countries is estimated at sixty per cent.

Members of Spotlight Initiative, as noted above, expressed sympathy, at least abstractly, for popular mobilization, notably for women taking to the streets and demanding action so that every person can live free of fear. As members of the European Commission, many had Europe in mind. However, taking to the street and demanding action occurred elsewhere.

The rapist is you

In 2020, on Valentine's Day, thousands of young Mexican women marched through Tijuana to reach the offices of the Public Prosecutor. Many of them showed large pictures of female friends or relatives who had been killed, their *proximity* to the victims echoing a key variable characterizing critical criminology today. The local Circulo Violeta was among the organizers of the event, described as a 'feminist spring' against femicide. This was a display of anger performed by 'troublemakers', in this case *puellae robustas*, ideal allies of critical criminologists who opted for direct action to make their claims. Despite hostile police presence, groups of masked girls managed to approach government buildings and smear them with red paint, but also embellish them with decorative graffiti. The era of petitions was over, 'now we believe in smashing whatever needs to be smashed, shouting whatever you need to shout, doing whatever you need to do' (Phillips, 2020: 3).

This was an event amongst many that led to a 24-hour women's strike involving more than 20 million female workers on 9 March 2020. The momentum for the upsurge of this movement was raised by the shocking images of murdered women circulated across the country in February, when commentators indicated that the '*revolución diamantina*' (glitter revolution) began. Protest against government inaction was particularly fervid because women had been strong supporters of would-be president Andrés Manuel López Obrador, known as Amlo, who presented himself as an advocate of women's rights (Carrigan and Dawson, 2020). His term in power, instead, coincided with an increase in women's killings, for which he had previously blamed his political

rivals of neoliberal faith. With the mounting protest, he now saw the action taken by women as part of a conspiracy led by conservative forces. He was targeted because he had failed to implement the schemes designed to improve the condition of women, the launch the programmes aimed at achieving gender equality, and to provide the essential services to protect female victims of violence.

Around 8,000 women were killed in Mexico between 2018 and 2019 and the women's strike ended in clashes with riot police, monuments being daubed and sensationalist, misogynist newspapers' offices set on fire (Grant, 2020). An example of how *power as mercy* can rapidly turn into *power as terror* (see Chapter 2) was epitomized by police opening fire on protesters at a Cancún rally in November 2020 (Wattenberger, 2020).

In Chile, around 6,000 cases of sexual violence were recorded in 2019. The collective known as *Las Tesis* launched a dance and a song titled '*Un Violador en Tu Camino*' (A Rapist in Your Path), which was eventually performed by women across the world, from Washington to Istanbul. Readers may want to check it on line and see if they too get enthralled by its rhythm and theatrical harmony. The women recite the lines at unison and their voices make instruments redundant, the musicality being conveyed by gestures and mesmerizing waves of changing tonality. The performance ends with the sentence 'El violador eres tu' (The rapist is you), directed at the authorities. And when it is over, groups of demonstrators scatter around to replace the names of the heroes carved on national monuments with those of the women who have been killed. This echoes an idea launched by writer Dacia Maraini in Italy, who proposed to erect a monument to the 'unknown victims of femicide' in every city of the country.

'A Rapist in Your Path' was also performed outside the New York courtroom where Harvey Weinstein was on trial for rape and at Trump Tower, and the title is a parody of 'a friend in your path' referred to the helping hand women and citizens in general are to expect from the police.

'Even the dance steps tell a story: performers squat three times, representing the degrading position arrested women have allegedly been forced to adopt for bodily cavity searches, often while stripped naked' (Hinsliff, 2020: 2).

Loathing and resenting

The protests in Mexico and Chile show how humans may turn space into a place. A place is more than an area, and is the opposite of an empty area (Berger, 2001). A place is characterised by the unfolding and the consequences of an action. The action just described created a place and the women perhaps knew that the process in which they were involved was far from irreversible, as what they symbolically gained would have a price. The more women achieve, the more they may be met with hostility, and by occupying or creating a place they rebuff those who would like to send them back into an empty area. Arguably, femicide soars in contexts where women appear to attain some status, where they create places, including in countries we commonly describe as advanced. A toxic brew is unleashed that contains fear, blame and hostility against those who threaten to abandon their 'proper' role. Anxiety intermingles with disgust, magnified by

envy directed at feisty and successful competitors. Disgust is linked to male fantasies of female intemperance that brings depravity, while fluids signal reproduction, often associated with signs of the abject: 'Women's bodies have been discursively produced as bodies of fear and contempt' (Wilcox, 2015: 99).

Killing can be the culmination of a career of 'coercive control', that depicts a progression from domestic abuse to lethal violence, or the sudden result of 'deadly passion', that sees violence as a response to an emotional provocation or injury. In the first case, men impose on women a process of growing erosion of freedom, which will culminate in total subjugation. When men's control is challenged, the penalty for refusing to subjugate is death. In the second case, the lethal violence is unpredictable, sparked as it is by a contingent issue, an incident rather than a long-term process (Monckton Smith, 2019).

Clinical explanations of domestic abuse provide justifications for this behaviour, ignoring the conditions of inequality in which aggression takes shape. For example, mental illness and drug or alcohol misuse may add to the rationalization of killing. On the other hand, the 'crime of passion' paradigm depicts situations where the betrayed expectations of men are the cause of violence, which is inflicted on women due to their refusal to provide emotional services.

'Discourses of heterosexual romantic love normalize an all-encompassing "grand Passion". Jealousy is constructed as a normal output of love, as is possessiveness, and love becomes a powerful justification for all sorts of possessive and fixated behaviours' (ibid: 9).

By postulating romantic love as the kernel of relationships, these discourses manage to mitigate responsibility and alleviate disapproval. Often the perpetrators, in this way, become the real victims.

Sexism and misogyny, on the other hand, provide an infinite repository of beliefs implying that women have to be disciplined. Sexism can be defined as a set of views that converge on the idea of women's inferiority, of their inadequacy in performing a variety of important functions. Misogyny, instead, leads to action, namely to the enforcement of punitive measures as a way of conserving gender privileges (Manne, 2016). Misogyny equips sexism with a practical weapon. Ultimately, fear, anger, blame, disgust and envy combine in a powerful poison that acts as a threatening weapon (Nussbaum, 2018).

That weapon, while generating fear, induces subordination, urged by the prevalence of impunity that, in its turn, terrorizes even more. As Butler (2020a) argues, 'subordinate or die' may seem like a hyperbolic imperative, but it is the message that many women know is addressed to them. This power to terrorize is backed and shared by official men, who find women reporting the violence they suffer unreliable, if not repulsive. Moreover, reporting a violent incident can bring more violence.

There is, however, another variable that can be included in the toxic brew. The backlash that occurs when women attain some equity becomes enveloped in bouts of moralism that hit others as enemies. Moralism, in this case, should be understood as a product of feelings of superiority but also as the result of *remoteness*. The latter may sound inappropriate to describe gender relationships, but it is misogyny itself that establishes a considerable distance

from its victims, because it speaks a language that is totally foreign to those it addresses. Having located victims in remote spaces, moralists can express in practice their propensity to use force, replacing the judicial authorities in the infliction of pain. The social repulsion ignited by moralism, thus, 'achieves its fullest development: across great distances and from higher to lower elevations in social space' (Black, 1998: 150). Confident evolutionists would argue that social subordination is weakening, inequality is moderating and differences are flattening. Increased communication is bringing the other closer, one might argue. However, moralism is not declining and enemies are far from becoming obsolete.

Loathing and resentment make killing a mode of redress for the rights conquered by enemies, a compensation for the disturbance of the order of things, a manifestation of self-help. The killers make claims and express a grievance while replacing the state in imposing penalties. The female victims, whether known to the murderer or not, are individually paying for the fact of being women, but they are also being killed on the basis of 'collective liability', whereby everyone who belongs to a gender category is held accountable for the conduct of their fellows. From the events in Chile and Mexico reported above, however, other aspects transpire, mainly linked with ethnicity, its history and contemporary features.

Colonial legacy and slavery

The infamy that lingers around the name Ciudad Juárez is not only due to the astonishing number of women killed there, but also to the systemic connivance the institutions grant to perpetrators. Galtung (1990), in this respect, would resort to the concept of cultural violence to explain how some key, widespread, shared values manage to legitimize violence even in its more horrid manifestations. This explanatory exercise, however, appears to be more successful when ethnicity is considered. Cultural violence, in Galtung's formulation, includes narratives of superiority that reach particularly hostile levels when ethnic differences are emphasized. Femicide in colonial contexts, for example, can assume gigantic proportions, exactly because the feeling of superiority by perpetrators is inscribed in the very fabric of society and its hierarchical arrangements. Physical punishment, torture, rape and killing are the means that create and reproduce, rather than describe, superiority. Economic disadvantage, spatial segregation and racism in a colonial situation like Palestine, for instance, produce a stark effect on violence against women. So, it is less honour killings than colonization by the Israeli state that explains the disproportionate number of femicides among Palestinian women (Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Daher-Nashif, 2013).

True, femicide in former colonies cannot be directly connected to colonization, nor can violence against women within certain minority groups be imputed to their western country of residence (Corradi et al, 2016). However, torture, rapes and killings, typically brought by 'civilizers', must have left a legacy among the colonized, or at least added a dose of supplementary cruelty to that already in place among them. Like in war, the spectacle of death and the normalization of suffering depreciate life, particularly the life of the vulnerable. When systems survive courtesy of routine coercion and violence, the geometry of human

interactions is equally coercive and violent. The inflationary process that devalues life decrees that even mundane types of disagreement must be resolved with blows and injury.

Looking at indigenous women and girls killed in Canada, it cannot be denied that the killings are the result of intersecting structures of inequality and colonial histories (García-Del Moral, 2018). Perpetrators are family members or acquaintances, but also white strangers who exploit the vulnerability of those who are both indigenous and young women. But a more nuanced picture emerges in Rita Segato's (2000; 2015) research. The Argentinian anthropologist is a 'decolonial' feminist who regards gender as the fulcrum around which all forms of power revolve, therefore to tackle violence, in her view, it is necessary to demolish what she defines 'the mandate of masculinity'. Studying the gender factor in the Yoruba tradition, she refutes the notion that gender is the result of colonial domination and that traditional societies are genderless. Rather, she discovers that 'maleness' and 'femaleness' are flexible connotations that allow transitioning between them. She reveals the existence of a patriarchy of 'low intensity' as opposed to the 'high intensity' variety and the gender binary brought by the colonizers. In brief, what the colonizers impose is heterosexuality.

Argentinian founder of the Women's Union, Victoria Ocampo, wrote without irony that millions of men do not understand the demand made by women: just stop thinking of a woman as a *colony* to exploit and destroy (Manguel, 1986, my *italics*). But there is a need to travel back in time if other hypotheses are to be formulated.

In the introduction to the diary of Frederick Douglass (*An American Slave Written by Himself*), Angela Davis (2010) remarked that, when we think of the civil rights movements, we think of Martin Luther King and find it hard to imagine that the movement was formed of women and men whose names we ignore. The legendary bus boycott in Montgomery, which was a defining turning point of the civil rights movement, 'would have been impossible had it not been for black women domestic workers' (ibid: 15). These were invisible women who travelled from their black communities to go and clean up white people's houses, do their laundry and cook their meals. Why do we not regard them as agents of history? They too refused to occupy the segregated bus seats. The issue underlined by Davis is that slave narrative as genre is monopolised by men, that women's accounts are overlooked. One such account is Harriet Jacobs' (1987) autobiography, which ran counter the sentimental canon of the time, warning readers that the author's goal was liberation: the story of this slave girl ends with freedom, not with marriage.

Having become the leading black abolitionist, Frederick Douglass was also the most prominent male advocate of women's emancipation in his time (Davis, 1981). In his diary, however, he left the male-female opposition untouched and foregrounded 'manhood-freedom' as the conceptual couple for emancipation. Women, in this way, were relegated in the position of representing slavery (McDowell, 1999). His description relies heavily on the maimed, flogged, abused black female bodies, and 'these horrific forms of violence might also tend to objectify slave women and discursively deprive them of the capacity to strike out for their own freedom' (Davis, 2010: 26). Attacks on black women were indirect attacks on black men, who were not allowed to protect them.

Female slaves, therefore, were regarded as vulnerable both by their owners and by their men. The former could violate them as things belonging to them, the latter could perpetuate through them their paternalistic power. In the current situation, such power is handed over to authoritarian or regulatory agencies which are inclined, even when providing care, to follow their own interests and maintain the gender status quo. But neither vulnerability nor care can serve as the basis of a politics (Butler, 2020). In fact, vulnerability may hamper resistance, thus eliciting disrespect and indignity.

Returning to slavery, Angela Davis proposes a parallel between the nineteenth-century Women's Rights Movement and Frederick Douglass. The former has to be applauded for its accomplishments, even if it was saturated with racism. Douglass must be held in high regard despite his inability to see the key features of the subjugation of women by virtue of race and gender. Violence against enslaved women helped maintaining the system but also 'sustaining gendered hierarchies of power even in black abolitionist circles' (Davis, 2010: 34). In sum, the inheritance of colonization and slavery help us grasp the contemporary pandemic of intimate, domestic, individual violence against women. 'Forced into the hull of a ship, shackled, beaten, humiliated, spat on: how could that leave no trace?' (Césaire, 2020: 10).

In a speech on West Indian Emancipation in 1857, Douglass (2010) said that the struggle would be moral and physical and that injustice will endure until it is resisted with either words or blows, or with both.

Fiction offers a variety of possible responses to men's violence, but I doubt critical criminologists would find them of interest. Naomi Alderman (2016) describes a world in which women are empowered by a genetic mutation that enables them to harness and wield electrical currents. They use their new power to electrocute women's traffickers, pimps and a range of other unpleasant men. Joyce Carol Oates (1994: 4) tells the story of Foxfire, a blood sisterhood, a gang that commits 'what you would call crimes', namely they violently punish violent men. Many critical criminologists would be reluctant to encourage the commission of crimes as a response to crimes and perhaps resort to other potential solutions, including the following.

Shame

The shame women experience for being sexually abused can be diverted towards the abusers, as in the examples reported in the previous chapter. Here it should be noted that the #MeToo movement managed to break up with a tradition of self-imposed silence compelled by external forces threatening physical or emotional retaliation. Diversion of shame could inspire all marginalized, powerless and silenced groups, who could easily enough blame the powerful for their miserable condition (Maruna and Pali, 2020). Claims made by social movements, after all, are forms of blaming. Shame, on the other hand, can turn into pride, as shown in the evolution of the gay movement, but it can also play a role in alternative ways of dealing with crimes against women.

'Community conferencing' is one of the ways of dealing with sexual violence, a collective, informal procedure built on the failure of established criminal justice systems (Braithwaite and Daly, 1994). The latter are retributive and incapacitating but only offer short-term protection to women. There are

structural mechanisms that trigger men's violence and they can only be tempered or neutralized if women are empowered to defend themselves or safely withdraw from destructive relationships. Innovative practices, of course, face a dilemma: how to treat injurious acts without causing further injury? On the other hand, harshness of punishment does not result in safer lives for women, making the effectiveness of 'gentler' approaches worth exploring. Abandoning formal and legally patriarchal models may avert the multiple humiliations suffered by women who are victimized and then patronized or unheeded. Many victims of sexual violence are led to experience a sense of guilt, while the criminal justice process ends up amplifying stigma and rage, ultimately, increasing violence. With reintegration ceremonies (Daly, 2002; 2020), the criminal label is not rejected but collectively handled to clarify the features of the violence committed, its origin and outcome. Some skepticism, however, may arise from the 'communitarian direction' such ceremonies are likely to take, as they imply the existence of homogenous communities immersed in their specific drab conformity. Women, moreover, may decry the stifling nature of the very notion of community and its oppressive role.

There is awareness that community conferences, reintegration ceremonies and all other restorative justice tools can encounter potential problems, including the victim's safety during the process, manipulation by offenders, minimal impact on preventing future violence. Additionally, the lenient outcome of the session can be construed as a sign of the mundane nature of the crime being discussed. However, advantages can also be identified, for instance, victims' participation, offenders acknowledging the harm caused and the possibility to repair relationships. Optimistic analyses would also suggest that all participatory justice practices focused on the victimization of women are receptive of feminist ideas that, after spreading through the criminal justice, may gain more purchase within society as a whole.

Restorative Justice has been used as a response to political violence and large-scale conflicts (Bertagna, Ceretti and Mazzucato, 2015), a circumstance that encourages its use also in cases of sexual violence and even femicide. The killing of women, as argued here, is indeed a mark of a large-scale gender conflict occurring in society and dialogic exercises could increase public awareness about it while setting off healing processes. Restorative Justice has been used, among other places, in the Basque Country, in Northern Ireland and in Italy, where among those involved were previous members of armed organizations.

The principles underpinning RJ may facilitate projects of political reconciliation by calling upon wrongdoers to acknowledge the wrong they have caused, offering recognition of victim suffering, providing opportunities for truth-telling and norm-clarification for all sides, and starting the process of bridge-building between divided parts of societies (Pali, 2018: 1).

Peace-building projects have been conducted in afflicted areas of South Asia, where close observation of how violence 'cascades' and spreads has led to hypotheses and practical implementation of collective programmes that cause 'cascades of nonviolence' (Braithwaite and d'Costa, 2018). Such reconciliation processes will not erase the horror, but suspend hatred and revenge, and like a

'gift' they might establish social and emotional bonds while helping untangle and reconstruct events and their causes.

Conclusion

Women's sexual exploitation has been equated to robbery and consumption of a body, to the reification of life. Hatred and contempt underlie femicide, which occurs in contexts of overall gender oppression. This type of violence is systemic and can hardly be imputed to personality disorders of the individual perpetrators. It cannot be seen as the result of unfortunate encounters between a vulnerable person and a psychopath. In this chapter we have seen the resistance put in place by Latin American women, where gendered violence reflects the sharp inequality between men and women but also represents a disturbing legacy of dictatorships and military governmental cruelty. Given the complicity of advanced countries with such dictatorships, themes such as colonialism and neo-colonialism inevitably sprang up, leading to some observations about the legacy of colonialism and slavery that can be observed in gendered violence today.

For many women, home is like Guantanamo Bay, an *extra-legem* site where domination takes the form of torture and terror, impunity and slow extermination. Killing is the final act of 'sexist terrorism', in a trajectory that proceeds from discrimination to battery, from abuse to sexual violence, culminating in a lethal conclusion. In brief, sexual violence carries the threat and the seed of death (Sagot and Cabañas, 2010; Butler, 2020). And if we deem the promise of life the main feature of the social, we must conclude that sexual violence and femicide are the most cruel way of denying the social: society does not exist! While arguing for reintegration ceremonies and other conciliatory practices, this chapter has expressed the hope that, by suspending revenge, society may be restored. For Thomas Aquinas, forgiveness does not imply complacency with horror, but amounts to bestowing a gift that prevails over hatred. For him, hateful judgments are reserved to the absolute being, God. For critical criminologists and atheists like myself, forgiveness may still possess a secular hateful trace, but it is meant to repair the future of the social.

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