

A Political Shout from the Rooftops of Latin America

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No les pasó por boluda ni por puta.
 No fue su culpa.
 Nadie merece terminar en una bolsa, no se justifica.¹
 (Rodríguez 2015)

Introduction

The philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler was attacked a few weeks ago at the Congonhas Airport in Brazil, where she was arriving as one of the organizers of the international conference titled “The Ends of Democracy” (November 7-9, 2017 SESC Unidade Pompeia São Paulo, Brazil). Her assailants greeted her with insults: “You’re not welcome in Brazil. You’re the devil! The ‘ideology of gender’ has no place in Brazil, you pedophile!”, were among the phrases hurled at her by the hecklers. Not limited to that initial action, the assault was repeated at a later demonstration, this time at the SESC Pompeia Cultural Center in East São Paulo providing the backdrop for the rally against Butler. Less than hundred protestors equipped with rosaries and crosses voiced their opposition to the philosopher, burning and trampling a doll with her likeness. A counter-demonstration emerged spontaneously at the site, coming to her support and defending basic democratic rights.

Writing from nearby Argentina, this scene of violence in Brazil is a familiar one. For some time now, Argentina has looked on as women’s demonstrations and similar actions by the LGBTTTTIQ² community have been confronted by small, but vocal and increasingly widespread counter-demonstrations. In particular, the Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres (National Gathering of Women), held annually at different points throughout the country, has been confronted by groups that are willing to violently defend their peculiar vision of what they deem the correct social order (Masson 2007; Di Marco 2012).

As Butler herself remarked in connection with the attacks (Folha de S. Paulo 2017), and as was reconstructed by Richard Miskolci and Maximiliano Campana (2017) as well as Mario Pecheny, Daniel Jones and Lucia Ariza (2016), we must begin to trace the genealogy of these incidents at their point of origin, that is, at the Vatican and its local representatives. It is there that the ultra-conservative myth was born. They say that the gender perspective (or, the ‘gender ideology’, as they prefer) entails a fiendish desire to destroy “the human being” and the “natural” – heterosexual – order of which that human being would be the standard bearer. They claim that it is because of the destruction of those traditional values that violence against women is on the rise. This, effectively, was the sentiment of Juan Luis Cipriani, the Cardinal of Lima, who recently said: “Statistics tell us that young girls are having abortions, but this is not due to girls being abused, but rather because a woman is often seen standing