

Presentation

INTERPELLATION AND ACTION: WOMEN IN THE MEXICAN POST-REVOLUTION

Desde la Ilustración hasta la Conferencia de Beijing. La cuestión de los derechos humanos universales ha tenido importantes repercusiones para las feministas (Human Rights Watch, 1995). La idea de que todos los individuos estaban (según las palabras de la Declaración de Independencia Americana) “dotados de algunos derechos inalienables por el Creador” permitía a hombres y mujeres imaginar sociedades donde reinara una perfecta igualdad y movilizarse colectivamente para hacerlas realidad.

—Joan Wallach Scott, *Género e historia*¹

The process of transforming gender roles has met several breaking points through history, especially since the intense discussion of the rights of individuals that emerged during the Enlightenment and then, even more forcefully, the French Revolution. The vindication of women’s rights –first by imagining them and then mobilizing against women’s subordinate condition in society– has gradually taken shape and gathered strength since Olympe de Gouges and Mary Wollstonecraft took up their pens. This has been a long history of interpellation and action, of which much has been written,

¹ Joan Wallach Scott, *Género e historia* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, UACM, 2008), 264.

though never too much, nor enough; one that has witnessed the coming-and-going of diverse feminist movements that have articulated distinct demands in accordance with their times; not only political and economic in nature, but also social or cultural.

The *Thematic Section of Relaciones 149* focuses on a key period in the history of 20th-century Mexico that was fundamental for its critique and transformation of traditional gender roles: the 40 years following the consolidation of the post-revolutionary regime. To lead the reader through those four decades, four renowned specialists in gender studies and women's history offer portraits of four women who were intensely involved in the nation's political and cultural life, in creating and stabilizing institutions, and in constructing feminisms of distinct political inclination. Rina Ortiz Peralta's article reviews previously unpublished features of the figure of Alexandra Kollontai, who served as the Soviet Union's ambassador in Mexico; Gabriela Cano presents a novel analysis of how Amalia González Caballero de Castillo Ledón forged the beginnings of her political trajectory; and María Teresa Fernández Aceves examines María Guadalupe Urzúa Flores' leadership in the Secretariat of Feminist Action of the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (National Confederation of Peasants) during an especially significant period for women's suffrage in Mexico. Finally, Verónica Oikión probes the thought and action of Dr. Mathilde Rodríguez Cabo, an eminent physician and activist with close ties to the Communist Party. In her words as coordinator of this *Thematic Section*, Dr. Oikión observed:

The agglutinating axis of this dossier revolves around women's capacity for collective action in terms of interpellating—from distinct ideological, political, social and cultural watchtowers—the order instituted by the post-revolutionary State in masculine and patriarchal terms. One original signal of the richness of the history of women and gender in Mexico finds expression in this dossier with its range of feminine experiences and struggles that reveal women's strength, motivations, and activities, both personal and collective; all in response to an array of feminisms that acted in diverse ways in social life and the public sphere, a countercurrent to the traditional posture that women should perform only the limited role of

the “angel of the home”. If the intention of the post-revolutionary male generation was to remain reiteratively recalcitrant to opening spaces to women and recognizing their civil, political and citizenship rights, the liberalizing and socializing channels and currents of post-revolutionary Mexico –paradoxically– pushed groups of women from different social classes and economic levels to emerge *en masse* from the social invisibility to which they had for so long been relegated. The case studies presented herein exhibit their courage in challenging, in distinct ways, the traditional forms of ‘what they should be’; to manifest their public presence in distinct levels; and to set out on a route of social revolution that they themselves championed.²

It is important to mention that a second element that lends cohesion to the studies in the section “Interpellation and action...” is the rigor that the authors applied in developing their studies of these four women, including the presentation of novel aspects culled from sources, many of them never before examined.

On this occasion in the *Documents Section*, Juan González Morfín presents a transcription and translation of an intriguing text penned originally in Latin: a letter that the Archbishop of Mexico, José Mora y del Río (1854-1928), wrote to Pope Benedict XV in 1916 to inform him of the situation of the Catholic Church in Mexico during the convulsive years following the coup led by Huerta that forced so many prelates to flee into exile—including Mora himself, who wrote the letter while living in Texas. His missive touches upon events, some quite well-known, others virtually unknown, but it never found its way to its intended recipient due to a series of circumstances that readers will discover as they read the author’s brief, but substantial, introduction to the document.

Much is written nowadays about digital humanities; indeed a broad and complex debate has arisen as to whether the new information and communication technologies (ICT) constitute a simple series of digital tools that proffer advantages to social and humanist

² Verónica Oikión, “Propuesta de Dossier para la revista Relaciones”, 12 May, 2016 (mecanoscrit).

scientists as auxiliaries in their research and the diffusion of knowledge, or if we are witnessing something more: a paradigmatic change in how knowledge is constructed and consumed. The latter view would mean that these tools –in and of themselves– would be objects of study, since we would be dealing with the modeling of a new type of discipline or ‘transdiscipline’.³ Whatever the case, phenomena such as the digitalization of our academic life and the availability of Web 2.0 are opening a window onto a universe of *big data*, the infinite file, a veritable library of Babel in the most Borgian sense of the term; one that we must learn how to read. *Relaciones* is by no means foreign to this debate and these phenomena, so we asked Jairo A. Melo to prepare a brief essay on ways of reading the infinite file. In the *Notes and Debates Section*, he presents ways of approaching *big textual data* based on three types of readings that, in turn, involve diverse tools, both digital and methodological in nature: distant, fragmented and collaborative.

Our *General Section* presents four articles beginning with Miriam López’ account of the sanctions imposed in cases of adultery among the ancient Nahuas. Lorena Ojeda Dávila follows with an analysis of the legacy of Paul Friedrich’s work on the Tarascans, and then Caroline Cunill sheds light on a little-explored topic: government and the administration of justice by *corregidores* in 16th-century Yucatán. Finally, Carlos Ramírez Vuelvas examines the impact of the image of modern Mexico constructed by Justo Sierra in the late Porfiriato, as seen through the lens of early 20th-century public opinion in Spain.

The year 2017 finds the *Relaciones* team in the process of reforming our journal to integrate the adjustments that will allow us to maintain our high standing in the world of academic publications, both nationally and internationally; an increasingly competitive space, indeed. These changes run the gamut from technical issues to structural modifications. With issue 147 (last year) we began to publish complete texts online in .html files to complement the traditional .pdf files. Also, we initiated the generation of .xml files of the

³ For a particularly intelligent contribution to the debate from an academic perspective based on a Spanish-speaking tradition, see Anacllet Pons, *El desorden digital. Guía para historiadores y humanistas* (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España, 2013).

entire contents using the labeling model employed by *SciELO-México*. Now, with issue 149, we begin to fully utilize the *Open Journal System* platform, which provides better flow in editorial operations and improves management of online digital publication with contents that include optimal metadata based on the Dublin Core model. This is also the first digital issue of the journal to bear the legend ISSN-e 2448-7554. As of February 2017, the electronic version of *Relaciones* presents a section that makes public the pre-prints of the articles that have passed through the evaluation process and been accepted for publication. Parallel to this, and apart from these technical aspects, we have reformed our Editorial Council to make it a more diverse, plural consultative organ. Please join us in welcoming the following scholars to our voyage: Laura Cházaro (Cinvestav-IPN); Marco A. Estrada Saavedra (Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, El Colegio de México); Agapi Filini (Centro de Estudios Arqueológicos, El Colegio de Michoacán); Virginia García Acosta (Ciesas-DF); and Alberto J. Olvera Rivera (Instituto de Investigaciones Histórico-Sociales, Universidad Veracruzana). Finally, we take this opportunity to publicly offer our thanks and recognition to those who have accompanied and supported us up to today.

*English translation
by Paul C. Kersey Johnson*