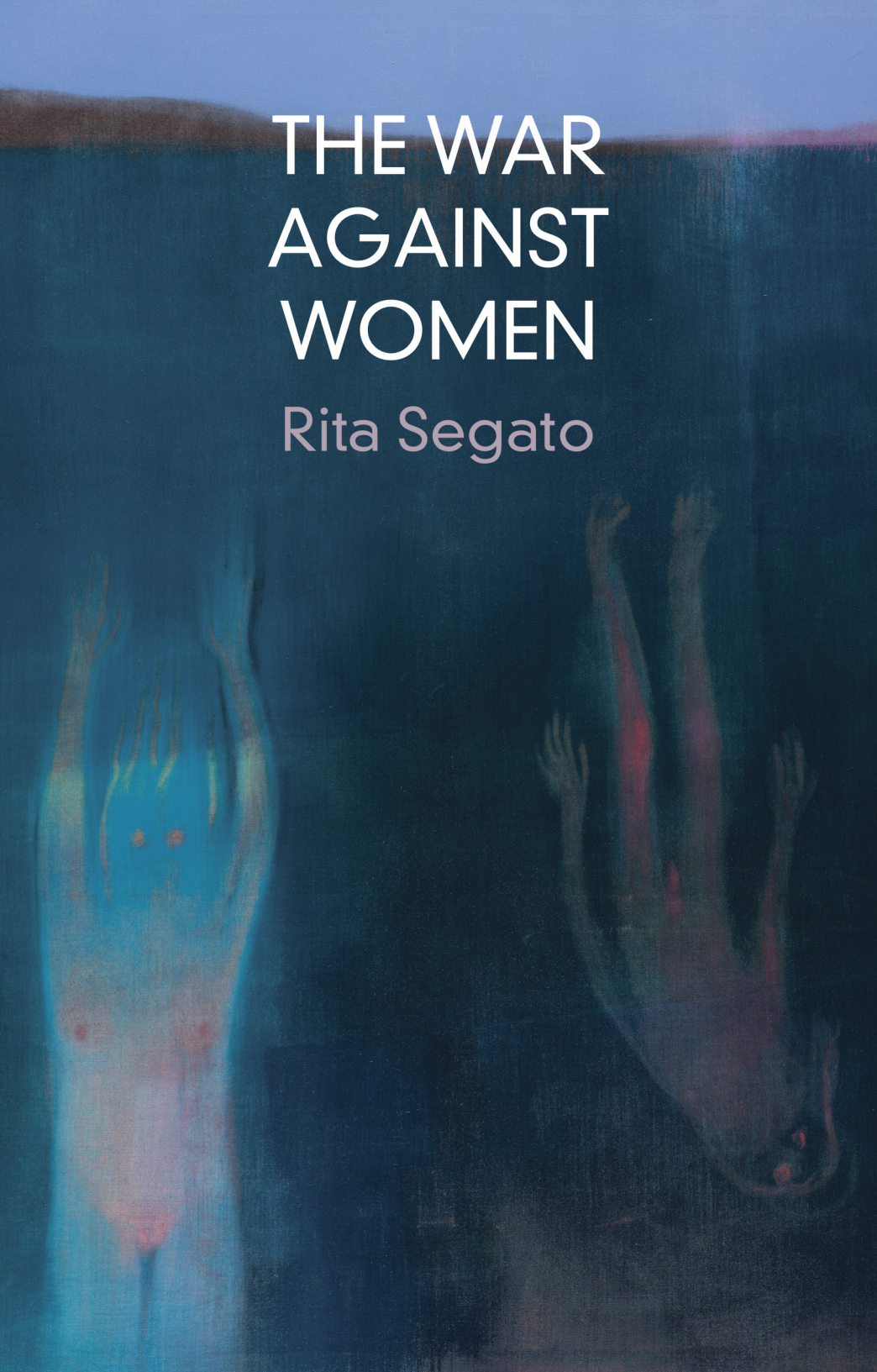
THE WAR AGAINST WOMEN

Rita Segato



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Critical South

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Translated by Ramsey McGlazer

polity

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I dedicate this book to the students and recent collaborators in whose generous company, and thanks to whose conversation, I wrote the following pages: Aída Esther Bueno Sarduy, Paulina Alvarez, Marcelo Tadvald, Livia Vitenti, Elaine Moreira, Vicenzo Lauriola, Luciana Santos, Cesar Baldi, Luciana Oliveira, Larissa da Silva Araujo, Mariana Holanda, Daniela Gontijo, Wanderson Flor do Nascimento, Elisa Matos, Juliana Watson, Saúl Hernández, Aline Guedes, Irina Bacci, Priscila Godoy, Vanessa Rodrigues, Tarsila Flores, Nailah Veleci, Ariadne Oliveira, Lourival de Carvalho, Douglas Fernandes, Larissa Vieira Patrocinio de Araújo, Paulo Victor, Silva Pacheco, and Alejandra Rocío del Bello Urrego. I learned with all of them, and they inspired me, provoked me, and nourished my hope.

Foreword

The War Against Women first came out in 2016 as *La guerra contra las mujeres*. The #NiUnaMenos campaign – or #NotOneLess, similar to what came to be known as the #MeToo movement – was well underway in various Latin American cities following particularly high-profile and visible acts of violence against women. Feminist activism was reeling both on- and offline. Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups gathered thousands of supporters in mere hours across Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Bogotá, and Lima, collecting country- and city-specific testimony of women telling of their experiences with sexual harassment and gendered violence. Women shared names and places, and men in all kinds of professions were dragged before the courts of public opinion, and some before the judiciary. Segato's book rode this global feminist wave of indignation and calls for justice. Her work was also an inspiration to the Chilean activist group LasTesis, who in late 2019 gained global visibility with a collective street performance, *A Rapist in Your Path* – since then performed in dozens of countries, languages, and contexts.

In Latin America, Rita Segato is a highly influential, widely known, and revered feminist theorist. I learned about Segato's stardom in Latin American feminism in 2019 at Lima's annual International Book Fair, where she was a guest of honor. Her appearance attracted hundreds of fans, young and old, activists and scholars alike, too many to fit into the room. Segato drew on her

expertise to speak to the specificities of the Peruvian context, and a panel of Peruvian feminist activists and intellectuals responded. The mood was celebratory as well as rebellious; it felt like a new feminist era had arrived.

Segato's work had of course been circulating widely before, mostly as PDFs shared among researchers, students, and activists alike. Paper copies of books don't circulate much in Latin America, as distribution of books is often limited and prices are too high for the studious. This has never prevented anyone from reading, though; before online circulation, books were photocopied and circulated, pirated, and sold in street stalls. My first copy of *La guerra contra las mujeres* arrived in my inbox as a PDF in 2017, via a friend who drew solace from the theoretical clarity articulated in Segato's work.

Clarity of thought, and a clear activist standpoint, are what make the work of Rita Segato so compelling and timely. In addition, Segato holds a systemic vision, theorizing how patriarchal violence is at the center of struggles for power over resources, votes, territory, and (racial, ethnic, class) status. Lastly, Segato connects different contexts and violences across Latin America with a keen eye for contemporary developments and contextual differences. Ultimately, she is a broad-stroke feminist theorist with a deep understanding of persistent colonial structures.

Segato was born in Buenos Aires in 1951. She trained and worked in ethnomusicology in Caracas in the 1970s, after which she continued in anthropology at Queens University Belfast, where she was awarded a Ph.D. in 1984. Her doctoral work focused on mythology and religion in Afro-Brazilian communities in Brazil. From Northern Ireland, she moved to Brazil, where she taught anthropology at the University of Brasília, and where she was first confronted with the issue of violence against women as the subject of research. It was in Brasília where she turned her gaze upon gender violence, and from an unusual starting point: in the mid-1990s, she did a series of interviews with convicted and imprisoned rapists. This research propelled her into the subject matter of patriarchal violence, her focus ever since.

The work with prisoners let Segato to understand sexual violence not as sex crimes, nor as individual crimes of certain men against certain women. Rather, she argued in the resulting book, *Las estructuras elementales de la violencia* (Segato 2003a; in English: The Elementary Structures of Violence), that sexual violence serves to produce and reproduce hierarchies between men; that is, that these

are an integral part of the structures of power in contemporary society. Her understanding of sexual violence, then, focused (a) on its performative and public aspects, and (b) on power as its main driver. Considering the persistent attempts of media, politicians, and society at large to privatize gender violence as incidental and individual, more often than not blaming the victim rather than the perpetrator, Segato's analysis was a welcome and necessary protest against mainstream understandings of violence against women.

While violence against women was and is a central theme in women's lives throughout the continent, if not the world, in the 1990s much attention was focused on the astonishing scale and impunity of the rape and killing of young women on the Mexico–US border, in particular in and around Ciudad Juárez. Many young women of *mestiza*[1] descent migrated to Ciudad Juárez, attracted by the city's labor opportunities in so-called *maquiladoras* (sweatshops), which erupted after the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada in 1994. These workers were low paid, with no benefits or social protection or urban infrastructure. This is the context in which women's precarious lives became disposable, to be used and abused by the powers that be (Monárrez Fragoso 2010).

The South African-US scholar and activist Diana Russell coined and mainstreamed the term "femicide," later translated and popularized in Mexico as *feminicido*, and in recent decades included in criminal codes across the Americas (Lagarde y de los Ríos 2010: xv). In Latin America, Ciudad Juárez is the center of what seems to be a very persistent increase in femicides. Together with family members of murdered women, Mexican feminists set up ongoing campaigns and protests to fight impunity and identify people and institutions to hold to account, and structures that might help explain these continuing atrocities (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010). None of this has resolved the femicides, though, and Ciudad Juárez continues to be one of the most dangerous places for women to live and work.

Segato visited Ciudad Juárez in 2004, and has written extensively about her observations since, including in *The War Against Women*. Theorizing the femicides in Ciudad Juárez affirmed Segato's argument that these crimes were crimes of power rather than crimes of sex or intimacy, which is often the excuse that the authorities would give after another tortured and raped body was found. Crimes of power, in Segato's view, link capital accumulation

and dispossession in borderlands with criminal violence, institutional corruption, and the continual need to reproduce violent masculinities to hold onto power. In such a context, no perpetrators can be identified, as a complicit system closes its ranks and obscures all accountability, a system where violence has become a logic in itself.

Segato's observations, leading from the femicides in Ciudad Juárez to the increasing levels of violence against women, femicides, and other forms of chronic violence and impunity in the region, led her to argue that there is a "parallel state," a "second state," which is the system behind the cycles of violence we observe when studying violence against women in Latin America. From this perspective, an illegal economy of territory for construction, extractive industries, and coca growing and drug production with strong links to politics and the legitimate economy through investment and capital for votes, arms, and political allies has completely undermined any serious institutional control. This "parastate," or "second state," can exist, Segato argues, because of the control over populations and land that criminal gangs and paramilitaries exercise, deploying gender violence as their tool. Thus, violence against women is an integral part of the functioning of a corrupt and violent system that benefits a few at the expense of the many. The (largely) young men who become victimizers are not necessarily the ones who benefit; they are cogs in a spiraling fight over power and control directed by an obscure parastate. Drawn from marginalized and impoverished masses, these young men are often the first to die, victims of, in Segato's terms, the "mandate" of a violent masculinity.

From this perspective, criminal gangs – from Salvadoran *maras* to similar phenomena in urban centers across Central and South America, or paramilitaries serving urban and rural corporate and political interests – have become the tools by which contemporary violence, dispossession, and death are reproduced daily. It is here, in these all-male environments, that the norms of a violent masculinity are learned and enforced, breeding grounds for misogyny and cruelty in a context of precarity while others maintain power and produce wealth and misery. This analysis draws back to Segato's work with Brazilian convicts, in which she saw that sexual violence was largely a performative exercise in determining a pecking order among men (with women being disposable therein), while these men seemed to be mandated to act this way by a system that functions only via a violent patriarchal logic.

The analysis of all-male environments that exacerbate and cultivate violent masculinities draws parallels to (para)militaries. Just like urban gangs, the frontlines of (para)militaries are largely made up of marginalized young men, who are trained to be and act as violent machos, where sex is a tool to show physical domination. In *The War Against Women*, Segato thus firmly argues that rape is not about sexual desire but about power, locating herself in a feminist tradition that has argued that rape is about power and domination, not about sex (Brownmiller 1975).[2]

Is there a war against women? Or are new wars raging that draw on colonial-patriarchal scripts of conquest of territory via the appropriation of bodies? The Argentinian feminist sociologist Veronica Gago (2020: 75) follows Segato when she argues that the war is not about women, but about property. Property lends authority, and it is the feminized body-territory that has become the battlefield. Segato's analysis of the femicides in Ciudad Juárez leads her to speak of a "pedagogy of cruelty" via "expressive violence": a war over power and control over territory that is played out via messages on the bodies of women. The phrase "women's bodies are battlefields" springs to mind.

Segato was asked to act as an expert witness in the groundbreaking trial against two former military commanders accused of sexual slavery of fifteen indigenous women in Guatemala's dirty war, which culminated in lengthy convictions in 2016. Segato, as an expert on the dynamics of male violence against women, argued that rape was used as a military strategy to subordinate and ultimately destroy the indigenous communities whose lands were being appropriated. Her statement affirmed that women's bodies were used as the larger social body of the communities they were seen to represent (Abbott and Hartviksen 2016). This statement was incredibly important in the context of the trial and helped de-individualize the crimes committed against women's bodies.

One of the things that Segato's performance before the human rights court in Guatemala shows is her importance as a *transnational* expert: Segato never seems to keep to boundaries, either of places, disciplines, or intellectual conventions. This makes her work very accessible, and applicable across cases and contexts. Ultimately, her work is that of a scholar-activist, someone who theorizes based on sharp observation and making connections between persistent phenomena and processes, such as capitalism, democracy, patriarchy, extractivism, and colonialism.

Thinking through the ongoing consequences of colonialism has been part of Segato's work since the beginning; after all, she started her career looking at religion in Afro-Brazilian communities, tracing customs and norms across time and space, and inequalities across histories of oppressions. Since then, as she narrates in *The War Against Women*, Segato has continued to work with Brazilian indigenous communities in what she calls the *mundo aldea* (village-world), the world of dispersed indigenous communities colonized, dispossessed, and re-colonized under post-dictatorship democratic rule. Segato's gender analysis of the Latin American indigenous world is grounded in the difference between duality and binarism: whereas in contemporary (colonial) Western understandings gender is a hierarchical binary, in indigenous duality, gender roles are perceived as complementary. Hence, gendered hierarchies exist and existed in precolonial indigenous societies, albeit according to different logics than the racialized binary of Western gender regimes.

For Segato, this position allows for an indigenous feminism that may fight for women's rights as well as indigenous rights. Not everyone agrees. For the Argentinian scholar María Lugones, whose work is more widely known among English-speaking audiences than Segato's as she was located in the Global North, Segato's position was not critical enough. In 2020, Lugones published a critique of Segato's work in which she argued that Segato fails to properly decolonize her own biases: according to Lugones, even using a duality of gender and the framework of patriarchal inequality in discussing indigenous peoples is an imposition of colonial terminology, and hence structures. While Segato advocates for alliances between feminisms across ethnic and class divides, Lugones suggests we work "toward the recuperation of resistant historical tapestries that weave understandings of relations to and of the universe, of realities that are resistant to the logic of modernity and show us alternatives that enable a communal sense of the self in relation to what there is." She proposes that we build on a "long memory" to return to precolonial values and practices of communal living, hence, an undoing of colonial histories, or of "Eurocentric modernity" (Lugones 2020: 37).

While theoretically interesting, it may be impossible to "return to" a way of perceiving the self and the collective that erases the influence of five hundred years of colonial and postcolonial history. We cannot know how indigenous gender relations, sexualities, and ways of communal living would have developed without

the influence of colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal structures of oppression and struggles for liberation. Five hundred years is a long time. In that sense, it might not be that useful to focus on precolonial gender regimes as characteristics of today's indigenous women's struggles.

Contemporary feminist struggles for liberation in Latin America are multiple and diverse, and they intersect with struggles for land and environmental recuperation, for LGTBQ+ rights, and against racisms and class prejudice. Everyday violence, in both public and private spheres, is real and widespread, and comes from within communities as well as beyond. Arguably, many of the struggles of contemporary indigenous feminisms show similarities with the struggles of Westernized Latin American feminisms. The everyday violence in homes and communities in the rural Andes, or in the indigenous Amazon, or in mixed urban migrant communities in the neighborhoods and slums of Lima, Santiago, or Caracas, is not all embroiled in a parastate type of corruption and control; much of it is mundane, and related to everyday privilege and poverty, patriarchy, and institutional neglect. As Kimberlé Crenshaw (1990) has taught us, in their intersection, struggles of race and gender often clash and can leave women's rights stuck between loyalty to the racialized community and the racism of white feminist movements. Therefore, white and/or Westernized[3] feminist intentions of genuine alliance and collaboration and support for the struggle both for women's rights and for indigenous rights might still work as a unifying factor. Indeed, much of contemporary Latin American feminist activism works explicitly from a horizontal democratic perspective, or "in assembly," bridging divides through – sometimes endless or contentious – debate.

While Segato is mainly interested in understanding and explaining violence against women, her strength lies in her capacity to see the big picture, to link different systemic processes of dispossession over recent decades to explain the disconnect between the increase in laws, programs, and reporting mechanisms for violence against women, and the simultaneous increase in prevalence and cruelty of the same. The systemic links between different phenomena, culminating in heightened levels of violence, corruption, and dispossession across the continent, are what lead her to conclude that violence against women is the act not of an individual but of higher powers, of the state, the Church, the big international corporations – mafias that contrive to maintain and reproduce their power base.

Or, in the words of LasTesis from *A Rapist in Your Path*, "It wasn't my fault, neither where I was nor how I was dressed. The rapist is you: the judges, the police, the state, the president."

Segato's theoretically rich and sharp perspective on the nature and purpose of contemporary violence against women in Latin America has inspired and fueled a diverse and theoretically rich feminist movement throughout Latin America; her work underpins much of our current understanding of the persistent increase, visibility, and cruelty with which violence and death are inflicted upon women throughout the continent, for the sole reason that they are women.

Jelke Boesten

Translator's Preface

In this book, Rita Segato studies the emergence of what she calls "new forms of war." Unlike conventional wars, Segato argues in chapter 2, contemporary wars "are not guided by ends, and their aim is not the achievement of peace in any of that word's senses. Today, for those who administer it, war is a long-term project without victories or conclusive defeats. We could almost say that, in many world regions, the plan is to make war into a way of life." That claim, which has lost none of its relevance since Segato first made it in 2014, has important implications for her argument about violence against women. Repeatedly, Segato takes pains to emphasize that this violence is not only "instrumental" but also "expressive." This means that women are not only the victims and targets of today's lethal wars. They are also "surfaces" for inscription, such that feminine and feminized bodies become the bearers of messages addressed to entire communities and even, Segato insists, to "humanity as a whole."

It follows that the femicides in Ciudad Juárez, for instance, are not matters of local or regional concern. On the contrary, they are, Segato writes pointedly at the end of chapter 1, "addressed to us," even attacks "launched against us." Here her "us" is inclusive, expansive. "The murders are designed to display *before us* the capacity to kill, an expertise in cruelty and sovereign domination. … We have to become their interlocutors and antagonists, critics of the crimes, at odds with them." Notice what the careful wording of that

last sentence implies: that we can only be the crimes' antagonists if we are also their interlocutors, in other words, that in order to oppose the crimes, we have to allow ourselves to be interpellated by them, enter into painful dialogue with them. In this sense, the book's original title, *La guerra contra las mujeres*, was already somewhat misleading, because, for Segato, the war was being waged against almost everyone.

The title that Segato and I had proposed for this translation was *The War on Women*. To my ear, that title, with its echo of the US "War on Drugs" or the "War on Terror," now an integral part of what is called the "American way of life," came closer to naming the ambient condition of diffuse and open-ended conflict that the book seeks to describe. By contrast, in my view, *The War Against Women* risks suggesting that the forms of violence discussed in this book have an objective, an aim. It risks treating violence against women as war's end rather than the means by which war is fought at a moment when, according to Segato, women's bodies have become the "documents" of domination and the very medium of armed conflict. The phrase "the war against women" also has a history of use among Anglophone feminists and thus activates associations that, as a translator, I had hoped to avoid. Although these associations are now unavoidable, I hope the translation that follows will let readers hear the call that Segato receives and make sense of the messages that she works to decipher.

Ramsey McGlazer

Prologue to the Second Edition

I have added two new chapters, written between 2017 and 2018, to this second edition. The first, chapter 8, "From Anti-Punitivist Feminism to Feminist Anti-Punitivism," brings together the anti-punitivist argument that I made publicly before the National Senate of Argentina and a feminist argument that identifies and reveals the limits of legal education. It thus allows me to include in this volume a set of critical reflections on two sets of efforts in the legal field, punitivist and anti-punitivist, that seek to limit the damage done by a misunderstanding of gender and the violence that derives from it, an uncontained violence that is spreading throughout the Americas.

The chapter responds, first, to the attempt to make women, as victims of sexual and femicidal violence, responsible for justifying a governmental project that seeks to expand the construction of the concentration camps for poor and non-white people that are prisons. But the replication of a problem has never been a solution to it. The only real solution is understanding the roots of the problem. Without this understanding, it is impossible to act efficaciously. Without examining the problem deliberately and profoundly, we will not achieve the goal of containing the truly catastrophic forms of gender violence that are assailing us.

I decided to include, in the second part of the chapter, my response to a text by Eugenio Raúl Zaffaroni published in *Página 12* on May 18, 2017, a text on what he calls the "epidemic of femicides," because this text shows a surprising superficiality that

I thought should be publicly contested and corrected. It is worth noting that what Zaffaroni, a distinguished jurist, ventures to say about femicide is glaringly wrong; this text of his has nothing of the acuteness or sophistication that characterize his writings on the selective application of criminal law along the axes of class and race (see, e.g., Zaffaroni 1993, 2006). When he thinks of femicide and sexual and gender crime, Zaffaroni finds himself caught in common sense. For this reason, in my critique of his work, writing with some impatience, I take the opportunity to clarify my positions on these questions. Conflict and tense conversation allow me to think with greater clarity, and force me to refine my vocabulary.

Chapter 9, "By Way of Conclusion: A Blueprint for Reading Gender Violence in Our Times," is also newly added to this second edition. In this chapter, I elaborate and explain the categories that make up my analytic model throughout the book. This brief text is thus a compendium of the arguments that I have brought to bear on the analysis of gender violence during the last twenty-five years.

Introduction

Theme One: The Centrality of the Question of Gender

I write this introduction in a state of amazement. This volume gathers essays and lectures from the last decade (2006–16). Despite what I argue in these texts, the recent maneuvers of the powerful in the Americas – with their conservative return to moral discourse, used as a prop for their anti-democratic politics – have not ceased to surprise me. In 2016: Macri in Argentina, Temer in Brazil, the Uribe- and corporate-backed "No" vote in Colombia, the dismantling of citizens' power in Mexico, and Trump in the United States. These figures and developments have irrefutably demonstrated the validity of the wager that runs through the following pages and gives coherence to the argument I make in them. The force of the familialist and patriarchal onslaught that is these figures' strategy attests to this. Indeed, throughout the Americas, an emphasis on the ideal of the family, defined as the subject of rights to be defended at all costs, has galvanized efforts to demonize and punish what is called "the ideology of gender" or "gender ideology."[1] The spokesmen of the historical project of capital thus offer proof that, far from being residual, minor, or marginal, the question of gender is the cornerstone of and the center of gravity for all forms of power. Brazil is the country where the role of this moral discourse in the politics

of the ruling class has become clearest, since the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, the democratically elected president, took place in that country's National Congress, with a majority of votes made "in the name of God" or "of Jesus" or "for the sake of the family." It is our enemies in history, then, who have ended up proving this book's central thesis, by making the demonization of "the ideology of gender" the focal point of their discourse.

I have referred to a "conservative return to moral discourse" here, because we have seen a retreat from the bourgeois discourse of the post-Cold War period, characterized as it was by an "anodyne multiculturalism" that, as I have argued elsewhere (Segato 2007a), replaced the anti-systemic discourse of the preceding period with the inclusive discourse of human rights, at a time when Latin American post-dictatorship "democracies" were being constructed. The question that emerges now is: Why, and on the basis of what evidence, did the think tanks of the geopolitical North conclude that the current phase calls for a reorientation, a turn away from the path followed during the previous decade? During that decade, they supported a multiculturalism destined to create minority elites – black elites, women elites, Hispanic elites, LGBT elites, and so forth – without changing the processes that generate wealth or the patterns of accumulation or concentration. This multiculturalism thus left unaddressed the growing abyss separating the poor from the rich throughout the world. In other words, the benign decade of "multicultural democracy" did not alter the workings of the capitalist machine, but rather produced new elites and new consumers. But if this was the case, then why was it necessary to abolish this democracy and decree a new era of Christian, familialist moralism, dubiously aligned with the militarisms imposed by fundamentalist monotheisms in other parts of the world? Probably because, although multiculturalism did not erode the bases of capitalist accumulation, it did threaten to wear away at the foundation of gender relations, and the enemies of our historical project discovered, even before many of us did, that the pillar, cement, and pedagogy of *all power* is patriarchy.

Drawing on my work as an anthropologist and on the practice and methods of ethnographic listening, these pages constitute an ethnography of power in its foundational and persistent form: patriarchy. The masculine mandate emerges here as the first pedagogy of expropriation, a primal and persistent pedagogy that teaches the expropriation of value and the exercise of domination. But how to

write an ethnography of power, given that the pact of silence – an agreement among peers that rarely fails in any of its iterations – is power's classic strategy and one that appears in nearly every patriarchal, racial, imperial, or metropolitan context? We can only come to understand power by observing the recurrence and regularity of its effects, which allow us to approach the task of discerning where its *historical project* is headed (Segato 2015a/Eng.: Segato 2022). Patriarchal violence – that is, the misogynist, homophobic, and transphobic violence of our late modernity, our era of human rights and of the UN – is thus precisely a symptom of patriarchy's unfettered expansion, even despite the significant victories that we have won in the intellectual realm, the field of discourse. This violence perfectly expresses the ascendancy of a world of ownership, or indeed one of lordship, a new form of domination resulting from the acceleration of the concentration and expansion of a parastate sphere of control over life (which I address in the second chapter included in this volume). In these crimes, capital in its contemporary form expresses the existence of an order ruled by arbitrary patriarchal impulse and exhibits the spectacle of inevitable institutional failure in the face of unprecedented levels of concentration of wealth. Observing the speed with which this phase of capital leads to increases in the concentration of wealth, I suggest in chapter 3 that it is no longer sufficient to refer to "inequality," as we used to do in militant discourses in the context of the anti-systemic struggles of the Cold War. The problem today, again, has become one of ownership or lordship.

It has not been easy, after a period of multicultural sloganeering – a period when multicultural slogans seemed powerful – to understand why it has been so important, even indispensable, for the historical project of the owners to preach and reinstate a militaristic patriarchal fanaticism – one that seemed to be gone forever. In Latin America, the phrase "the ideology of gender" has appeared recently, a category in the service of accusations. In Brazil, there have even been several legislative proposals put forward by a movement called the Programa Escola sem Partido, or Program for a School without Party, or Non-Partisan School. One of these proposed laws, awaiting a vote in Brazil's National Congress and already in force in some states, including the state of Alagoas, for example, seeks to prohibit "the application of the postulates of the theory or ideology of gender" in education, as well as "any practice that could compromise, hasten, or misguide the maturation and development

of gender in harmony with the student's biological sexual identity." The extraordinary engagement with the field of "gender" on the part of the new right, represented by the most conservative factions in all churches – factions that are themselves representative of the recalcitrant interests of extractivist agribusiness and mining – is, at the very least, enigmatic. What is at stake in this effort to ensure obedience to a conservative morality of gender? Where is this strategy headed? After an episode involving attacks and threats against me when I took part in a conference at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais – attacks and threats made by a far-right group based in Spain[2] – I suddenly understood with alarm that the truculent style and spirit of their arguments came close to something that I already knew, because they recalled the patrolling and persecutory avidity of Islamic fundamentalism, which I have discussed elsewhere (Segato 2008); that is, precisely the most Westernized version of Islam, one that emulates the modern West in its identitarian and racializing essentialism.

I then started to wonder: Are we not witnessing the intent to impose and spread a religious war like the one that has been destroying the Middle East, exactly at a time when, as I suggest in the second chapter, the political and economic decline of empire makes war its only terrain of uncontestable superiority?

Theme Two: Patriarchal Pedagogy, Cruelty, and War Today

In this volume, my initial formulations on gender and violence remain (Segato 2003a): (1) The phrase "sexual violence" is misleading, because although aggression is exercised *by sexual means*, the ends of this kind of violence are not of a sexual nature but rather are related to the order of power. (2) These are not acts of aggression that originate in a libidinal drive or a desire for sexual satisfaction. Here instead the libido seeks power and is guided by a mandate delivered by peers, by the members of a masculine fraternity that demands proof of belonging to the group. (3) What confirms one's belonging to the group is the taking, the extortion, of a tribute, one that is transferred from the feminine to the masculine position and that constructs the latter in and through this transfer. (4) The hierarchically organized structure of the masculine mandate is analogous to the order of gangs. (5) Through this kind of violence,