

an introduction from the guest editor

Women's studies and feminist critique are interdisciplinary of necessity and this issue of *Feminist Review* is no exception. The articles have at their centre a nexus of ideas pertaining to women's history, the history of sexual difference, women's bodies, warfare and the legacy of militarism. Coherence is ensured by their focus on one place, Latin America (Chile, Mexico, Colombia and Brazil mainly), and primarily one period, the 19th century.¹ The first four articles focus on the Spanish American Wars of Independence (c. 1810–25); the following three on 19th-century medical and nursing practices in Latin America; and the final three plus the dialogue section on how the patriarchal values and attitudes embedded in the very formation of the Latin American nation-states have carried over until today. The articles provide further knowledge about women as historical subjects and agents and also indicate ways in which the terms 'man' and 'woman' are produced historically, especially in crises of war (Davies, Brewster, Fowler and Brown) and military repression (Acuña, Green). Of interest is to underline women's complicity in the objectification of women's bodies and in the politics of exclusion based on sexual difference (Gorbach, Cházaro, Liddell, Miller, Craske). The common denominator in these studies is authoritarianism and, conversely, the submission, dependence and exclusion of subjects or citizens denominated 'woman'. Gender inequality, seen here to be exercised in the political, intellectual, cultural and medical spheres, is arguably both the symptom and the cause of the constant threat of war (Goldstein, 2001: 401).²

women/war/Latin America

Apart from nationalist celebration of iconic female heroines, especially during the centenary commemorations c. 1920, relatively little attention had been paid to Latin American women in war and the subsequent implications for the social organization of sexual difference (although see Cherpak (1978) in Lavrin (1978), and Earle (2000) in Dore and Molyneux (2000)). Yet since independence (and before) the region has been marked by violence and conflict. Most warfare has been in civil wars between conservatives and liberals, or central governments and the regions. The lengthiest and bloodiest were the Wars of Independence with Spain, especially in Venezuela (which was almost entirely destroyed) and Colombia; these were civil wars between rebels/patriots on the one hand and royalists/loyalists on the other. Thereafter five major wars between the Latin American republics were caused primarily by

1 Latin America denotes Spanish America and Portuguese-speaking Brazil; Spanish America denotes the Spanish-speaking republics extending from Mexico to Argentina and Chile, but does not include the Spanish Caribbean. Cuba and Puerto Rico did not achieve independence from Spain until 1898. The independence of Brazil from Portugal (in 1889) was the result of a relatively peaceful process.

2 Following Goldstein (2001: 3) war is 'lethal intergroup violence'; the war system is the social organization for the preparation and participation in wars.

territorial disputes. Particularly destructive were the War of the Triple Alliance (1864–70) between Paraguay and Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil and the senseless Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay (1932–35) in which some half a million Paraguayans were killed (Williamson, 1992: 274). Apart from Argentina's war with Britain over the Malvinas/Falklands, only Mexico has fought against a power outside the region: against France in the 1860s, and, more significantly, against the United States in the mid 1840s over Texas (annexed by the US in 1845). Mexico City fell to the US army and the Treaty of 1848 conceded over half of Mexican sovereign territory to the United States (today's Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado and California). What was the legacy of this violence for the gender system? How did it affect the meanings attributed to 'man' and 'woman'? The articles in this issue address these questions.

women/Latin America/history

Since 'the gender turn' some 30 years ago, many of the most significant and lasting achievements in feminist scholarship have been made in history and historiography, both in women's history and in the historical formation of gender (Scott, 1996, 1999; Mabry, 2004). This includes Latin American history, as demonstrated by the substantial and ever-increasing bibliography on gender and women in the region (for an overview see Stoner (1987) and Caulfield (2001)). Such research complements the long-standing engagement with gender and society in Latin American social sciences and development studies (Dore, 1997; Dore and Molyneux, 2000). The articles here provide a small sample of gender-sensitive historical research and focus on a period in Latin American history that has been of particular interest to British historians. It was during the Independence period that the Spanish dominions in the Americas, which stretched from San Francisco in the north to Patagonia in the south, achieved political liberation and were reconfigured to form republican states and national identities. Women's pivotal role in these events needs to be studied objectively outside the framework of local interests and nationalist agendas. Women were as instrumental to the successful completion of the independence project as they were to resistance against it.

The event that prompted the armed rebellion of the dissatisfied sectors of the white, Spanish American creole elite against the Spanish Crown was Napoleon's invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 1808 and the resulting power vacuum created by the removal of the Spanish King from the throne. Many other Spanish Americans remained loyal to the Crown. The resulting conflict, sometimes referred to as revolution rather than independence struggle, was a protracted civil war. As in all wars and revolutions, the breakdown of society provided an opportunity for the reconfiguration of social differences and, in some parts, the reversal of social hierarchies. But generally speaking this was not a social revolution. After the signing of peace with Spain, war continued as the victorious elites, backed by their

new republican constitutions, took up the reins of power and attempted to exert their authority. They usually failed to do so. Stability was not forthcoming in Spanish America until at least the mid-century, if at all.

The articles in this issue offer a critical review of these anti-colonial and civil wars from a gendered perspective and examine the continuities between the militarism and authoritarianism of the time and the politics and society of today. They explore the way the war system produces and exacerbates sexual difference, which is then perpetuated throughout the social and cultural fabric in the transition from colonial to postcolonial dependency. Davies analyses how the category woman is constructed ambiguously in Independence/anti-colonial discourse and how gender is employed to create hierarchical systems of social organization to legitimate the exercise of power by an elite of white men. Brewster looks at the ways in which Spanish-American women exploited the political and social turmoil of the late 18th and early 19th centuries to move beyond their traditional sphere of influence in the home. Brown examines changing conceptions of honour and masculinity during the Colombian Wars of Independence in the early 19th century. He studies the position of the foreign women who accompanied British and Irish expeditions to join the war against Spanish rule, and shows how colonial, imperial and republican conceptions of masculinity were affected by the role that women played. Fowler's essay is concerned with the representative value of Mexican General Santa Anna in terms of 19th-century gender relations and the *macho* stereotype of the *caudillo* (leader) and asks if Santa Anna's marital and extra-marital relationships confirm or challenge traditional views on the position of women in Spanish America following independence. Liddell explores the way the Brazilian writer and educator Nísia Floresta addresses issues of race and class within her construction of nationhood and considers how, as a vital aspect of women's claim to citizenship, she portrays maternal breast-feeding as both natural and patriotic. Gorbach shows how scientific interest in hysteria began in Mexico at the end of the 19th century and argues that the feminine appears only when the unity of medical discourse is ruptured. Cházaro examines the socio-cultural history of the use of forceps in 19th-century Mexico and argues that the knowledge and practices that the use of such instruments implied were related to controversial issues of the time regarding gender, race and national identity. Miller studies the life and work of Chilean Gabriela Mistral, the first Latin American writer to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1945, as an example of how difficult it was for women to win recognition as intellectuals in 20th-century Latin America. Craske interrogates the ambiguities and ambivalences in the state promotion of women in the nation-building projects of Mexico in the 20th century. Acuña argues that the prohibition of abortion in Chile, other than when the mother's life is in danger, is a form of human rights violation targeting women specifically. Women's bodies were used by the Pinochet regime, in sexual violence and torture, and by the denial of women's reproductive and sexual rights, as a means to impose discipline on society. Green's

dialogue with contemporary Chilean novelist Diamela Eltit explores these topical issues further.

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