

Neither Patria nor Patriarchy: Women and militancy in Chile, a historical perspective.

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Feminine militancy in Chile has notably increased from the sixties on, particularly in leftwing parties. Nevertheless, this feminine incursion did not change the masculine dynamic of parties, because the incorporation of women was part of more general collective social struggles, which do not necessary question gender differences. In fact, a more structural questioning would only take place in Chile during the 80's, after several years of increasing participation, at the same time that the most diverse social movement would begin to capture public spaces, until generating a massive protest against the Pinochet regime. One of these pressure groups will be a heterogenic and strong women's social movement, which was often leading the struggle to recover democracy, that at the same time included other types of democratisation demands as for instance in the private sphere, as said by a well known slogan in those days: 'Democracy in the country and at home'. If in some ways these questionings would affect parties' internal dynamics, putting gender issues on the table, that situation did not necessary imply that parties were going to change their 'masculine' dynamics, as I shall show through Isabel and Helena's testimonies.

Remarkably, after women obtained the right to vote, the resulting –yet modest- electoral force happened to privilege the conservative sectors, tending to halt “the revolutionary or even reformist initiatives” (CEM; 1988:535). This situation was later going to change with the rise of the Christian Democratic government in the 60's.

Part of the explanations so far offered of the scarce feminine participation and its conservative bias are related to the political discourses of that time, in which women were constantly addressed. These discourses invited and promoted feminine participation, but to get involved in welfare activities or charity institutions. Munizaga and Letelier asserted that this image was eventually going to incarnate in the figure of the “first lady, as the public symbol of a secularized charity” (CEM; 1988:534), clearly establishing in

this way, from the State, what were considered to be the public works for women; and in which, evidently, political militancy was not included.

This situation was partially modified in the 60's, not only because of the political, social and –hence- cultural changes that the country was going through, but also because of the politics of “social promotion” implemented by the Christian Democratic government, which was going to catalyse the action of women in the public arena, towards “an important and not previously known participation of them in other instances of social organization” (en CEM; 1988:535).

These manifestations were characterized by strong participation and social mobilization capacities, and in some moments, for instance during the 80's (against Pinochet), they could even operate in very transversal forms, by articulating diverse types of identity frameworks such as class, age, employment, sexual preferences and other differences. However, whenever crises seemed to be controlled, women vanished into the invisibility of their private spheres.

I would like to recall some points made at the beginning of this chapter. The literature relating to the political participation of Chilean women, both as a particular social movement with its own vindications and as members of the traditional system of parties, is not too abundant. In most of this literature it is concluded that ‘women’, as social actors, used to be visible in the contingent ‘social crises’, displaying what Salazar and Pinto called a “maximum solidarity”. This last expression, however, despite having a positive connotation -since it contains the intention, from these authors, of rescuing this type of ‘feminine’ participation-, implies in my opinion an implicit trap. This trap consists of maintaining and insisting that political participation of women is inseparable from their nature as “sensitive, emotional, affective, not rational” (CEM; 1988:36). It would be due to this reason that they participate by sympathizing with other social actors in times of crisis, not because they are affected by the crisis or because they are conscious of it, but as a matter of empathy.

For Kirkwood, however, the issue is more complex than that. The massive participation of women in the public sphere during the 80's, against the military regime, has more

content than simply sympathy. Kirkwood asserts that this participation is also related to the fact that while facing the authoritarian government, women are facing a known phenomenon, which at higher or lower extent is part of their daily cultural experience (1986: 164). It is because of it that many of these organizations connected the struggle to recover democracy with specific vindication demands, with respect to the subordination of gender thus tensioning political militancy, in particular inside of the leftwing parties, as we shall see next in the case of Isabel.

Indeed, Isabel's story is very attractive because she narrates how, after her exile in Germany; she suffered a transformation that would deeply question her militancy status in the Socialist Party. She began her militancy by the end of the 60's when she finished university, and she rapidly became one of the few women inside the party who would have a leading position. After the coup her partner was arrested and she was forced to leave the country with her little son.

Once in exile, did you continue to be a militant?

Only a short time, then I retired...

Why?

Let's see... hum..., I think that it was because of three reasons. After the coup there is a big division inside of the socialist party and that affected me a lot; second, for me it was becoming less clear what sense it had to be a militant being so far... mmm... and third, I was strongly influenced by the social processes in Germany, ... for instance, the anti-nuclear, the ecologists, and Latin America and Africa supporting movements... in general all of those movements became very interesting to me because they did strongly criticize the parties, with criticisms about the lack of participation and the horizontality in the ways of working, as well as criticisms about the way in which processes in eastern communist parties took place. I didn't know about that before, I hadn't had access to that information,... and well, besides, among the things that marked me more they were the women's movements. Then, all of these movements made me reflect and the party became less attractive, since I am becoming part of these criticisms and there the style of militancy that I had experienced became authoritarian... And there I was every time more militant of those movements, for instance I worked in the movements supporting Nicaragua and El Salvador and in women's groups... and there... err... I became a feminist...

A feminist?

Yes, because before Germany I did not perceive any gender difference inside of the party or with respect to militancy, but afterwards I notice that indeed, because I identify the ways of excluding, sexist things... but look, you know what happens, it is that when one is a woman director as I was in Concepción by the end of the 60's, I was very in demand and possibly therefore I did not feel discriminated, because in some way I shared the space of power with men and I didn't realize the discrimination, on the contrary, I would tell you that I was pretty

macho myself in my view on women... I thought women talked only unimportant things, that they were not interested in politics... No, in Chile I didn't realize... I realize about discrimination once I was in Germany... for instance, I realized that that closeness I had with the men of the party before, was related to a closeness to the power, because I was one of the few female director... because inside the party, most women did completely secondary jobs, or better said, jobs that were considered to be less important, related to the organization and not properly political, from taking care of the coffee to getting and cleaning the meeting rooms. In the end, all the things that in one way or the other were the projection of the social roles, then the power part was left aside... I also remember some pretty sexist things such as the construction of women as objects, of looking at them so, as things... Now I made myself a feminist in Germany, and I did so from the more traditional roles, because I went out in exile alone with my son, so I had to do everything by myself... and when my partner arrived, after being imprisoned in Chile, he almost hadn't known our child, practically they did not know each other, ... and in that process he kind of remained as an observer and I went on doing everything, and I felt that that annoyed me, but I didn't know how to say it... and suddenly my German friends were asking me questions that, at the beginning, I didn't understand very much, but that then made me reflect, and little by little I understood... look I am never going to forget a situation in which I was invited with a companion from the MIR to a meeting with German women, I have it very vivid because it was with a translation, and they asked questions, kind of personal, about what we did in our daily life, things like that, and I was very disconcerted, didn't understand why they were asking that sort of question. Later they asked us about the roles in Chilean culture, about the things that women do, the things that men do, if there was any discrimination, how was it during the UP, and so on... And I replied very relaxed about how it was, but at the same time I saw certain disenchantment in their eyes, although I didn't understand why. It was as if they were asking one thing and I was answering another one. And the meeting finished, and I never understood very much about what happened, until several years later I understood that misunderstanding and disenchantment, because, actually, these women realized that we had no notion of the specific problems of women. They asked us on this specific situation and we talked to her about another one, about workers, about socialism, I don't know...

Isabel's narration describes her political conversion from the socialist party to 'feminism'. This transformation happens practically and metaphorically through a forced trip, where she would be alone with her baby son in a strange country, with a very different language. Far from Chile, for the first time she will allow herself to question her past life, at the same time that she will start a new one, in a very different context. In her story, the first thing that would get her attention, in relation to politics, was the different types of social movements that she found, and their relative autonomy from parties, a completely different situation to Chile, where political parties were practically the only way to exercise politics 'seriously'. Suddenly she starts perceiving that the internal

dynamic of leftwing parties, particularly in the Chilean Socialist party where she used to be a militant, was authoritarian and ‘machista’ in character. The peculiarity of this discovery is that this occurred in a moment in which for the first time she was alone, trying to survive and to resolve quotidian problems such as where to live, how to find a job, and how to deal with motherhood. As in her own words “I made myself a feminist in Germany, and I did so from the more traditional roles, because I went out to the exile alone with my son, then I had to do everything by myself...”, then there is a new appreciation by Isabel of the daily activities that she never considered to be important before. Indeed, she realized that in Chile, while she had the experience of being a political leader, her style in the exercise of power was very ‘masculine’, even ‘machista’, as she expresses, “I was pretty machista myself in my view on women... I though women talked only unimportant things, that they were not interested in politics”.

Thus, there are at least three aspects in Isabel’s story that I want to emphasize. The first is related to the fact that in her story, besides the German context, it is through her development as a ‘single mother’ that she starts, on one hand, valuing the ‘traditional women duty’ as a mother, but on the other, she also starts politicising this condition, her ‘private life’.

The second aspect is how she describes her political participation as a political leader, because in Chile she never felt excluded or discriminated in any way by her male partners, but she realises that this situation was “because in some way I shared the space of power with men”, since she did not question the established order, or the way in which the power was exercised, in the same way as the rest of her male companions. Like them, she also never considered the job of other women militants to be significant. As she explains, “because inside the party, most women did completely secondary jobs, or better said, jobs that were considered to be less important, related to the organization and not properly political, from taking care of the coffee to getting and cleaning the meeting rooms”. In other words, the sexual division of labour operated inside her party without any conflict, and by extension also in the way of understanding politics, in a dichotomized mode, were ‘proper politics’ related to leadership, decision making on the party’s actions, and so on, but not to things related to the ‘organization’, as Isabel points out. Then, it can be assumed that in her leader position, from a very young age, she was

always participating in ‘proper political activities’ and not in those other minor and less important activities, which most women militant did, until she travelled to Germany. Thus, the naturalization of the sexual roles and the sexual division of labour marked the political performance of men and women of this time.

The third point is a consequence of the previous one. As a matter of fact, women were not considered to be important in their jobs inside the party, and they were also excluded, or at least not encouraged to develop other aspects of militancy, as for instance in having more access to make decisions on party strategies, or to assume more leading positions. As militants, the majority of women were basically excluded. Isabel was an exception in a way, because she was a kind of leader before her militancy. From a very young age at her primary school, and later in the university she was recognized as a public leader, with strong support from her student friends. She also took an active participation in the university’s student union and from this public position was recruited by the Socialist Party. She did not develop the ‘leadership quality’ as a consequence of her militancy; she gained social recognitions as a leader before. Thus Isabel’s story opens the question to whether it was the reason why she was recruited, because it was convenient to the party.

It was during her stay in Germany, being far from her usual identity referents, where she was forced to question things that were givens before, so in this sense her story is about a reconfiguration of herself, especially of her political identity. She lived outside of Chile for about twelve years. Very soon, after her husband met her in exile, they divorced, she never lived with another partner again, and she changed her militancy in the socialist party, for a feminist collective until now.

Mmm... and this transformation that you experienced is also related to a change of life, in personal terms

In my case it is absolutely so, because before everything was outside in the social thing, but in exile I discovered a sort of process of individualization, which did not mean letting aside the social processes, but to consider that my space was important too, that my development was important, my relationships with a couple... because really all of that I didn’t know, I only had social development in the collective things, well because in that time all that implied a concern for the individual thing was considered to be bourgeois deformations, because you couldn’t imagine a different thing... in fact, the first time I went on a kind of vacation because they lent me a little house, I went with a friend from the MIR and she was almost expelled, because they said that it was very selfish and bourgeois to have gone to that house without advising our respective parties to

share it with the others... I mean... And I also suffered them looking at me in an ugly way, because in fact I was one of the first to rescue and defend the idea of having vacations... now the issue was very complicated because it crossed the issue of guilt, because sure, us exiled having a holiday, and the rest of the companions who had stayed were fighting, they were imprisoned or being tortured and sure, I went and came on holiday... that was very complicated... it wasn't easy... now I was not thinking about it much, I just lived it, almost as a necessity and as a rebellion towards all of that authoritarian thing about the control of the party... Now I think that that also mixes in part with our catholic culture of punishing yourself all day, the thing about the suffering of the penitence and of avoiding pleasure especially for women, and I think that that thing is very strong.

In her narration she recognises that part of the reason why she gave up her militancy in the socialist party, was because of the internal divisions that this party was suffering, and also because she had access to information about the political procedure in the East of Europe that she did not know before. However, the most important motive was a process that she calls 'individualization', a sort of making consciousness of her as an individuality, which gave her a new dimension about the importance of her personal life, as for instance on having a partner, taking a holiday, and so on. This process would provide a new point of view on her past militancy's style, which she now finds repressive, authoritarian and patriarchal, pleasure being the focus of control, particularly for women. Thus, her struggle about having holidays becomes both a defence of a personal right and a political issue, since it will question the party internal establishment and procedures.

Once again, appearing in this story is the moral rigidity of some leftwing parties that during that time focused their collective and internal cohesion by disciplining their members in a very authoritarian way, ignoring the everyday life complexities of each militant, and controlling several aspects that were normally considered 'private'. As in the case of Ana, Isabel qualifies this control not only as the result of the parties' rigidity, considering "all that implied a concern for the individual thing was considered to be bourgeois deformations", she actively mentions the Catholic elements in our culture that privilege feelings of suffering and guiltiness over pleasure, particularly when this pleasure refers to women.

Nevertheless, Isabel's narration keeps the gender paradox, since her rebellion is associated with a kind of discovery of a 'womanhood' related to 'personal issues', 'individual development' and 'everyday life problems', which she became aware of, in part, with the help of her German women friends. Thus, the dichotomy between the 'private sphere' as a feminine thing and the 'public' as masculine is kept. Because, Isabel's story goes from a 'masculine way' of performing politics, represented by her militancy in the Socialist Party, to a 'feminine way' expressed in her adherence to 'feminism'. Despite the fact that she continued to feel part of the leftwing side, she rejects any militancy and she prefers to focus on looking at solutions for the different ways in which the subjugation of women takes place.

In Kirkwood's view, the problem is basically that in the "popular, progressive and revolutionary parties" (1990: 51) they assume the claim of "political, economical and class" vindications which, in effect, gave account of the greater part of the social problems of the time, but forgot or left aside other types of exploitations and discriminations. On the other hand, it was assumed that the beneficiary subject of those vindications was one internally undifferentiated. Thus, unavoidably, the popular subject, the worker, the exploited one, or even the citizen is naturally masculine, regardless whether it was mentioned or not. According to Kirkwood, the feminine discrimination "will appear covered up, postponed as secondary or, in occasions, directly neglected" (1990: 51). Therefore many women, in particular leftwing militants as in the case of Isabel, are going to live between the paradox of accepting "the predominant cultural idea on [the problem of] the feminine as a secondary contradiction" (1990: 51) and consequently to subordinate their demands to others more general and "important", or, as with Isabel, the option will be to change the frontline of struggle and to change militancy.

Feelings of politics as being a male activity can be found on the rightwing side too, as for example in the UDI's women militants. However, at least in appearance, it was lived without too much contradiction, since gender differences were accepted as natural, thus it was normal that these differences were expressed in politics as well.

Let us consider the case of Helena, a woman in her 50's who is a militant of the UDI party, the youngest daughter of one of the members of the military officer who was in the

government during the military dictatorship. She, for instance, recognises the absence of women in power positions inside the party, but she thinks that this is just a consequence of natural ‘gender differences’. She also accepts participating as a candidate in a election knowing that she will lose.

Just recently there were representative elections, I didn’t have the least interest in being a representative candidate, because in reality my work as a militant in the UDI, it was much more social and behind the scenes without showing the face, the job of a worker and which had much more to do with my character, it suited me a lot, besides it was lovely to me and I liked that job... but at the same time, it was also my turn to work with the team upstairs, because I did the legal advice, and they got together every Monday, about eight of them, and I left feeling full of their spirit, because they were a great group of people, worried about doing things right, interested in how their work benefited the party, not their individual images... well, one day they called me and asked me to be a candidate for deputy in *Cerro Navia*, they told me that it was one of the hardest districts, because the possibilities of winning were minimum, but they asked me anyway because of course it was necessary to offer a candidate, then it was like a favour, because no one wanted to go for that district because everyone knew that it was a waste of time... but since I had been working with that group of people, and observing the way they gave, the effort, the dedication... then therefore I accepted and... and... and I gave myself completely, I was, as I told you, a year in there, especially the last seven months of campaign, ... that was a really very heavy thing, because we started at 9, 10 in the morning when we went from house to house introducing myself, and sure in some of them they spat at you, in others they invited you in, in others they offer you cake, in others they don’t open the door, in others they tell you “go back to *Las Condes*”, in others they tell you “and you, blond, blue eyes girl, what are you doing here, in this ‘*población*’, go and have a laugh on your grandma... you understand?, it wasn’t easy. Besides, we had to go to *Centros de Madres*, Neighbours associations, Centres for child protection, and then you were exposed to all kind of questions, comments... and well, one responded in the best possible way... and I think that I did all of that and that I did it with the strength that I did it with and I faced the situation because I had seen that group and because of all of what I had heard about Jaime Guzmán, on how he gave himself up...

mmm... and you did the campaign despite knowing you were not going to win?

Yes, sure, I did it like a favour; I did it for the party... Now the loss was terrible anyway, for me it was very hard because I got much more votes than we initially thought we could get, and besides we went for it a hundred percent... At the beginning it was terrible, because I am very shy... I remember once, I had been in this for a week or so, and a man told me ‘I want to know your opinion on having a divorce law’; well, I said I think this and that... and then he said ‘good, you have given me very good reasons not to vote for you’ and I remember that it felt like a punch in the face, because one was not prepared to receive such a sort of comment so hard,... because I don’t know,... I thought ‘what have I done to this poor man?’... nothing, we only had different ideas, but ‘why be so rude?’ a rudeness you could not imagine because I don’t know, you rang the door bell and a woman

almost threatened you with a stick, yelling ‘go away to your neighbourhood in Las Condes’, ‘go to hell...’; then it is like ... I mean, what is my guilt on this?... now finally when one sees the difficulties for people... I mean I have never thought that money makes happiness, but obviously helps and when you see people who live under conditions that are really very hard, one can understand that every once in a while they react that way, so hard with you, and in the end you start thinking ‘oh, what a pity’, it is understandable... in the beginning they made me feel very bad, but then, it is perfectly understandable...

It is relatively easy to argue and show Helena as an example of the political utilization that some parties make of their militant women. She explicitly asks to participate in a campaign for a representative seat that no other militant wanted to take because it’s considered a ‘waste of time’. The party directive group knew beforehand that it was practically impossible to win in the district that she was asking to participate in, nevertheless they needed somebody to represent the UDI, they needed to be present despite the result. That’s how Helena’s participation becomes a sacrificial act, an effort destined to fail, because the person that was going to represent the party had to be someone who on one hand didn’t have much ambition in their political career, and on the other, someone who the party didn’t consider a key piece, evidently shown by higher regarded militants who were competing in districts where they thought they could win. The position in which she is put, and in which she accepts being, is ambivalent. On one hand, a woman competing in the representative elections makes the UDI appear progressive, and besides, the district where she competes is one of the poorest in Santiago, so the feminine image can be used in a maternal way, as more sensitive to adversity. Nevertheless, on the other hand, they put ‘her’ a ‘woman’ in a place in the political game where she knows she is going to lose. The message from the party for her is ‘we need you to sacrifice yourself for the good of everyone, for the good of the party, and therefore the political importance you put into this act’. The party’s use of Helena is obvious, but she knows it, she accepts it, she is an accomplice, as she says “I did it like a favour; I did it for the party...”

So, she wasn’t only an object, she accepted the challenge, religiously in a certain sense as she expressed “I gave myself completely”. Independently of the result forecast, she actively participated and in doing so she had experiences that she never imagined, and despite her tendency to naturalise the gender differences and hence the political

competition of men and women, these experiences will make her doubt, until eventually recognising that there are women in leadership positions that can even do it better than some men

The religious or confessional dimension of her campaign is given, not only by the sacrificial act, but also by the house to house strategy of trying to convince the people to vote for her. In doing this she exposed herself to all sorts of reactions, where she was verbally mistreated many times, not only for being part of the UDI, but also for her image, white, blonde, blue eyes, features personifying someone of upper class, a kind of inverted racism reaction given that indigenous features are much more associated with the lower classes. Nevertheless she continues, she stays in the fight until the end, she incorporates her strategies of co-opting other activist organisations, and the rejection doesn't intimidate her. She finds hidden strengths that she didn't know she had and which in a certain sense transform her, and the origin of that strength is owed, on one hand, to her perception of the party's founding group which she has seen work close up and whose members she admires deeply; and evidently by the image of Jaime Guzmán, enlightened, special, and a model to imitate.

Here it is important to highlight how the figure of Jaime Guzmán operates inside the party, especially within the feminine militancy. Because, it is particularly, the mystical and religious aspect that his image contains which is most redeemed by Helena. This facet of Guzman helps them to take control of themselves in a place where the 'spirit of sacrifice' is a fundamental value and even a superior one, therefore the force to work for the party comes from there. And so, on building their militancy from this almost religious support it also feminizes their militancy, since that same value is usually associated with the feminine.

Her condition of being a woman of high class and Catholic is going to help her face the campaign because it puts her in a place of moral superiority. Besides being shy and being mistreated on repeated occasions, she realises, she understands, she puts herself through mistreatment, because in one sense that is the cost of being in a privileged place. She can't lose composure, she can't return the aggression, she has to understand and hold back, like a good mother with her children. When she recounts the situation she describes

as ‘a punch’, Helena says ‘what have I done to this poor man?’..., that’s to say even though it hurts her, it bothers her, it angers her, she also tries to brush off the attack, converting the aggressor into a ‘poor man’, someone for whom it is better to feel pity for. Regardless of her effectively suffering verbal aggression and rejection, on many occasions she chooses to generalise and convert all types of resistance to her campaign into a result of the ‘precariousness of the people’, ‘of poverty’, of ‘the conditions in which they live’, denying herself all types of ill feeling with the people that she faces. So, that very ‘feminine’ and ‘Catholic’ understanding and compassionate attitude that she adopts is going to take away the political dimension of conflict of which she is part of, because she refuses to accept and recognise that those who argue with her are also political adversaries.

But also, these same ‘attributes’ are going to help her, not only to support, but also to strengthen her campaign. She is even going to discover, gradually, that at least at a political campaign level she can make the most the most of her ‘feminine’ condition.

Do you think that there was a difference in all of this process because you were a woman?

Campaigning can be easier for a woman, because you obviously use all kinds of tools, tools that for instance men cannot manage, besides they are things that people tell you, for instance they told me “look, you’ve got to be dressed the same way every day, to show a style, so people can identify you from afar, recognize you by your clothes...” Besides, I think that women have a thing, I don’t know,... sometimes it turns out more attractive, or warmer,... so men on one hand pay attention to the blonde, with that there is nothing we can do,... and to women, look... it’s just that I am a woman of hugs and things like that and that comes from my soul, because I get tender when I see people having real bad times, then I come and I hug them very hard, and that’s something a man can’t do because people may think that he is trying to get something, but instead a woman’s hug in that context is more maternal. Yes, and also women are kind of more notorious, we also have the fame of being more daring, I don’t know to what point men could be so. I don’t know, I suppose that both men and women can take political advantage of their qualities... Now I believe that carrying out political campaigns is easier for women, now it’s a different thing once you are inside the system, because clearly politics at a directive level is still very masculine... Anyway I think it is normal because men and women are different and have different attributes...

It is very interesting in her story to observe how she associates the manipulation of her corporal and affective image to the feminine, and how in turn she decides to utilise them as advantages for her political campaign. On recognising that it is easier for a woman to

manipulate her public image through the use of clothes, it would seem that for her the problem of clothing is evidently feminine, when in theory, the same recommendation that was given to her could be given to a male candidate. Yet more natural appears the valuation she makes of her sexual image, given by her white and blonde condition, with respect to which she tells us that it catches the attention of the men and that in relation to that ‘there is nothing you can do’, that’s the way it is almost by nature. And so, the conclusion is like the title of the movie ‘Gentlemen prefer blondes’. On the other hand, it would seem that it is more complex for men to manipulate or exploit the sexual dimension of their image; it could even be dangerous and counterproductive. So, if the sexualised dimension of her ‘blonde’ condition helps her to capture votes in the masculine sector, or at least so that they give her some level of attention, the affective dimension will help her to capture feminine votes. She describes herself as affectively demonstrative, she likes to hug and touch the people, particularly the people who are suffering, and those gestures are authentic because ‘they come from her soul’ and certainly they are more typically feminine, therefore in that way women can identify themselves with these typically maternal gestures. Whereas, in the case of a man, those physical, affectionate and empathetic gestures run the risk of being misinterpreted because one may think that ‘he is trying to get something’. This phrase – a little enigmatic – encloses a basic idea: if a man has those gestures, they suspect him, because they are not typical of the masculine, and if they do them, then one may think that he is doing it for self-interest, they aren’t authentic gestures, he is using gestures that don’t belong to him and that he does it because ‘he wants something’. In that wanting something, it could have multiple contents. From the point of view of a political campaign, the masculine subject that Helena imagines evidently wants – the same as her – to get voters, but in an ‘incorrect’ way. Finally, another great advantage of being a woman in a campaign, according to Helena, lies in the fact that women are much more dedicated when they decide to participate politically, that’s to say, they give themselves up entirely, just as she did despite knowing beforehand that she was going to lose. But that advantage that seems to help women work better in a political campaign, paradoxically doesn’t necessarily make them win, and worse still, just as Helena recognises, it doesn’t convert them into leaders inside the parties.

In Catholic codes, a sacrifice doesn't expect reward, it's a free gesture, and for her militancy and politics has to do with that, as well as a 'spirit of service' for it and when she is asked if she felt a little used she responds:

I'm telling you, no... or rather, there are many ways to help, and you are not going to kick up a fuss because I did this and so now I'm waiting for the party to give me something in return, because at the bottom of it all the only thing that that attitude shows is that you are in the party for personal benefit, and not to help, you know? When you go to help, you're not going to demand things, you dedicate yourself to the task and that's it.

The political militancy of Helena that today has her as personal secretary to one of the highest leaders of the party, does not put a strain on the established patriarchal order; doing this was not one of her objectives either. The strategy that she chooses is not to follow the masculine parameters either, as if that was the only permitted way, as we have seen in the case of other accounts. Rather she chooses to make use of her feminine condition, politically exploit the difference, and effectively, despite losing, she obtains more votes than the UDI calculated that she would be able to receive in the said district. Nevertheless, this fact doesn't stand her any better in the party, on the contrary she disappears from the public sphere given the exhaustion that the campaign provoked. She returns to her 'worker ant' job which was what she liked to do before her candidature. But, in her story, Helena can't avoid expressing that "politics at directive level is still very masculine...", the little word 'still' is significant, it holds a certain nostalgia for her, possibly because it could eventually mean that she occupies a public post, and a promise of a future that could be different for militant women. What the word 'still' hides is the tension that Helena has, between understanding the political activity femininely as 'public service' and 'sacrifice', and understanding it in its 'masculine' aspect in relation to power and the exercise of it.

To summarise, as we have seen in the case of Isabel and Helena, feminine political participation as active militants inside of a political party can turn out difficult. And in these accounts is clearly shown a kind of disorientation, in relation to a game, in which one remains exempt from participating in the making of the rules, a game that someone else made, in this case a masculine subject. In both stories it is possible to perceive a

sensation that the militancy and the political parties in the last analysis are masculine territory. And so the only possibility of staying in it is to accept using those codes.

According to the academic Ana Pizarro, women in Latin America have established different strategies to be able to appropriate themselves and express themselves in public. These strategies can basically organise themselves into four categories: identification and decontextualisation; accompaniment; displacement and, finally, masking. The first refers to the use of public space from the symbolic reaffirmation that women make of the cultural discourse from which, usually, they are addressed. The paradigmatic example of this would be the Mothers of the May Plaza, but also the already mentioned case of the Saucepans in Chile, where the feminine and private symbolic universe changes context, from the house to the street. According to Pizarro, this fluctuation between identification and at the same time decontextualisation of the same thing, permits the movements or women's groups to gain access to public spaces, "without appearing to invade the other speech [traditional politician], to which culturally it is granting them access to" (1994:200). In a certain way it is what Helena does, to reaffirm her 'feminine' condition, culturally built from more traditional social sectors and from there to elaborate her political campaign. The strategies of accompaniment, on the other hand, according to Pizarro, relate themselves to reinforcing the already established political battles in public, in the little "spaces that they leave each other" (1994: 202). In this case the feminine action favours and supports that of fathers, brothers, husband or sons. It doesn't have its own agenda and neither does it subvert feminine subordination, rather it reproduces it in a public space.

With respect to the displacement strategies, they refer to the creation of public spaces comparable with or extending to the home, or to the feminine cultural dimension and that eventually they can put pressure on the same assumptions that uphold these organisations (1994: 202). This would be the case of many of the feminine associations or groups that emerged in the 80s in Chile against the dictatorship, from organisations like the Soup Kitchens, or Buying Together, where the everyday tasks of women such as cooking or buying food, on being transferred to the public arena, acquire a social dimension, demonstrating the economic injustices, and therefore they clearly acquire a political dimension. The same happens with organisations like 'Women For Life', 'Women For

Democracy’, ‘Women For Peace’ etc., that even though they elaborate a discussion from their feminine ‘maternal’ condition, this becomes more radical and focuses on the demand for the end of the dictatorship.

The last strategy that Pizarro recognises is masking which in a certain sense implicates practising political activity ‘like the men’. That’s to say, to accept that the correct way of acting in politics is already established beforehand and that if one wants to participate in it, without being discriminated or stigmatised, then one has to work in it with the hegemonic codes which are masculine. In the context of this chapter, the clearest examples of this strategy would be the cases of Cristina and Isabel (the latter in her first period as a militant in the socialist party). Because in a certain sense the interpretation that they give is that politics is one - because public matters have no sex or gender to which one must attach to.