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James N. Green

- 1 This essay is part of a book project tentatively entitled *Generation 77: Politicized Youth in São Paulo and the Demise of the Brazilian Dictatorship*. It studies the roles that Paulistano students and youth, as well as new social movement activists, played in mobilizations against the military dictatorship (1964-1985) during the late 1970s and early 1980. It also examines the expansion of notions about democracy, human rights, and social inclusion within Brazilian society during this period. The book will have seven main chapters, each featuring an individual who represents one of the many constituent groups of politicalized (and largely middle-class) youth in the years surrounding 1977. They come from different social, economic, political, racial, gender, and other identities and backgrounds. Their life stories will be a means to analyze and understand the nature of the different movements that marked this period, when new ideas, ideologies, and approaches to social change dialogued and at the same time clashed with an array of Marxists' worldviews that had dominated the thinking of 1968 political activists and were still influential among sectors of the Left. In this essay, and in one of the chapters of the book, I focus specifically on the early years of the small lesbian movement in São Paulo – the first in the country – that developed in the midst of the process of democratization and offered a radical critique of both sectors of an emergent

women's movement and traditional Marxist ideas that still had purchase among many radicalized youth.

- 2 In studying this period of political effervesce, I am using Karl Mannheim's classical definition of a generation as those individuals who are significantly influenced by a given socio-historical environment, and especially notable events in their youth, which involved them actively, creating social cohorts with a shared experience and offering the possibility of shaping future generations (Mannheim 1972 [1952], 276-322). An examination of the lesbian movement, which emerged at this moment in Brazil and shared much of this generational ethos, serves as one of many windows into this period of intense politicization in which new actors fought for social change during the authoritarian regime's twilight years.
- 3 Hundreds of books have been written about the Generation of 1968 in Brazil, which was largely guided by Marxist and revolutionary ideologies, and preceded « generation '77 » by a decade¹. Many of these works are *about* or *by* those who later engaged in the armed struggle that reached its zenith between 1968 and 1973². The gradual reorganization of the student movement after the 1964 military coup d'état; the changes in the gender composition of universities in the mid-1960s; and the sexual, social, and cultural transformations that took place in the country's urban centers, all combined in 1968 to generate an explosion in mobilizations by youth against the military regime. The symbolic apogee of that year was the March of 100,000 in Rio de Janeiro against the dictatorship, which represented the aspirations of a generation to end military rule. In the aftermath of Institutional Act No. 5 in December 1968 and an increased repression against the radical opposition, those who opted for the armed struggle to topple the regime (a small minority of politically mobilized youth) suffered a horrendous defeat in the early 1970s. Political entrenchment of the opposition took place. In addition, as Christopher Dunn has argued, many youths became attracted to new forms of contestation against a morally and culturally rigid regime that did not take on overtly political overtones (Dunn 2017, 1-35).
- 4 Mannheim (1972 [1952], 301-302) notes that there is usually an intermediary or buffer generation between two discrete cohorts, a hiatus that contributes to the distinctiveness of each generation. In this case I hypothesize that the years 1969 to 1973 mark that intermediate period between two unique and different groups. It was a period in which leftwing oppositionists participated in semi-clandestine activities on university campuses to reorganize the student movement; militants of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) redirected their work to operating through the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB); and intellectuals founded journals as a public vehicle for political debates, among many other efforts. All of these efforts could be considered defensive measure after the brutal repression of the student movement and the legal opposition at the end of 1968. Historian Kenneth Serbin reminds us that the first significant demonstration against the dictatorship after 1968 only took place in 1973 (Serbin 1998, 2). In this public protest in downtown São Paulo, several thousand students and others gathered at the Cathedral for a mass honoring slain student and revolutionary Alexandre Leme. This was two years prior to the more well-known and larger service held at the same site memorializing leftwing journalist Vladimir Herzog after his murder while under police custody in 1975. In spite of these pockets of resistance, in 1973 the opposition was still on the defensive.

- 5 Historical periodization is always tricky, but there is a near consensus that the « *lenta, gradativa e segura distensão* » (slow, gradual and secure loosening) promised by the newly appointed President-General Ernesto Geisel on August 29, 1974³, coupled with the impressive victory of the MDB in the November 1974 legislative elections, marked the beginning of a shift in the balance of power between the regime and the opposition. Among the many factors that moved public sentiment against the ruling generals were the end of significant economic growth; increased inflation; a growing foreign debt; and middle-class fatigue with the regime's authoritarian and arbitrary measures. Geisel attempted to manage the *distensão* process through the controlled end to censorship in 1975, the symbolic marginalization of sectors of the hard right within the armed forces after the deaths of Herzog in 1975 and Manoel Fiel Filho in 1976, and the April Package in 1977, which was designed to contain advances of the opposition inside and outside Congress.
- 6 The pace of the political opening [*abertura*], however, remained a tug-of-war between the government and the legal opposition in which unexpected events upset the rhythm of the process and the terms of engagement. In April 1977, several students from the Liga Operária, a small Trotskyist group, along with a young worker whom they had recently met, were arrested while leafleting in the greater São Paulo region, calling for a wage hike and the celebration of May Day. The São Paulo student movement, which had been organizing carefully orchestrated protests against the regime *inside* the University of São Paulo's campus, mobilized in support of those detained and tortured. An escalating number of student-organized protests culminated in a massive march through downtown São Paulo, the largest public demonstration since the 1968 March of 100,000. One of the most prominent banners that students carried stated: « *Pelas Liberdades Democráticas* » (For democratic freedom). Suddenly, the regime could not prevent the opposition from taking to the streets. The next year, employees from the Scania-Saab automobile factory reported to work and then sat down at their machines, igniting a wildcat strike that turned into a three-year nationwide wave of working-class mobilizations that defied the dictatorship's labor and economic policies and catapulted union leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to national prominence.
- 7 The political mobilizations that begin in 1977 and grew in intensity over time were built on organizational efforts of the previous years and relied in part on the intermediary experiences of 1969-1973. Knowledge of the tactics and traditions of the student movement were passed on to younger classmates, and stories of radical opposition of previous years circulated throughout campuses. In this regard, assigning the year 1977 to a new generation of politicized students and youth is somewhat arbitrary, but the fact that they conquered the street that year under a banner calling for « *liberdades democráticas* », I argue, represented the core impulse of this generation, namely opposition to the authoritarian regime and a desire for greater freedom. In this regard, recently formed feminist organizations, the United Black Movement, and gay and lesbian groups embraced the banner of fighting for broader notions of democracy⁴. These new articulations insisted on rethinking traditional Marxist perspectives defended by clandestine student-based groups about the kind of Brazil that should exist with the end of the dictatorship. While these conflicts and tensions existed, as Mannheim (1972 [1952], 303) points out, it is the participation in a common sense of destiny that binds a generation together. Here, it was the generalized feeling of mobilized São Paulo youth in which the days of the dictatorship were numbered and a

new democracy was in the process of being born that represented a generational ethos. The activists that I am studying all felt that their participation in different groups and movements was linked to the sensation that something new, positive, and transformative was taking place and that they were integral agents in that process.

- 8 In this essay, as said above, I restrict myself to lesbian activism that emerged in the late 1970s within the Homosexual Movement, as it was known at the time. My goal is to understand these women's quest for autonomy and independence and their interaction with feminists, the labor movement, and different sectors of the Left within the context of broader efforts for a return to democracy. To do so, I will briefly analyze five moments in the formative first two years of lesbian activism from 1979 to 1981. I will deal with (1) the organization of a separate lesbian subgroup within Somos: Grupo de Afirmação Homossexual, Brazil's first LGBT political group; (2) the publication in May 1979 of a set of articles by lesbians in the pages of *Lampião da Esquina*, the first politicized journal with LGBT themes; (3) the interactions of the Lesbian-Feminist subgroup of Somos with feminists attending the Second Congress of Paulista Women in March 1980; (4) the participation of lesbian activists in the 1980 May Day demonstration during the general strike in the industrial belt around the city of São Paulo; and (5) their final separation from Somos and the formation of Grupo de Ação Lésbica-Feminista in May of 1980.

- 9 Marisa Fernandes, one of the seven main protagonists in *Generation 77*, remembered the tremendous impact that attending the February 1979 debate on « Minorities » held at the University of São Paulo (USP) had on her subsequent life dedicated to activism.

Vilma called me at home. She told me that that night there was going to be a debate at USP about homosexuals [...], and she wanted to know if I wanted to go with her. There in the auditorium at the head table were Alfredo, Emanuel, Trevisan, Piva and Darci [members of Somos and *Lampião's* editorial board]. They were talking about homosexuality, and I was in the audience.⁵

- 10 The debate was one of four evening events that discussed the newly formed feminist, Black, indigenous, and homosexual movements. They were organized by Vento Novo (New Wind), a new student group at USP, which had distanced itself from traditional Marxist ideology that prioritized a class analysis as a key to understanding the political situation. Attended by approximately 200 people, future scholars would describe the round-table discussion and debate as the coming-out moment for Somos⁶. Marisa recalled her emotions that evening:

I had read a lot about the subject, about what was happening in the United States, because the [homosexual] movement was well advanced there, as well as in Europe. You can imagine at that time in my adolescence, living under a military dictatorship, I was convinced that there wasn't a movement here in Brazil. I thought that something like that couldn't happen in Brazil. No kind of movement, let alone a homosexual movement! I thought I would never live to see it. And then suddenly it was happening in front of me. And I had a sense of certainty within me. I felt tremendously emotional.⁷

- 11 At the time, Marisa, age 25, worked as secretary and studied history at USP in the evening. Coming from the working-class city of Santo André, located in the industrial belt around São Paulo, Marisa had fallen in love with a neighbor, Miriam, when she was fifteen. Their relationship provoked a radical reaction among both families, filled with drama, separations, secret rendezvous, police interventions, and finally reconciliation and acceptance of their relationship by Marisa's parents, who grew to love and accept Miriam⁸. Even though Marisa was attending USP, she hadn't participated actively in the

student movement or become a supporter of any of the clandestine leftwing groups on campus. The event featuring members of Somos and representatives of *Lampião* was her first contact with the newest oppositional social movements that had just started to gain visibility.

- 12 As I have written elsewhere, the audience participation following the exposition of the panelists pitted two articulated and divergent political viewpoints against each other, with a third stand only timidly defended at the time (Green 1999, 97-98). One position, argued by supporters of different leftwing Marxist-inspired student groups, held that the demands of the homosexual movement were controversial and raising them divided progressive forces. Therefore, they should be set aside for some future date so that a broad united front against the dictatorship could be forged. Members of Somos insisted that the repression of homosexuality was an immediate priority for those who were facing discrimination, and that it was a failure of the Left to refuse to take the demands of the homosexual movement seriously. A third standpoint put forward the need to combine the struggle against the dictatorship with the democratic demands of the women's, Black, and homosexual movements.
- 13 During the late 1970s, the Marxist-led student movement was a major reference point for political organizing and mobilizations against the military regime, yet some of the earliest leaders of Somos rejected their leadership style as hierarchical and prone to authoritarian power disputes. Others within the homosexual movement, who had had links to sectors of the Left, were less hostile to working with those forces within a broader opposition to the military regime. The tension between supporters of the Left within the homosexual movement and those who argued for autonomy without the participation of people with leftwing ideologies continued over the next two years and would eventually lead to a split in Somos (Green 2000, 59-62). Based on interviews in which she recalled that evening, it is not clear whether Marisa followed the intricacies of that part of the debate. She did remember with certainty, however, that Emanuel, one of the founders of Somos, called on lesbians in the audience to join the group, and Marisa immediately gave him her telephone number. She reminisced that she could hardly wait for the following Saturday afternoon group meeting⁹.
- 14 Since its founding in May 1978, the Action Nucleus for Homosexuals' Rights, as Somos was originally called, was dominated by gay men. Individual lesbians passed through the group, but few lingered very long due to the fact that the discussions focused on male-centered issues (Green 1994, 45). After the USP debate, this dynamic changed as Marisa and a dozen or more women joined the organization. Marisa remembered attending her first Saturday gatherings. « We were afraid that people would think that the meetings were of leftists against the government, and I was sure that if neighbors knew that it was a meeting of homosexuals, they would think that we were involved with "immoral" activities and would call the police¹⁰. » In Western Europe or the United States, a new generation of politically active lesbian groups arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the context of democratic societies. In Brazil, the first core of lesbian activists organized within the framework of an authoritarian regime, which still exercised considerable power and control even as it loosened its influence over civil society. Furthermore, unlike in the student movement there was no previous generation of lesbian activists to pass on their experiences of political organizing.
- 15 Becoming a part of a group, however, quickly assuaged Marisa's fears: « After I joined, I realized that I had a tremendous desire to organize, that I had to organize. It was

impossible for me to remain still; I had to do something. There was so much repression that I couldn't remain silent without doing something¹¹. » Finding other women and men who wanted to engage in political action had a profound impact on her thinking. As she recalled thirty years later:

I became a feminist activist because within Somos I found men, gays, who already had a feminist consciousness, who read, who had been out of the country, who knew the movement abroad. They took me by the hand, and they threw me [into the thick of things]. « You have to go [to feminist meetings]. You have to go. You can't only be a lesbian; you have to be a feminist. » And so, I become a lesbian-feminist activist.¹²

- 16 The experiences of several founding members of Somos, who had lived abroad, and the circulation of a small number of books and magazines about international gay and lesbian organizations and ideas offered just enough political and moral support to Marisa and others to acquire the confidence to attempt to forge a new social movement. They did so in spite of the political conjuncture, which, at the time, in no way guaranteed that Brazil would unequivocally evolve into a democratic regime.
- 17 Although there were a handful of supportive gay men within Somos who considered themselves to be feminists, lesbian visibility within the pages of *Lampião*, the country's first gay publication with political content, was non-existent. Pressured by a lesbian journalist to address the subject, Aguinaldo Silva, the *de facto* editor-in-chief of *Lampião*, agreed to publish a set of articles, which appeared in the first anniversary issue of the monthly¹³. The May 1979 front cover of *Lampião* provocatively announced « LOVE BETWEEN WOMEN (They say where, when, how, and why) ». Marisa recalled that 25 lesbians put together the five-page dossier¹⁴. It included the dramatic coming-out tales of two young women who faced familial and social stigmatization. One recounted Marisa's own story, although she was identified as « M¹⁵ ». The issue also included a long statement about the importance of lesbian visibility¹⁶. The text explained: « We arrived late in *Lampião* because our existence was always clandestine, with fear and reluctance to live what we are. Because we haven't created our own living space. » The five pages amounted to a full-fledged lesbian-feminist manifesto that outlined the nature and mechanisms of lesbians' social subjugation and recognized the ways it had been internalized: « We are late because I, you, the one over there, the other, in short all of us have also assimilated this repression. » The statement, however, raised reservations about the feminist movement by pointing out that women's publications also failed to print articles about same-sex female sexuality. The comment foresaw the conflicts that the lesbians in Somos would face when they attended the Second Paulista Congress of Women the following year.
- 18 Marisa contends that the set of materials published in *Lampião* engendered significant confidence among the women in Somos. As was the group's recently established practice, those men and women who had entered after the USP debate met with a reception committee and then participated in mixed-gendered consciousness-raising groups. Some also chose to join more sub-groups that focused on publicity and political action. The dispersal of new lesbians into discussion groups dominated by gay men created discomfort among most of the women who had recently joined Somos and felt that their specific issues as lesbians were drowned out by the male majority in the subgroups. In response, they formed the Lesbian-Feminist subgroup to coalesce their forces and address specificities they faced as women within Somos and as lesbians

within society. The desire for autonomy within the organization, however, provoked a controversy among some male members.

- 19 « Ten lesbians and eighty gay men participated in the July 1979 general meeting [of Somos] », Marisa recalled.
- 20 Even though we were a clear minority, the lesbians of L-F [lesbian feminists] presented [a set of] decisions that they had made [that all members should] discuss machismo and feminism within Somos, recommend a specific theme to be discussed by all, have a group exclusively made-up of lesbians to receive new members, organize consciousness-raising groups [for women], and seek alliances with the feminist movement. (Fernandes 2018a, 3)
- 21 During the meeting, several gay men made hostile comments about the proposal, arguing that it would divide the group. Ironically, these men made arguments similar to those that some leftwing activists in the USP debate had articulated about the homosexual movement as a whole, namely, that a separate lesbian group would shatter an imagined united front against the oppression of homosexuals, both male and female.
- 22 Marisa pointed out, « Fortunately we received support from some of the gays in Somos, who were more open to question of gender. » She reflected:
- This first phase of the L-F group was not at all easy, because we ran into obstacles that we hadn't anticipated. The L-F group was rather pluralistic. [People in the group ranged] from a domestic servant to a computer programmer, [as well as] women who weren't from the academy but from « the closet » or « the ghetto ». Their commonality was that they were lesbians. (Fernandes 2018a, 3)
- 23 The lesbians of Somos laid out three goals as they organized a separate group: equal participation within the male-dominated group, equal standing within the emergent feminist movement, and equal rights within Brazilian society at large. In a way, all three objectives mirrored the general goals of those mobilized against the dictatorship, namely, an end to arbitrary rule and the expansion of democracy, which implied equal rights. The lesbians, however, extended these demands into the homosexual and feminist movements themselves. These efforts proved much harder to achieve than these newly politically involved lesbian activists had expected.
- 24 As we shall see, the failure of the majority of Somos's male members to comprehend the feminist critique of misogynistic comments and action by many of the men in the group, as well as a desire of most lesbians to form an independent, autonomous group, led most of them to leave Somos in May of 1980. However, even prior to their departure, they had faced a major challenge in their attempts to collaborate with feminists.
- 25 Although a small cluster of feminist activists managed to carry out political work during the repressive years of 1969 to 1974, a feminist movement coalesced in 1975 in activities surrounding the United Nation's promotion of the Year of Women (Alvarez 1990, 83; Pinto 2003, 56). It drew in part on women who had been active in the Left in 1968 but who had criticized conventional Marxist analyses that privileged issues related to class over those connected to gender. At the same time, several semi-clandestine leftwing organizations, including the pro-Soviet PCB, as well as pro-Chinese and pro-Cuban groups, adapted their programs and public activities to respond to a growing interest among female sectors of the opposition to issues related specifically to women. Following an orthodox Marxist logic, they focused on organizing poor and working-class women, and they promoted an outlook that insisted that such political

work needed to be carried out within the context of a broad, democratic, united front to end the dictatorship. These same leftists also considered emergent feminist groups to be middle-class or petty-bourgeois organizations that ignored the immediate economic problems of lower-class women. In this context, feminists favoring an autonomous movement without the participation of leftwing Marxist-oriented organizations ended up colliding with the latter. A major confrontation took place during the Second Congress of Paulista Women, held at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo in March 1980. To a certain extent, the lesbians of Somos got caught in the crossfire.

- 26 Joining the Congress organizing committee and attending the gathering was the first major political activity in which Somos's lesbians participated. In order to gain some visibility, the Lesbian-Feminist group decided to put up a large sign at the site of the Congress announcing a panel entitled « Love between Women », accompanied by some photographs. Almost immediately, someone ripped up the poster, sending an unwelcoming message to the lesbians attending the gathering. During the first day of the event, the lesbians from Somos chose to stay together in a single small group, but as Marisa reflected years later:

Because there were eighty groups meeting at the same time, it had very little effect. The second day, our tactic was to spread out in other groups to reach more women about our ideas, but it was in vein, since the general climate of the Congress was very difficult. As such, lesbian demands didn't cause the desired impact and created animosity. The first lesbian insertion in the feminist movement, through the Second Congress was pretty traumatic. (Fernandes 2014, 129)

As Marisa recently argued in a written reflection on the early years of the movement, « the lesbians defended the idea that women should fight for the right to pleasure and their own sexuality and break with the cycle of oppression and masculine subordination that didn't accept women's desires » (Fernandes 2018a, 3). Notions of imposed heteronormativity were new ideas for both orthodox Marxist militants and many independent feminists, and there was initially little receptivity from either group to these lesbian ideas.

- 27 This was especially the case with an organized faction within the Congress, led by MR-8 (Revolutionary Movement 8 of October). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, this organization had been involved in the armed struggle but by the end of that decade had changed political course and was organizing in poor and working-class communities. MR-8 mobilized supporters to participate in the Congress and made the argument that women from the low-income areas of São Paulo would not accept the participation of open lesbians within the women's movement. They also insisted that « proletarian » women, whom they considered they represented, were not interested in questions regarding sexuality and pleasure (Fernandes 2014, 129). The conflict between the traditional Marxist ideas of orthodox leftists and the feminists who criticized what they considered their sectarian ideas ended in a split Congress, with both sides issuing declarations and manifestos against the other. The lesbians of Somos, rejected by orthodox Marxists yet not embraced by most self-identified feminists, remained marginalized in the process (Fernandes 2014, 129-130).
- 28 This first attempt to reach out beyond the confines of lesbian-only consciousness-raising and discussion groups failed to gain the support of the women's movement. It also placed them in conflict with orthodox Marxists who argued, as did students at the USP debate that Marisa had attended, in favor of a united front against the dictatorship but considered the gay and lesbian movements not suitable partners in this endeavor.

Unfortunately, the political polarization between independent feminists and women affiliated with leftwing groups deepened the following year. The latter, who had the upper hand in the Third Congress held in 1981, went so far as to prohibit lesbians from openly participating in the event. However, an eventual realignment of the women's movement with lesbians who joined with feminists that were opposed to any links with leftwing political groups opened up a space for a discussion about female sexuality and the concept of differences. Nonetheless, the first foray into the feminist movement revealed that certain sectors of movements calling for an end to the dictatorship did not adhere to the values of democracy and pluralism that the lesbian-feminist activists considered an essential element in their own political work (Fernandes 2018b).

29 Almost immediately after the II Congress of Paulista Women in 1980, Somos became involved in organizing the First Meeting of Organized Homosexual Groups, a national meeting held in São Paulo in April 1980. Although on a much smaller scale, the gathering experienced the same tensions that were present in the women's event. The tensions centered on whether or not the homosexual movement should have anything to do with other social and political movements fighting against the dictatorship. One of the more controversial proposals, debated in the national meeting of about 200 activists, regarded participation in the May Day celebration that was scheduled to be held in São Bernardo, a working-class city near São Paulo in the midst of a general strike of metalworkers, led by Lula da Silva. Although at the opening ceremony of the three-day event, the body unanimously acclaimed support for the general strike, the suggestion that the movement as a whole join the May Day march polarized the assembly, as well as Somos. To avoid a split in Somos, those who wanted to participate in the march and rally formed the Pro-May Day Commission of Homosexuals. Fifty lesbians and gay men traveled to São Bernardo and marched under a banner proclaiming: « Down with the Discrimination of Homosexual Workers¹⁷ ». Other members of Somos, who were against joining the May Day march and rally, organized a picnic at the zoo (Trevisan 1986, 147-148).

30 Marisa was among those who joined the march: « We also wanted to defeat the dictatorship. [...] There was an enormous fight, a split. It was almost an imposition on us not to go. » (Green & Maluf 2003, 63) At the planning meeting of the *ad hoc* commission to organize a contingent, some expressed fear that the crowd would be aggressive toward a group of gays and lesbians. It turned out not to be the case. Marisa noted that the military regime did not disperse the crowd although the march and rally had not been authorized by the government:

There were 100,000 people, and they [the military] didn't attack. [...] So, I lost my fear because previously I had always run away from the police. At USP there was the student movement in 1977, and people had been arrested. So, I was afraid of the long arm of the army, much less so of the workers. I thought everyone would be there. Everyone. [I also thought] that we might be lynched because of moralism. But we weren't. At that moment, we needed every possible force to do it, and everyone had this understanding when the homosexuals participated. We were there. And I thought this was terrific. I remember that I totally lost any fear that I had had. I entered [the stadium where the rally took place] dancing samba. (*Id.*, 62-63)

31 Marisa also admitted that the fact that she had come from a working-class family and had grown up in Santo André, a city near São Paulo with a largely proletarian population, were additional reasons why she felt it was important to participate in the demonstration¹⁸. Even though she and other lesbians had faced hostility from leftists within the Congress of Paulista Women, who argued that issues of same-sex female

sexuality divided a united front against the dictatorship, this did not dissuade her from opting to join the mobilization that was organized by the newly formed Workers' Party (PT) and left-leaning trade unions. She understood the political importance of her participation, just as she claimed the mantle of feminism, even though some feminists rejected or remained distant from the lesbian group.

- 32 Soon after the May Day demonstration, a group of twelve members of Somos decided to split from the organization, alleging that it had come under the irreversible influence of the Socialist Convergence, the only leftwing organization that had a clear position in favor of homosexual rights and had an organized group within its ranks of gay men and lesbians (Green 2018, 75).
- 33 At the same time, most of the women in the Lesbian-Feminist group left Somos in order to form an independent, all-women's group. Some female members remained, preferring to work with a mixed-gendered organization. The division in Somos provoked considerable controversy in the pages of *Lampião*, leading the newly formed Grupo de Ação Lésbica-Feminista (GALF) to issue a statement explaining its position on the matter: « The autonomy of GALF in relationship to Somos/São Paulo took place before the division of the group. It was merely an "historical coincidence" that it took place on the same day that some left to form another group¹⁹. » The statement explained that the lesbians' departure from Somos was to « organize separately and deal with our specificities. [...] This does not mean that we are outside of the [homosexual] movement or merely a feminist group. In carrying out work alongside feminists, we are responding to another priority of our movement, since we are a group of women. We are seeking to broaden the universe of the activities of homosexual groups through this new space that we have conquered ». The declaration continued by affirming: « In short, we have brought to the homosexual movement a revolutionary imprint of the feminist movement and a transforming new praxis to social reality. We want to emphasize that we will still be a lesbian group and that feminism will merely open up new a front in the struggle. » Soon thereafter, GALF began publishing *Chanacomchana*, the first Brazilian publication with a lesbian focus (Lessa 2008, 306-309).
- 34 In the year and a half since Marisa and other lesbians entered Somos in early 1979, the women of GALF had begun to elaborate a political perspective that argued for the multiple political identities of lesbians who shared common experiences with gay men but at the same time faced different forms of discrimination and repression as women and as lesbians. Although many identified with the efforts of the labor movement and sectors of the Left to challenge the dictatorship's policies, they held back from embracing orthodox leftist groups that they considered actually narrowed rather than broadened a democratic front against the regime.
- 35 Sectors of the Left were also going through transitions. At the 1981 Founding Congress of the Workers' Party, Lula declared that he defended the space of homosexuals within the Party, adding that « we will not permit homosexuality to be treated as a sickness, and much less a "case for the police" in our party. We will defend the respect that they deserve, calling on them to participate in the building of our society²⁰ ». In 1982, several openly gay candidates ran for political office, mostly on the PT ticket, although none was elected (Cruz 2018). At the same time, lesbians finally gained a political space within the feminist movement. In addition, in 1983 GALF organized a public protest at Ferro's bar, a prominent São Paulo gathering place for lesbians, criticizing the

discriminatory measures of the owners who refused to let them sell *Chanacomchana* within the establishment (Fernandes 2018a, 5).

- 36 During that same year, however, there was a considerable decline in gay and lesbian activism nationally. A severe recession stymied groups with precarious finances and members facing unemployment and economic problems. The enthusiastic energies of members of the Generation of 1977 had dissipated, and many activists turned to quotidian concerns in order to survive economically. To a great extent, the utopian expectations that a return to democracy would usher in a new and glorious period in Brazilian history were unrealized (Green & Maluf 2003, 62). Still, these lesbians of the Generation of 1977 introduced a new set of ideas about democratic inclusion into the body politic of the opposition, as well as a new analytical framework about discrimination and repression, which would be passed on to future militants of the LGBT movement as it reorganized in the late 1980s and into the 1990s.

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NOTES

1. The most famous of these works is Ventura (1988).
2. Two multiple edition best-sellers represent this genre: Gabeira (1979) and Sirkis (1980).
3. « President anuncia distensão gradativa e segura. » *O Globo*, 30 August 1974.
4. There is a vast array of works on these movements. The classic works in English are Alvarez (1990) and Hanchard (1994).
5. Marisa Fernandes, interview with Edward MacRae (May 6, 1981), tape recording.
6. Dantas, Eduardo. « Negros, mulheres, homossexuais e índios nos debates da USP. » *Lampião da Esquina* 10, March 1979, p. 9; MacRae (2018, 177-181); Simões & Facchini (2008, 96-97).
7. Marisa Fernandes, interview with MacRae (May 6, 1981) tape recording.
8. « Então, porque tanta repressão. » *Lampião da Esquina* 12, May 1979, p. 9-10.
9. Marisa Fernandes, interview with MacRae (May 6, 1981) tape recording.
10. *Id.*
11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*
 13. « Nós também somos aí. » *Lampião da Esquina* 12, May 1979, p. 7-8.
 14. *Id.*
 15. « Então, porque tanta repressão. » *Lampião da Esquina* 12, May 1979, p. 9-10.
 16. « Nós também somos aí. » *Lampião da Esquina* 12, May 1979, p. 7-8.
 17. Vílma Maunder, Luiz Mott & Aroldo Asunção. « Homossexuais e o 1º de maio. » *Em tempo*, May 14-27, 1981, p. 14.
 18. Interview with author, July 8, 2018, São Paulo.
 19. « A posição do GALF. » *Lampião da Esquina* 27, August 1980, p. 5.
 20. « Abertura ainda não chegou ao povo. » *Folha de S. Paulo*, September 28, 1981, p.6.
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ABSTRACTS

This essay is part of a project entitled « Generation 77: Politicized Youth in São Paulo and the Demise of the Brazilian Dictatorship ». It studies the roles that Paulistano students, youth, and new social movement activists, played in mobilizations against the military dictatorship. In this essay, I focus on the early years of the small lesbian movement in São Paulo that developed in the midst of the process of democratization and offered a radical critique of sectors of an emergent women's movement and traditional Marxist ideas that still had purchase among many radicalized youth.

Cet article fait partie d'un projet intitulé « Génération 77 : la jeunesse politisée à São Paulo et la fin de la dictature brésilienne ». Il étudie les rôles que les étudiants, les jeunes et les nouveaux militants du mouvement social de São Paulo ont joué dans les mobilisations contre le régime militaire. Dans ce texte, je me centre sur les premières années du modeste mouvement lesbien qui s'est développé à São Paulo pendant le processus de démocratisation. Celui-ci a radicalement critiqué plusieurs secteurs de la mouvance féministe émergente ainsi que les idées marxistes traditionnelles qui attiraient encore une bonne partie de la jeunesse radicalisée.

Este artigo faz parte do projeto « Geração 77: a juventude politizada em São Paulo e o fim da ditadura brasileira » que analisa os papéis que estudantes paulistanos, jovens e novos militantes de movimentos sociais, desempenharam nas mobilizações contra a ditadura militar. Nesse texto, me concentro nos primeiros anos do pequeno movimento lésbico em São Paulo, que se desenvolveu em meio ao processo de democratização e ofereceu uma crítica radical a setores de um emergente movimento de mulheres e às ideias marxistas tradicionais que ainda tinham valor entre boa parte da juventude radicalizada.

INDEX

Palavras-chave: lésbicas, movimento feminista, movimento homossexual brasileiro, Brasil, século XX

Keywords: lesbians, feminist movement, Brazilian homosexual movement, Brazil, 20th century

Mots-clés: lesbiennes, mouvement féministe, mouvement homosexuel brésilien, Brésil, XXe siècle

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