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The Threaded Writing[1]: A Decolonial Feminist Interpretation of Textile Action in the State of Mexico

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Author's Declaration

The author declares that she has participated in the entire scientific process of this research, including conceptualization, methodology, writing, and editing. She also asserts that there are no potential conflicts of interest concerning the authorship and publication of this article.

[1] The thread is a fragment of yarn, cotton, or fiber of diverse origins that can create a stitch or embroidery. The thread symbolizes a collective, a woman, a body that can sow an idea, knowledge, an action, or give rise to an embroidery.

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Abstract

This article reflects on textile action and collective writing as a means of knowledge construction from a decolonial feminist epistemology. This perspective emphasizes the importance of enunciation, partial knowledge, and experience to account for situated knowledge arising from a matrix of oppressions. The study delves into the ongoing female-feminist textile continuum through a first-person narrative. In the sociopolitical context of the State of Mexico, where there is a significant rise in violence against women's lives, women's organizations employ textile action as a means of denunciation, documentation, creation, organization, and dialogue.
Keywords: decolonial feminism; feminist epistemology; experience; textile archive; memory.

A escrita com fibras: Uma leitura a partir do feminismo descolonial da ação têxtil no Estado do México

Resumo

Este artigo reflete sobre a ação têxtil e a escrita coletiva como uma forma de construção de conhecimento a partir de uma epistemologia feminista descolonial, na qual se retoma a relevância do lugar de enunciação, do conhecimento parcial e da experiência para dar conta de um saber situado que surge de uma matriz de opressões. Através de um relato em primeira pessoa, explora-se como existe um contínuo feminino-feminista têxtil que, no contexto sociopolítico do Estado do México, onde há um alto aumento da violência contra a vida das mulheres, leva à organização das mulheres a utilizar a ação têxtil como uma forma de denúncia, documentação, criação, organização e diálogo.
Palavras-chave: feminismo descolonial; epistemologia feminista; experiência; arquivo têxtil; memória.

Introduction

This work is an endeavor to narrate my life trajectory in textile action, drawing from my experience in writing with threads and collective action. I reflect on these practices as a means of building knowledge from a decolonial feminist epistemology.

In this regard, I align with the proposals of Tania Pérez-Bustos (2018) and Mariana Rivera (2021) to view embroidery as an act of collective and political writing. A narrative emerges, intertwining creation, documentation, organization, and sociopolitical context, reaching personal intimacies and private domains. Textile work evokes emotions and sentiments as we allow ourselves to be affected by collective stitches, impacting our daily lives (Pérez-Bustos, 2018; Rivera, 2021).

I will journey through threads, ideas, needles, memories, and photographs to trace a genealogy from my textile practice. This proposal will touch upon our current efforts in the collective "Vivas en la Memoria", where, as women inhabitants of Nezahualcóyotl City, we embroider femicides in the first person. I embrace the idea of a textile female-feminist continuum as proposed by Pérez-Bustos (2019) and Pentney (2008). This perspective allows me to narrate my initial approach to textiles as a weaver in women's spaces and later transition to embroidery as a political act of enunciation, constructing testimonies, and archiving our region's violence and impunity.

First Stitches and Coordinates for Embroidering

Why does the act of embroidering equate to producing knowledge? To understand embroidery as knowledge, I begin by mapping specific coordinates related to feminist knowledge production and epistemology.

Epistemology provides guidelines to discern what constitutes knowledge and what does not. This framework has led to the exclusion of a multitude of pieces of knowledge—those marginalized by imperatives constructed from a predominantly male, Western, positivist perspective, grounded in a heteronormative, patriarchal, and racist worldview that has been canonized as 'science.' From this standpoint, a series of norms are advanced in the name of universal knowledge, which stems from a singular Western perspective. Thus, actual knowledge is considered neutral, objective, impartial, and forged in a predominantly male world.

Embracing alternative epistemologies from a feminist standpoint entail acknowledging a political stance in knowledge production within research creation. While some feminist theorists advocate for producing knowledge from a political stance to counter the inherent inequality of the patriarchal system, we confront—emphasizing the importance of illuminating power dynamics, oppression, and gendered exploitation and committing to revealing these disparities—it also introduces another quandary: that of location. In essence, it is vital to recognize that there are no universally applicable oppressions nor a singular notion of womanhood. It is also fallacious to assume that the subjugation of women reflects a monolithic experience (Espinosa, 2016). Knowledge can manifest in varied contexts and locations, leading us to discern and encounter different forms of oppression in distinct ways. From this viewpoint, acknowledging our history, memories, genealogy, and roots empowers us to challenge and displace the coloniality of the knowledge/epistemology we grapple with.

María Lugones (2008), drawing from a decolonial feminist perspective, proposes a characterization of the modern colonial gender system, wherein patriarchy is integral. From this foundation, a specific manner of knowledge construction is imposed. It establishes colonial and dichotomous power relations that organize and narrate the world in a hierarchical and exclusionary manner, manifesting in dichotomies such as nature/culture, mind/body, reason/emotion, white/black, feminine/masculine, civilization/barbarism, America/Europe, and human/non-human, among others (Espinosa, 2016).

> Detailing this modern colonial gender system, both in broad strokes and in its intricate specifics, allows us to discern the depth of colonial imposition. It unveils the historical breadth and profound depth of its destructive scope. I seek to illuminate the instrumental nature of the colonial/modern gender system in our subjugation—of both men and women of color—across all facets of existence. Concurrently, this examination reveals the forced and pivotal dissolution of bonds of practical solidarity among victims of domination and exploitation that define coloniality (Lugones, 2008, p. 78).

Acknowledging the impositions of the modern colonial gender system will enable us to analyze the power relations we grapple with. Secondly, it highlights the essential movements that must be forged to transform our reality, pinpointing the oppressions we confront and determining our position within this matrix. Through this understanding, we are poised to cultivate alternative knowledge and epistemologies.

Several feminist theorists provide coordinates to demonstrate that knowledge can be constructed from non-hegemonic starting points, with which we challenge the modern colonial

gender system from our position within it. This feminist theorist represents a localized and reflective knowledge.

Adrienne Rich (1999) asserts that our closest geography is the body; from here, a specific, tangible experience of how we are situated and interpreted in the world emerges. The author states, "Before birth, I was white, after birth, I was a Jewish woman in the United States. Sitting in my body means recognizing this white skin, the places it has taken me, and the places it has not allowed me to go" (Rich, 1999, p. 36). In this context, she suggests a politics of location that poses questions from our body, the one we were born into, to reclaim it and construct alternative ways of thinking about it from a tangible perspective and with a possessive pronoun.

Ribeiro (2019) builds upon Patricia Hill Collins's (1990) theory of standpoint, arguing that women generate diverse experiences shaped by a matrix of oppressions intersecting gender, race, class, and generation. Therefore, experience represents a partial knowledge that each group produces from a specific viewpoint, implying that there is not universal knowledge but rather partial perspectives.

Ribeiro, within the framework of Black feminism and building upon Collins's (1990) proposal, speaks of a "place of enunciation":

> The experiences of these socially hierarchized and dehumanized groups mean that their intellectual productions, knowledge, and voices are treated in an equally subaltern manner. Furthermore, social conditions keep them structurally silenced (Ribeiro, 2017, as cited in Ribeiro, 2019, p. 16).

In this context, to speak from a "place of enunciation" is to counteract dominant historical narratives through a hierarchical knowledge structure that obscures knowledge not rooted in Eurocentric thinking (Ribeiro, 2019).

Joan Scott (2009) asserts, "it is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience" (p. 49). Based on this premise, considering individuals within historical contexts means not solely relying on our personal experiences but contextualizing them within social and historical processes. This approach broadens the perspective, offering the opportunity to generate knowledge in alignment with these coordinates.In this vein, there is a need to explore how differences are structured and how repressive mechanisms are relationally produced within these processes of framing experience (Scott, 2009).

Building on these contributions, I position embroidery writing as refuting dominant historical narratives. The act of embroidering does not separate emotions and affections from reason. It stands as an action to break universal dichotomies and to enunciate a social and political issue while inhabiting a territory of systemic violence with colonial inheritance. From here on, I will begin the story of my female-feminist continuum in textile work, narrated in the first person. It is an experience that makes visible forms of dominance and oppression and is an epistemic and political tool for knowledge creation (Tribance, 2016).

My Thread

My paternal grandmother was a peasant woman, educated in a nunnery, where she fostered the dream of migrating to the heart of the country, the big city, in search of progress and development. She also held onto the hope that her children would not be peasants. In 1962, she migrated from Guanajuato to the municipality of Nezahualcóyotl with all her daughters and sons. One day, she decided it was time to travel to the country's center, taking advantage of the opportunity when my grandfather went to the United States[2]. She sold her lands and animals, and they migrated. The money she gathered from the sales was not enough to purchase a house in the Federal District, today known as CDMX (Mexico City); thus, she bought a plot of land in Nezahualcóyotl (colloquially referred to as 'Neza'), in the State of Mexico, to the east of the sprawling city (CDMX). Nezahualcóyotl was established next to the largest garbage dump in the country's center, known as the Bordo de Xochiaca.

Figure 1. Photograph of my paternal family in Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl. From left to right: my father, my grandfather, two aunts, an uncle, and my grandmother.

Source: Family Archive, State of Mexico, Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl (1968)

[2] "Going wetback" is a colloquial way to say that someone emigrated to the United States to work without immigration documents.

Why speak of my paternal grandmother? Because she embroidered and crocheted, using needles, she made doilies, tablecloths, dresses, and skirts, constantly weaving with fragile threads. She was adept at sewing, possessing a machine with which she fashioned clothes for the entire family. Upon arriving in Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl, she began working as a seamstress in a denim pants company in the industrial zone in Naucalpan, north of Mexico City. The company for which she did piecework was named "Hermanos Capuano"; in turn, it subcontracted for Levis. My grandmother worked there until the factory burned down in 1981.

It is said that we inherited the desire to knit, sew, and embroider from her. What other fabrics might she have passed down to us? What tools and knowledge did she leave behind? She worked in the Federal District, D.F., and traveled daily on public transport; one day, a man harassed her, and she defended herself with her knitting hook. She always carried her knitting hook to protect herself from any troubled man. As this story is repeatedly told within our family, it teaches us how to defend ourselves using the tools of feminine artistry.

I started my first stitches when I was nine, only creating knots with crochet, producing textiles without shape. My grandmother taught me these initial stitches, as we wanted clothes for our dolls, and she encouraged us to make them ourselves.

Later on, when I began studying social anthropology at the National School of Anthropology and History in Mexico City, I had classmates who formed a knitting circle to chat and learn how to crochet. They taught me to knit. Later, I learned to knit with needles. I was amazed by the art of knitting. Thus, with various fibers such as wool, cotton, yarn, hemp, and raffia, I crafted scarves, bags, pouches, belts, sweaters, dresses, skirts, shoes, ponchos, shawls, undergarments, and hats. Many of these pieces were made during my commutes from Neza City to the university—a daily round trip of four hours, two hours each way!

The other pieces were crafted during organizational and planning meetings. I was involved in a project focused on community and intercultural education in Guerrero. I would knit during assemblies at the Cultural Center CECOS, a self-managed, independent space dedicated to popular education and culture in Neza city, where I had been participating since childhood. Finally, during meetings with the Vivas en la Memoria collective, also in Neza, I initially knitted and later embroidered, always crafting items, tying knots, and threading yarns.

When we formed the collective, we began with a women's reading circle, bringing books by authors that intrigued us, such as Lorena Cabnal, Simone de Beauvoir, and Julieta Paredes.

As we discussed the texts, I would bring yarns and needles to knit throughout the meeting. Engaging in this manual activity while listening helped me weave together the ideas.

The collective aimed to identify the local issues we were facing and determine what we could do about them, and we had already heard about Irinea Buendía's denouncement concerning the murder of Mariana Lima.

Irinea Buendía embarked on a quest for justice and truth in 2010 when her daughter Mariana Lima was murdered. She investigated other organizations, insisting it was a femicide, not a suicide. Mariana Lima was killed on June 29, 2010, by her husband, a judicial police officer from Chimalhuacán, State of Mexico. On March 25, 2015, Mariana Lima's case became the first precedent in Mexico, wherein a landmark ruling by the Supreme Court of Justice recognized it as a femicide. This decision set a mandatory path for all violent deaths of women to be judged and investigated from a gender perspective.

Without a doubt, Irinea Buendía's struggle not only paved the way for gender-perspective investigations nationwide but also highlighted a local issue: the rising number of femicides in the municipalities of Nezahualcóyotl and Chimalhuacán. Her fight and the local situation drew our attention to our significant challenges, prompting the first Gender Violence Alert in the State of Mexico in 2015, emphasizing the urgency to prevent and eradicate violence against women. The second Gender Violence Alert came in 2019 due to a 227% increase in missing women between 2015 and 2017, with most being minors. Although neither of the two Gender Violence Alerts has compelled the State to fulfill its responsibilities, they have succeeded in shedding light on the problem nationwide.

In 2016, within the "Vivas en la Memoria collective", we established a database recounting local femicides in the State of Mexico and began embroidering the cases from Nezahualcóyotl, Ecatepec, and Chimalhuacán. Why embroidery? What for? We were aware of the textile action women were undertaking in Ciudad Juárez. We felt a need to create our archive through the art of embroidery, a local skill many women in Neza City possess.

Embroidering in a Collective

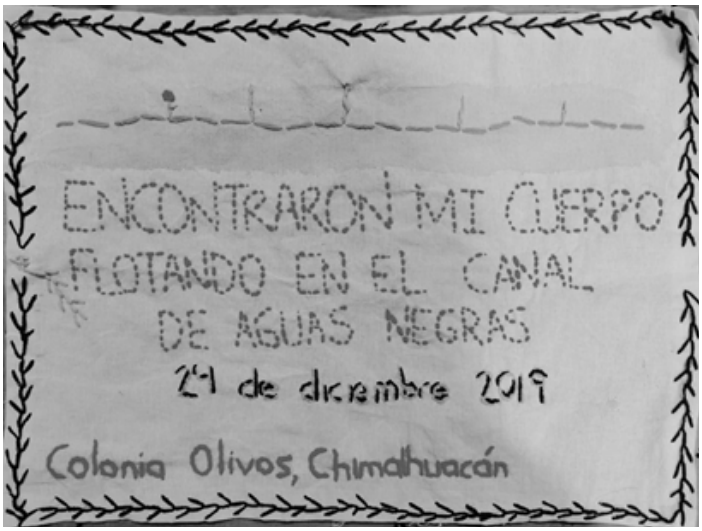
Figure 2. Embroidery "On the Land, We Continue"

Source: Vivas en la Memoria, State of Mexico, Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl (2021)

While I have knitted for many years, I do not know how to embroider, but I still do it, even though it is challenging. I learned intuitively, not recognizing the stitches. First, I tried watching a tutorial on YouTube, then I left that and began to embroider, piercing and pulling the thread unevenly, without rhythm, without precision, and I am still in that learning process. Usually, many young women who approach us to embroider social protest handkerchiefs do not know how to embroider. We learn in practice because the stories and silences are more pressing than focusing on doing it well. A few days ago, the aunt of MDMG, a girl who reported sexual violence by a relative in Nezahualcóyotl, wrote to our collective and said: "When you hold an embroidery workshop, please invite me because I want to embroider some things for all the girls, but I do not know how to do it" (June 2023).

Mainly, I choose cases to embroider where the name of the murdered woman is unknown (Figure 3). I'm concerned about thinking that she might be a missing person and that she needs a trace, a record that testifies she existed, a women's archive, for memory, justice, and truth.

Figure 3. Embroidery "My Name is Unknown"



Source: Vivas en la Memoria, State of Mexico, Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl (2020)

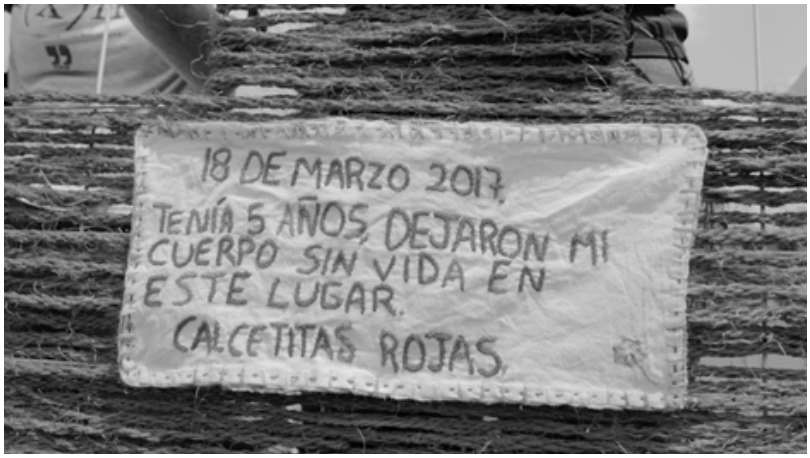
What do we do with the embroideries? We take them to various places — schools, marches, political actions. We also display them once a month in front of the Neza municipal palace, next to the pink crosses that Irinea Buendía planted for Mariana Lima's sentence as damage reparation, beside the anti-monument. This embroidery was placed on November 24, 2019, by relatives of victims and feminist collectives, marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. It is a symbol of memory for the women and girls who have been victims of femicides and a reminder to demand justice for the impunity and negligence of the State.

Figure 4. Textile Action: Rope Cross in Memory of "Red Socks"

Source: Vivas en la Memoria, State of Mexico, Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl (2022)

Furthermore, we have embroidered crosses with ropes (Figure 4 and Figure 5) in public spaces, a form of public textile activism, as was the case with the femicide of a five-year-old girl whose body was left at Bordo de Xochiaca[3] in 2017. After her case was closed, we returned to where she was found to knot the memory.

Figure 5. Textile Action: Rope Cross in Memory of "Red Socks"



Source: Vivas en la Memoria, State of Mexico, Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl (2023)

I take from Tania Pérez-Bustos (2019) and Pentney (2008) the idea of the female-feminist textile continuum to name my practice as a knitter and later as an embroiderer, as well as to look back at my grandmother and recognize the knowledge she passed down to me.

Within the female-feminist textile continuum lies "textile activism aimed at building collectivity and revaluing domestic art" (Pérez-Bustos, 2019, p. 5), where diverse female genealogies are woven together. At first, I think of my grandmother with her textile knowledge that allowed her to weave history memory and gain economic autonomy by being a worker and assembler for companies that manufactured for the United States. Similarly, I think of the spaces I built with my classmates from ENAH (National School of Anthropology and History of Mexico), those women's circles in which I participated, and where we discussed many other political topics beyond the stitches.

In the second moment of the female-feminist textile continuum, textile activism highlights social issues driven by groups of allied women concerned about social transformations through a feminine practice.

[3] The Bordo de Xochiaca is an avenue located next to the landfill in Nezahualcóyotl City.

Figure 6. Embroidery "Women Sowing Autonomy" for March 8th.

Source: Vivas en la Memoria, State of Mexico, Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl (2021)

At the end of the female-feminist textile continuum "lies textile activism as a form of public complaint or protest. This category includes self-motivated initiatives turned into political tools of protest. Here, textiles appear in gatherings, marches, and various public interventions" (Pérez-Bustos, 2019, p. 5). The work of the collective is situated in these last two practices, where, on one hand, we create an archive of women who have been rendered invisible and stripped of life, where we produce a document that bears witness on a handkerchief, using threads, to the situation of impunity in which we find ourselves; on the other hand, we publicize this work with our embroideries to shed light on the local issue.

In the following quotation, I share some of the reflections of the Vivas en la Memoria collective, in the context of the traveling exhibition "Mexican Insurgencies: Poetics of Life in Times of Death", held in various regions of Brazil in May 2018, an exhibition that included the embroidered handkerchiefs of the collective. For this exhibition, we collectively reflected on the act of embroidering in the first person and what embroidering has meant to us:

> We embroider in the first person as an attempt to recognize the murdered women because in this way, she ceases to be a statistical number of a victim and becomes the person to whom we want to grant that memory, so she doesn't fade away. We believe that embroidering is a loving act, as we allow ourselves to be affected and think about them. We use threads, colors, trying to heal, to give life. When we embroider, we perceive that we have a life story there; generally, we women understand the time it takes to do an embroidery. We don't know what we leave behind when we embroider, but we do feel a

> part of ourselves and another part of her. The act of embroidering is very different from making a sign or reading a case; we believe that placing one stitch next to another and the time we dedicate to the case brings a life into being; when we embroider, we sense that we have a life story and, placing it next to another handkerchief, another life, brings them together in a shared problem" (Vivas en la Memoria, 2018).

Returning to the question, "Why is textile action and embroidering a production of knowledge?" I want to highlight that it is from this situated experience, together with the "Vivas en la Memoria collective", that collective writing is constructed. From this, several contributions can be underscored in the construction of knowledge, such as documenting a problem we face socially and locally, organizing women in complex contexts with an anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal outlook, dialogue as a pedagogical tool for transformation, embroidering as an act of collective creation, recording testimony, and building a practical memory archive.

Documentation, in the case of the "Vivas en la Memoria collective", is a practice built by organized women continuously researching femicides in the State of Mexico. In 2016, we created a database on femicides in the locality, where we located the last trace of the women's bodies, their age, whether there were any reports regarding their cases, whether their names are known or not if the weapon or manner in which they were violated is recognized, among other elements. Based on these coordinates, we acquired a set of guidelines to recognize the context in which we are situated, and a diagnosis of the problem of feminicidal violence and femicide in the territory.

In this exercise of embroidering and textile action, we identify the organization of women as a form of construction of partial and localized knowledge, recognizing the particularities of this process in complex contexts of violence and impunity. This proposal has given us a necessary articulation to think about collective actions that allow us to intervene in the territory, take public space, build counter-hegemonic narratives, and make visible a problem that affects many of us women who travel and inhabit the territory. It means accompanying, when possible, the complaints of family members seeking justice and sharing the political horizon, the longing for a dignified life without human trafficking, disappearances, torture, femicides, and impunity.

With collective writing, one of the crucial elements is dialogue as a pedagogical tool for transformation. Within the collective, dialogues emerge about the construction of testimonies based on specific cases of violence, the socio-political context of the territory, local public

policies, and what the media reports about violence in the territory, among many other topics. These discussions construct a collective view of the problem and reflect on how to act.

In addition, dialogues mediated by embroideries arise. Unlike the investigation folders that may or may not exist in the State of Mexico's justice prosecutor's offices, we make the archive public as an open file for dialogue. In this way, we have promoted meetings with school students, the local population, relatives seeking justice, the media, researchers, and artists challenged by the textile archive.

Part of these dialogues occur during the writing with threads as collective creation. Creating an embroidery or a textile archive by multiple hands and hearts is a meaningful, political, and epistemic act, as it is not just about crafting the piece but also about leaving a part of oneself in what is embroidered or woven: a thought, a color, a metaphor, an emotion, a bond, or a gesture of love. In collective creation, other women or family members seeking justice are involved who are not part of the Vivas en la Memoria collective. They are women who join in writing the common of a textile archive as a way of getting involved in something that affects and involves them to act together because textile work provokes affections and breaks with universal dichotomies such as public and private, individual, and collective. One allows oneself to be affected and at the same time affects what is beside the everyday. Thus, creating collectively and constructing an archive of affective memory is also a way of building knowledge.

Creating a memory archive can account for the magnitude of the problem in this territory and is a testament to impunity. Writing with threads is, therefore, an epistemic and political tool with an articulated plot between organization, documentation, dialogue, collective creation, and affective textile memory.

Textile Action, Embroiderers in Mexico, and Latin America

Today, we acknowledge the embroiderers and memory weavers who have forged organization and documentation through embroidering in the sociopolitical contexts present in Latin America, notably dictatorships, the war against drug trafficking, and militarization. Due to this activity, numerous collectives, women, and feminists have identified textile action as a political domain to visualize, memorialize, and articulate this endeavor.

Throughout Latin America, a variety of collectives and organizations have turned to embroidery to express and articulate our realities. Tania Bustos (2019) emphasizes that

textile actions in the region can trace their origins back to the 1970s, particularly during the dictatorship in Chile. An iconic representation is that of the "memory seamstresses," groups of women who converted flour sacks into graphic testimonies from their homes' confines to denounce their loved ones' disappearances and torture. These women "resort to embroidery as a political demonstration (for instance, by figuratively capturing acts of state violence on the fabric) and also as a mechanism for healing, solidarity, and mutual support" (Pérez-Bustos, p. 4, 2019).

In Mexico, with the commencement of the so-called war against drug trafficking in 2006 during Felipe Calderón's administration, the violent milieu underscored that it was, in essence, a war against its citizens. The aftermath was a marked surge in murders, disappearances, and femicides. Amid this turmoil, arenas for organization and protest emerged, many spearheaded by the victims' relatives and notable figures such as the activist and poet Javier Sicilia.

Within this movement, textile organizations such as "Bordando por la Paz" (Embroidering for Peace), established in 2011 in Mexico City, dedicated themselves to embroidering the names of violence victims in the country onto white handkerchiefs. Similarly, in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, "Bordeamos por la Paz" (We Embroider for Peace) emerged in 2014. Concurrently, "Bordamos Feminicidios" (We Embroider Femicides), founded in 2011, focuses on embroidering cases of femicides across the Mexican territory.

In other parts of Latin America, similar initiatives have also emerged. One example is the "Sonsón Memory Weavers' Sewing Circle," a collective meeting in Antioquia, Colombia since 2019. It consists of adult women who craft quilts, dolls, and "sorrow-relievers" to narrate and denounce the violence in Colombia, transforming them into acts of resistance, struggle, and healing (Pérez-Bustos, 2018).

In 2020, the virtual textile exhibition "Puntadas Revoltosas" (Rebellious Stitches) occurred at the Costa Rica Women's Museum. This exhibition shed light on various organizations and collectives in Latin America that utilize textile art as a medium of action and expression. Works were showcased under three categories: "Prohibido callar" (Forbidden to Silence), "Experimentación textil" (Textile Experimentation), and "Grupos textiles" (Textile Groups).

Our group, 'Vivas en la Memoria,' had the honor of participating alongside other prominent collectives that use textile art as a tool for activism. Among them, the 'Colectiva la Sindicata de Uruguay' stands out, comprised of women who, in addition to identifying as feminists,

use textile art to denounce injustices and, simultaneously, reframe the cultural and emotional heritage passed down by their ancestors.

Another participating group was 'El Ojo de la Aguja' from Medellin, Colombia, founded in 2016. It is composed of human rights leaders and advocates and is associated with a research group at the University of Antioquia. Its members create embroidered memorials and archives. Also, 'Hebras de la Memoria' from Santiago, Chile, founded in 2018, took part. Their focus is on creating arpilleras (textile collages) to serve as memory and textile activism. Additionally, in 2018, the exhibition 'Huellas: puntadas y caminares de la memoria' was organized in Mexico City (Urdimbre audiovisual, 2018). This event brought together more than 130 textile pieces from women, collectives, and organizations from countries such as Mexico, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, and Colombia. All these pieces shared a common goal: to build historical memory and denounce social conflicts in their respective nations through textile art.

All of these initiatives demonstrate the importance of textile activism as a means of expression, documentation, and memory for testimonies of violence and cruelty in historically marginalized territories."

Final Reflections

Figure 7. Ceremony-march within the framework of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women #25N

Source: Vivas en la Memoria, State of Mexico, border between Chimalhuacán and Nezahualcóyotl (November 24, 2019)

Writing with Threads: Collective Narratives in Contexts of Violence

Writing with threads is a collective form of articulation that addresses social issues in contexts of violence, war, and impunity, legacies of a modern, capitalist, and colonial system. Thus, women who feel the impacts of violence in our territories find in this collective writing a necessary articulation. We weave our pain with threads to collectively express our indignation, to not normalize the perpetration of violent death and the pedagogy of cruelty present in our daily lives.

Writing with threads is not merely a technique; it is a living archive of affective memory that invites dialogue with those who observe the embroideries. When we encounter these works, we build memory, recall those taken from us, and address local and national issues. Each time we embroider a case, we are deeply affected individually and collectively. On one hand, we are compelled to see each represented woman not as just another number but as an individual with an identity and a name. On the other hand, we are driven by the understanding that, by gathering to embroider, we are doing more than just confronting violence. We are redefining traumas, initiating healing processes, engaging in dialogues, and discovering other women with whom we share a political vision and mission.

Engaging with other epistemologies from a decolonial feminist perspective is to recognize a political stance on knowledge production in research-creation through alternative forms of writing. These practices reclaim knowledge and practices such as embroidery, not only as acts of resistance but also as a strategy to dialogue and make visible a shared issue in the public space.

Embroidering handkerchiefs, positioned as a feminist archive within a context of violence towards women's lives, prompts me to ask: Is creating a handkerchief, conceived as a body or collective bodies, from a politics of location (Rich, 1999) a way to reclaim them? To reclaim the lives snatched away because they are in territories where impunity is tolerated, extreme violence is practiced, and women's bodies are treated as disposable commodities. When Adrienne Rich asserts, "locating myself in my body means... the places it has taken me, as well as the places it has not allowed me to go" (1999, p. 36), it immediately compels me to reflect on the matrix of oppressions leading to specific lives being murdered, disappeared, erased, and rendered invisible. Constructing an embroidered archive offers an opportunity to redefine the memory of countless women who, within a racist, patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist system, have had their lives stolen. This is why we write with threads, with those who are still with us, those who are no longer, and the women we yearn for.

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