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Words and Silences is the official on-line journal of the International Oral History Association. It is an internationally peer reviewed, high quality forum for oral historians from a wide range of disciplines and a means for the professional community to share projects and current trends of oral history from around the world.



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We are delighted to deliver this transition issue of *Words and Silences* into the hands of subscribers and members of IOHA.

The issue includes four articles of great interest, both because of their content and reflective tenor. Ligia Pereira describes the research project she undertook among members of the economic and political elite of the state of Minas Gerais, in Brazil. She focuses, in particular, on the reminiscences of the military coup of 1964 and the ensuing difficult period of military rule.

Luciana Seminara's article explores important aspects of militant practice among members of a political armed organization, the *Organización Sabino Navarro*, active in the region of Gran Rosario, Argentina, in the early 1970s. Her work faces the always difficult challenge of calling forth the memory of those who were in a clandestine movement. Rosemary Sayigh presents the way in which oral historians organically participate in the making of narratives that would otherwise be smothered by structures of power. Her piece reflects upon stories of displacement among Palestinians, and closely analyzes the mixture of internal and external factors that had impeded recording them before. The fourth article is by Robson Laverdi. This interesting piece discusses in depth the impact of Raymond Williams' cultural theory on social history, and argues in favor of extending such impact to oral history. The author examines in detail those ideas that are particularly important for elaborating the theory and

method of oral history. He makes a clear argument about how the work of Williams invites oral historians to see the oral stories produced through interviews as social experiences in continuous transformation.

Taken as a whole, these articles deal with themes often present in the pages of *Words and Silences*. The authors report and reflect on their research. Past issues of W&S have included this kind of grounded reflection, at times elicited by questions posed by the editors. Ligia Pereira adopts a somewhat amusing tone to tell us about her experiences interviewing powerful businessmen who favored military rule. She coins a new term that aptly pictures how they deal with their reminiscences, embarrassing memories. Such memories stand opposite to traumatic memories, the term used to refer to how victims remember repression at the hands of military dictatorships in Latin America. Rosemary Sayigh takes the perspective of traumatic memories, as she recounts the encounters and interviews with Palestinian women and wonders if it is enough for oral history to record such stories. She then invites us to go beyond the commendable intention of bringing memory to the surface and denouncing repression, and take on the challenge of reflecting on what kind of history may be of use and interest to those who face invisibility and repression.

Sayigh's invitation leads us into another recurrent topic in *Words and Silences*: politics and oral history. Seminara takes one possible road to deal with such

concerns: the oral history of politics. Laverdi takes another road: the politics of oral history.

Seminara reminds us that any situation of repression always engenders its opposite, organized resistance. Her article takes us along the twisting paths of reminiscences that deal with the violence that accompanies politics when it comes to confronting State terror. The stories told communicate meaning by way of parable, silence and difference. And perhaps this brings us to a point implicit in Sayigh suggestions, that memory may not be reduced to healing through words, as it is often proposed, but understanding it instead as the continuation of struggle on a new plane.

What Laverdi says about Williams and oral history aims in this direction, since he insists that the stories produced during an interview are not only about what happened in the past but also about present disputes on meaning while searching for new, creative understandings. For that reason, when presenting the results of interviews, an oral historian needs to include that difficult dialogue between dominant and rebellious modes of constructing knowledge about the past.

Authors in past issues of *Words and Silences / Palabras y Silencios* have often thought and written about doing oral history to understand politics and understanding the politics of doing oral history. Both topics,

no doubt, delineate a lively field for discussion on contemporary oral history and will continue to do so for time to come. We sincerely wish that writers and readers continue to consider the journal a place for experimenting new ideas and discussing differences.

The editors

A personal note from Gerardo Necochea

*This issue marks the transition from paper to digital. It is also the last issue of which I am director. I became co-director at the IOHA conference in Pietermaritzburg, in 2002, and I leave the journal almost a decade later. I believe I was able to carry on the work started a few years back by those who founded the journal, and today *Words and Silences / Palabras y Silencios* has earned its place in the oral history community. I thank previous co-editors and all those who did their best so each issue could be published. To the new editors, I wish them luck and success.*

