Argentine women have always been part of the historical process. Civil wars in the nineteenth century and military dictatorship in the twentieth century compelled them to become active participants of this process, which ultimately led them to a self-realization as historical agents, despite the fact that volatile governments often suppressed their activism by all means and rarely listened to their demands for justice. As in most developing countries, the Argentinian women’s movement is a discursive phenomenon. It had its roots in the nineteenth century, and its origin is undoubtedly linked to the European women’s movement. The Argentinian women’s suffrage movement culminated in 1947 when, under the leadership of María Eva Duarte de Perón, the Peronista Women’s Party (El Partido Peronista Femenino) was created. Feminist groups as well as feminist philosophies have never been welcomed by the military, which praised the conventional roles of women.

Latin America is well known for its reverence to the traditional figure of the mother. At the same time, the Argentinian cultural paradigm emphasizes male authority, making patent the dichotomy of marianismo and machismo. Marianismo presupposes such feminine virtues as submissiveness, purity, devotion to children, and moral strength, whereas machismo suggests first and foremost the supremacy of men over women. Marianismo can be traced back to the principles...
of the early Christian Church, where women are first obedient to God and then to man. *Marianismo* links females to the figure of the Virgin Mary and implies women’s apolitical nature. This ideology has been predominant in Argentina since its independence. It has been argued by some scholars that dictators saw themselves as absolute authorities and thus expected all men and women to submit. Interestingly, during the time of the dictatorship, the image of the mother was widely used in the mass media, mostly to promote women’s traditional roles, propagandize the nuclear family formation, and encourage an increase in birthrates. The junta presented itself as the defender of “tradition, family, and property.”

Nearly forty years ago, Argentinian women united as a group and formed the Association of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo to find their children who disappeared during the so-called Dirty War. Today the mothers are sorrowful grandmothers who still march every Thursday as they have done since 1977. Political scientist Marguerite Guzman Bouvard writes, “[T]o meet the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo is to understand the inner transformation that they herald as the prior condition of a new political way.” The inner transformation is also documented in the poetry and testimonials written by these women. Chandra Mohanty convincingly argues in *Feminism without Boarders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (2003), “Writing is itself an activity marked by class and ethnic position. However, testimonials, life stories and oral histories are a significant mode of remembering and recording experience and struggles. Written texts are not produced in a vacuum.”

Argentinian women’s texts are full of pain, struggle, and hope. Before the disappearances of their children, these women also shared characteristics of *marianismo*, but their loss transformed their identities completely and irretrievably. As feminist philosopher Sara Ruddick put it, “[W]hen children are assaulted by social evils that could be prevented, though a mother herself may be helpless to prevent them, mothering becomes cruel and bitter work. In many societies, the ideology of motherhood is oppressive to women.”

None of the Mothers had any prior political experience before the military coup of 1976. Their first meeting took place on April 30, 1977, but tragically the founder of the Association of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, Azucena Villaflor, along with 12 other women, also disappeared. The place where the Mothers assemble—the Plaza de Mayo—is historically symbolic for Argentina, as it faces the president’s office and is surrounded by government buildings. Women turned this plaza into their own space where they could share their pain, feel solidarity, and protest. In 1986 the original group of the Mothers split