


In memory of Janice Monk (Sydney, 1937 – Tucson, 2024)

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Abstract

Janice Monk, an internationally recognized geographer, died on 12 July 2024 in Tucson, Arizona. Monk was a pivotal figure in the development and institutionalization of geography and gender in the United States and internationally, co-founding the International Geographical Union's (IGU) Gender and Geography Commission in 1988, of which she was the guiding spirit to the last. The intellectual interests that characterized Monk's career were social equity and inclusivity, issues of women and gender, and the valuing of international ties, and she channeled them through research, teaching and her engagement with professional service in order to prompt institutional change. Janice Monk's academic uniqueness is strongly determined by her teaching, which was active, generous and committed to female geographers of different generations, places, languages and cultures around the world. Monk was an intellectual beacon for the Geography and Gender Research Group at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and for the development of geography and gender at this university.

Keywords: Janice Monk; geography and gender; social and cultural geography; International Geographical Union; obituary

Resum. *En homenatge a Janice Monk (Sydney, 1937 – Tucson, 2024)*

Janice Monk, geògrafa reconeguda internacionalment, va morir el 12 de juliol de 2024 a Tucson (Arizona). Monk va ser una figura cabdal en el desenvolupament i la institucionalització de la geografia i el gènere als Estats Units i més enllà de les seves fronteres, atès que va cofundar la Comissió de Gènere i Geografia de la Unió Geogràfica Internacional (UGI) el 1988, de la qual en va ser l'ànima fins al final. Els interessos intel·lectuals que van caracteritzar la trajectòria de Monk van ser les qüestions d'equitat i inclusió social, els temes sobre dones i gènere i el valor de les connexions internacionals, matèries que va canalitzar a través de la recerca, la docència i la implicació amb el servei professional per tal d'impulsar un canvi institucional. Amb tot, la singularitat acadèmica de Janice Monk va ser molt determinada per un mestratge actiu, generós i compromès envers geògrafs de diverses generacions, llocs, llengües i cultures del món. Monk va ser un far intel·lectual per al Grup de Recerca en Geografia i Gènere de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona i per al desenvolupament de la geografia i el gènere en aquesta universitat.

Paraules clau: Janice Monk; geografia i gènere; geografia social i cultural; Unió Geogràfica Internacional; obituari

Resumen. *En homenaje a Janice Monk (Sydney, 1937 – Tucson, 2024)*

Janice Monk, geógrafa reconocida internacionalmente, murió el 12 de julio de 2024 en Tucson (Arizona). Monk fue una figura fundamental en el desarrollo y la institucionalización de la geografía y el género en los Estados Unidos y más allá de sus fronteras, puesto que cofundó la Comisión de Género y Geografía de la Unión Geográfica Internacional (UGI) en 1988, de la que fue el alma hasta el final. Los intereses intelectuales que caracterizaron la trayectoria de Monk fueron las cuestiones de equidad e inclusión social, los temas sobre mujeres y género y el valor de las conexiones internacionales, materias que canalizó a través de la investigación, la docencia y la implicación con el servicio profesional para impulsar un cambio institucional. Aun así, la singularidad académica de Janice Monk fue muy determinada por una maestría activa, generosa y comprometida hacia geógrafas de diversas generaciones, lugares, lenguas y culturas del mundo. Monk fue un faro intelectual para el Grupo de Investigación en Geografía y Género de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona y para el desarrollo de la geografía y el género en esta universidad.

Palabras clave: Janice Monk; geografía y género; geografía social y cultural; Unión Geográfica Internacional; obituario

Résumé. *En hommage à Janice Monk (Sydney, 1937 – Tucson, 2025)*

Janice Monk, géographe de renommée internationale, est décédée le 12 juillet 2024 à Tucson, en Arizona. Monk a été une figure fondamentale dans le développement et l'institutionnalisation de la géographie et du genre aux États-Unis et dans le monde, co-fondatrice de la Commission sur le genre et la géographie de l'Union Géographique Internationale (UGI) en 1988, dont elle a été l'âme jusqu'à la fin. Les intérêts intellectuels qui ont caractérisé la carrière de Monk sont les questions d'équité et d'inclusion sociale, les questions de femmes et de genre, ainsi que la valeur des relations internationales, et elle les a canalisées à travers la recherche, l'enseignement et l'implication dans le service professionnel pour promouvoir le changement institutionnel. Néanmoins, la singularité académique de Janice Monk est grandement déterminée par une maîtrise active, généreuse et engagée envers les géographes de différentes générations, lieux, langues et cultures du monde. Monk a été un phare intellectuel pour le groupe de recherche sur la géographie et le genre de l'Université

Autonome de Barcelone et pour le développement de la géographie et du genre dans cette université.

Mots-clés : Janice Monk ; géographie et genre ; géographie sociale et culturelle ; Union Géographique Internationale ; nécrologie

I hope that looking back also prompts us to look to the future with aspirations that are inclusive and creative – ones that value commitments to social change, international collaboration, and the pleasure and rewards that come from working together and that enable us to forge such good friendships and the intellectual stimulation that I have received.

Janice MONK (2015). “Braided Streams: Spaces and Flows in a Career”.
Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica, 61(1), 5-20.

“Braided Streams: Spaces and Flows in a Career” is the title Janice Monk gave to the text of the acceptance speech on being awarded an honorary doctorate by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona on 16 October 2013, which was published in *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica* in 2015 (Monk, 2015). Certainly, this idea of connection, flow and movement is what identified the figure of Janice Monk in international geography. It also appears in a book published in her honor recently, *Bridging Worlds – Building Feminist Spaces*, in which the metaphor of the bridge connecting feminist geography with the world is what best defines the supportive figure that Janice Monk was for feminist geographers of different generations and different nationalities (Datta et al., 2023).

Janice Monk died on 12 July 2024 in Tucson, Arizona. She was an internationally renowned geographer, teacher, colleague and friend of the Geography and Gender Group at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). Janice Monk was a pivotal figure in the development and institutionalization of geography and gender in the United States and internationally – she co-founded the International Geographical Union's Gender and Geography Commission in 1988 and was its guiding spirit to the last. The intellectual interests that characterized Monk's career were concerns for social equity and inclusivity, issues of women and gender, and the valuing of international ties (Monk, 2015: 7). She channeled these interests into her research, her teaching and her commitment to professional service and to institutional change. Janice Monk's academic individuality is strongly determined by her teaching, which was active, generous and committed to female geographers of different generations, places, languages and cultures around the world. It was this ability to share and drive ideas, methods and activities and to connect people with similar and complementary interests, that makes Janice Monk's career so unique.

Janice Monk was born in Sydney on 13 March 1937, and graduated from there in 1957 with a degree in Geography. She continued her studies in the United States, receiving her PhD from the University of Illinois in 1972 with a thesis on the social and economic lives of people of Aboriginal descent in six

rural communities in New South Wales, a work at the crossroads of geography and Australian indigenous studies, something she had not encountered in her entire degree course at the University of Sydney. Her interest was in people's lived experiences, identifying their life situations and recognizing their diversity. Instead of treating the aboriginal identity as problematic, she focused on poverty and governmental policies as factors determining inequality (Howitt et al., 2024). The methodology she used was essentially qualitative and ethnographic at a time when research in the United States was very quantitative and showed little interest in cultural and ethnic studies. This is why she can be considered a pioneer in bringing about a cultural shift in geography, one that would become so important in international geography. Monk returned to this research topic in the later years of her academic life. Thanks to a collaborative project she was able to return to Australia, travel to the places she had researched in 1965, and meet new generations of the families she had worked with, create the Jan Monk Archive in Canberra with all the original materials from her research, and train new researchers working at the intersection between politics, context and people's lives. But now, after more than 50 years, she was able to work with an analytical perspective of gender, power and race to interpret her research (Howitt et al., 2018; Monk et al., 2023).

In 1980 she gained a permanent research position at the University of Arizona in Tucson as a member of the Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW), a regional and interdisciplinary research center that brought together female researchers from Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah, to research female diversity in the region beyond Anglo-Americans, such as Mexican-Americans and Indian-Americans. In 1983 Monk became executive director of the research center, a position she held for 21 years, until 2004. At the same time, she worked as a research professor in the Department of Geography and Development at the university until she was appointed professor emeritus. The University of Arizona became base camp for Janice Monk's academic life, travelling from here to many countries to share her ideas on how gender, place and race affect lived geographies, training academics and students, and reformulating the androcentric nature of the discipline. Very early on, with Susan Hanson she wrote "On not excluding half of the human in human geography" in *The Professional Geographer*, a text that would become seminal in feminist geography (Monk and Hanson, 1982). In this article the authors draw attention to the gaps in theory, concepts and methods in geographical research, with examples from many fields within the discipline. It is an article that has inspired many female geographers, as well as female researchers from other social and human sciences.

Work on women, gender and feminist perspectives emphasizing the significance of places and their cultures on female diversity was the focus of her work, enriching for her and inspiring for everyone who knew her. Now studies in feminist geography recognize that the positions female researchers take and the places where research is conducted influence the results, but Monk already had a special understanding of how social and political contexts, academic traditions

and male and female researchers model the creation and spread of knowledge. Her position as an Australian living in the United States on the border with Mexico and her interest in social, cultural and gender geography very much placed her at the margins of the mainstream Anglo-American geography of the time, although it did not prevent her from exercising a notable influence on it. She was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Honors award by the Association of American Geographers (AAG) in 2000, and was its president from 2001 to 2002.¹ This double perspective as both an insider and outsider in the predominating world of Anglo-Saxon academia enabled her to connect very effectively with research rooted in other academic disciplines which, in her opinion, also ought to be “international”. Her sensitivity and receptiveness to the geographies and female geographers of other cultures and languages led her to develop strong relationships and give personal support and intellectual stimulation for people from countries where the gender approach was not sufficiently known or even accepted in academic geography. This work was strengthened with the creation of the International Geographical Union (IGU)’s Geography and Gender Commission in 1988, with Janet Momsen and Maria Dolors García Ramon. In 2012 Monk was awarded the *Lauréat d’Honneur* by the IGU for her work.

The story of how the commission came to be created is an example of the relationships between people, places and trajectories that Monk promoted. Janice Monk met Maria Dolors García Ramon in Paris in 1984 at the International Geographical Union congress. It was here that the idea of creating a network of feminist geographers started to take shape. The idea became more concrete in 1986 in Barcelona at the International Geographical Union regional congress, for which Janice Monk, Maria Dolors García Ramon and Gemma Cànoves (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) organized a round table to explore directions in gender studies in geography as revealed in several contexts. Speakers at the round table responded positively to each other’s ideas and the collegiality of the session was a precursor in placing gender within the channels of the IGU (Monk, 2015: 8). The IGU Gender and Geography Study Group was official launched in 1988 at the congress in Sydney, under the leadership of Janet Momsen (president), who prepared the application and shared it with the executive board, Janice Monk (vice-president) and Maria Dolors García Ramon (secretary). The group was promoted to commission status at the Washington Congress in 1992. The commission has been the most important driver in promoting the internationalization of gender in geography, in empowering female academics to share their research and in making the discipline more inclusive (García Ramon and Luna, 2023). A first step towards promoting inclusivity was the creation of the IGU Gender Newsletter in 1988, a biannual online publication that publishes the work of female

1. At its annual meeting in Detroit in 2025, the AAG held a session in honor of Janice Monk, “Celebrating and Remembering Jan Monk”, attended by colleagues, friends and students.

researchers, covers commission events and provides information on congresses, seminars and other areas of interest in geography and gender around the world. The newsletter is published in English, French and Spanish. Janice Monk was editor of the newsletter for 30 years, and Maria Dolors Garcia Ramon took charge of Spanish translations from 2008 onwards, when the newsletter became available in the other two languages. Today the newsletter is edited by Joos Droogleever Fortuijn (who has been president of the commission and first female vice-president of the IGU). It has been running for 72 editions and is an excellent way of sharing the work and information of female geographers in both the global south and north.

Janice Monk's relationship with Maria Dolors Garcia Ramon, the Geography and Gender Research Group and the Department of Geography of the UAB began in 1986. She went on to visit the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona more than fifteen times: on sabbatical visits (1992 and 2006), on research trips or on shorter visits to participate in joint projects or to present at conferences. Her last visit was in July 2017 to celebrate her eightieth birthday. Monk also taught courses on the Erasmus program, a European Union teaching initiative connecting European academics working in the field of gender which enabled the UAB and six universities from five European countries (Denmark, Spain, Greece, Netherlands and the United Kingdom) to organize intensive courses on geography and gender from 1990 to 1998, with teaching staff and students from the participating universities. Janice Monk participated in the two courses organized by the UAB in 1993 and 1998, and in the course organized by the National Technical University of Athens in 1994, as part of the UAB research group. The courses were very interesting because they transmitted different traditions of geography, both in terms of theory and methodology. To develop as part of a culturally and linguistically diverse group was a huge challenge for the students and staff involved, and a learning experience that went beyond the "geography and gender" educational aspects of the courses. The importance of places and the differences between the north and south of Europe that were addressed were a source of inspiration for both Garcia Ramon and Monk, who together edited the book *Women of the European Union: The Politics of Work and Daily Life*, published by Routledge in 1996, as well as a series of books under the title "International Studies of Women and Place" that Monk and Momsen started and that today runs to more than 40 volumes. This practice of collaboration and co-authorship with colleagues from outside the Anglo-American sphere was a constant feature of Monk's career and an example of the truly international promotion of geography and gender. And she did not only publish in leading journals, editorials and languages, but also beyond these spaces, such as in the Belgian journal *Belgeo* (2007), for which Garcia Ramon and Monk edited a monographic edition on "Gender and Geography Worldwide: Contesting Anglo-American Hegemony", which included some of the papers presented at an international seminar organized by the Geography and Gender Research Group of the UAB in 2006; or the various articles in the journals *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica* and *Treballs de*

la Societat Catalana de Geografia, written in Catalan, Spanish and English, on feminist geography (García Ramon and Monk, 1987); feminist perspectives in different places in the world (Monk, 1995); her experience “weaving webs” between places, people and ideas (Monk, 2006, 2007, 2015); and the other two regular elements of her career: teaching (Monk, 2001a) and institutional transformation (Monk, 2001b). Other works by Janice Monk have been published in German, Italian, Japanese and Portuguese.

In her teaching, Monk was immediately concerned by what was being taught and how at the University of Arizona. She introduced geography and gender courses into the curriculum but she ensured that other subjects were not “gender blind” and shared this with several other disciplines in the faculty. Her organization of courses was followed by more ambitious strategies, such as at SIROW, where she hired female researchers from other countries so that they could train local female researchers in gender with examples from other social and human sciences from different places around the world. Monk also worked nationally on educational transformation with the Association of American Geographers (AAG) and the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) in the United States. Here she ran projects for secondary school teachers, creating teaching materials and approaches with gender, race and ethnicity-inclusive content and strategies (Monk et al., 2000). Institutionally, she contrasted the perspectives that staff and students had of the academic discipline or professional careers through different projects involving not just academic staff but also professional geographers from public institutions, businesses and non-governmental organizations. It was probably her interest in excavating the histories of female geographers in the United States from the late nineteenth century into the 1970s that led her to this task. Monk wanted to find out how the few, little recognized female geographers saw their work, what challenges they faced in male-dominated universities and how they contributed to the education and society of the time (Monk, 2004).

Jan Monk played a key role in mentoring young geographers, both male and female, especially in her work with post-graduate students and geographers in the first stages of their careers. Her work with Michael Solem and Kenneth Foote on books such as *Practicing Geography* (2012) and *Aspiring Academics. A resource book for graduate students and career faculty* (2009) was fundamental in providing valuable resources to male and female geographers at the beginning of their academic careers. In addition, her commitment to early career geographers was exceptional, as evidenced by the support she gave not only to women but also to other minority groups and to international students, helping them to integrate and prosper in the academic field of geography, and promoting a more inclusive and diverse environment within the discipline.

Her drive to help others also transferred to the more personal sphere, welcoming researchers from various academic fields and countries to the University of Arizona (and often to her home). In our case, Maria Dolors García Ramon went on several sabbatical visits there, Antoni Luna did his PhD thesis there, Mireia Baylina went on a research visit, and other people

from the department or closely linked to it were also welcomed to the University of Arizona under her leadership. These encounters led to intellectual stimulation and a close and continued scientific collaboration over time that has been essential to boost the internationalization of our research, teaching and institutional activities. With her vision of geography that had no disciplinary boundaries or spatial limitations, for Jan Monk linguistic and cultural differences were always overcome with mutual trust and enthusiasm (García Ramon and Luna, 2023). As a result, she also had an impact on social science, arts and humanities. Her pioneering role in introducing gender to geography and disseminating this challenge on an international level ran in parallel with her work on the relationship between art, creativity and landscape. One of the first projects that Monk worked on at SIROW, with Vera Norwood, was on the relationship between landscape, culture and female writers and artists from Southwest America, through a historical analysis running from 1880 to 1980. In addition to highlighting the region's huge cultural wealth, the authors demonstrated how female artists from different cultures perceived their surrounding landscape and how their creative work reflected this relationship. The project was an interesting combination of cultural and humanist geography seen from a clear gender perspective, something that was absent from these two geographical paradigms at the time. This way of exploring the relationships between people and landscapes, highlighting diversity and taking a feminist perspective, also inspired Catalan geography. And not only in terms of publications (Luna and Cerarols, 2015) but also at an institutional level, in the integration of the curriculum following Monk's example. The geo-humanities taught in the Faculty of Humanities of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona) are clearly inspired by this relationship between landscape, creativity and gender, an original interdisciplinary approach expressed in teaching, research and social transference (Cerarols and Luna, 2017).

Janice Monk was ready for a challenge for as long as her health allowed her. She liked to know about the people she valued and to participate in anything she could. One of her last collaborations with the Geography and Gender Research Group of the UAB was to co-edit the book *Maria Dolors García Ramon. Geografía y género, disidencia e innovación* (Albet et al., 2019) [Maria Dolors García Ramon. Geography and gender, dissidence and innovation], which was the fruit of her intimate knowledge of García Ramon's career and personality; and to contribute a chapter of the book on gender and international geography (Baylina et al., 2022), published as a commemorative volume to celebrate the centenary of the International Geographical Union.

Janice Monk's trajectory has outlasted the neoliberal university. Despite her considerable scientific output, her 'diverted' career – as she herself defined it having devoted herself to issues that were not mainstream in geography at the time (Monk, Casey and Allen, 2021) – exceeds all types of evaluation metrics of current curricula. Monk's feminist arguments have had a political effect at many universities. Few renowned geographers have enlightened, ins-

pired and helped so many people around the world, and in such a committed and supportive way, in geography and in social and human sciences. She was awarded an honorary doctorate by the UAB on 16 October 2013, proposed by the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts for her decisive contribution to the development of geography and gender, and social and cultural geography, at an international level, and for her valuable work with the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

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