Toward a Decolonial Feminism

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In "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System" (Lugones 2007), I proposed to read the relation between the colonizer and the colonized in terms of gender, race, and sexuality. By this I did not mean to add a gendered reading and a racial reading to the already understood colonial relations. Rather I proposed a rereading of modern capitalist colonial modernity itself. This is because the colonial imposition of gender cuts across questions of ecology, economics, government, relations with the spirit world, and knowledge, as well as across everyday practices that either habituate us to take care of the world or to destroy it. I propose this framework not as an abstraction from lived experience, but as a lens that enables us to see what is hidden from our understandings of both race and gender and the relation of each to normative heterosexuality.

Modernity organizes the world ontologically in terms of atomic, homogeneous, separable categories. Contemporary women of color and third-world women's critique of feminist universalism centers the claim that the intersection of race, class, sexuality, and gender exceeds the categories of modernity. If *woman* and *black* are terms for homogeneous, atomic, separable categories, then their intersection shows us the absence of black women rather than their presence. So, to see non-white women is to exceed "categorial" logic. I propose the modern, colonial, gender system as a lens through which to theorize further the oppressive logic of colonial modernity, its use of hierarchical dichotomies and categorial logic. I want to emphasize categorial, dichotomous, hierarchical logic as central to modern, colonial, capitalist thinking about race, gender, and sexuality. This permits me to search for social organizations from which people have resisted modern, capitalist modernity that are in tension with its logic. Following Aparicio and Blaser,[1] I will call such ways of organizing the social,

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the cosmological, the ecological, the economic, and the spiritual *non-modern*. With Aparicio and Blaser and others, I use non-modern to express that these ways are not premodern. The modern apparatus reduces them to premodern ways. So, non-modern knowledges, relations, and values, and ecological, economic, and spiritual practices are logically constituted to be at odds with a dichotomous, hierarchical, "categorial" logic.

I. The Coloniality of Gender

I understand the dichotomous hierarchy between the human and the nonhuman as the central dichotomy of colonial modernity. Beginning with the colonization of the Americas and the Caribbean, a hierarchical, dichotomous distinction between human and non-human was imposed on the colonized in the service of Western man. It was accompanied by other dichotomous hierarchical distinctions, among them that between men and women. This distinction became a mark of the human and a mark of civilization. Only the civilized are men or women. Indigenous peoples of the Americas and enslaved Africans were classified as not human in species—as animals, uncontrollably sexual and wild. The European, bourgeois, colonial, modern man became a subject/agent, fit for rule, for public life and ruling, a being of civilization, heterosexual, Christian, a being of mind and reason. The European bourgeois woman was not understood as his complement, but as someone who reproduced race and capital through her sexual purity, passivity, and being homebound in the service of the white, European, bourgeois man. The imposition of these dichotomous hierarchies became woven into the historicity of relations, including intimate relations. In this paper I want to figure out how to think about intimate, everyday resistant interactions to the colonial difference. When I think of intimacy here, I am not thinking exclusively or mainly about sexual relations. I am thinking of the interwoven social life among people who are not acting as representatives or officials.

I begin, then, with a need to understand that the colonized became subjects in colonial situations in the first modernity, in the tensions created by the brutal imposition of the modern, colonial, gender system. Under the imposed gender framework, the bourgeois white Europeans were civilized; they were fully human. The hierarchical dichotomy as a mark of the human also became a normative tool to damn the colonized. The behaviors of the colonized and their personalities/souls were judged as bestial and thus non-gendered, promiscuous, grotesquely sexual, and sinful. Though at this time the understanding of sex was not dimorphic, animals were differentiated as males and females, the male being the perfection, the female the inversion and deformation of the male.[2] Hermaphrodites, sodomites, viragos, and the colonized were all understood to be aberrations of male perfection.

The civilizing mission, including conversion to Christianity, was present in the ideological conception of conquest and colonization. Judging the colonized for their deficiencies from the point of view of the civilizing mission justified enormous cruelty. I propose to interpret the colonized, non-human males from the civilizing perspective as judged from the normative understanding of "man," the human being par excellence. Females were judged from the normative understanding of "women," the human inversion of men.[3] From this point of view, colonized people became males and females. Males became not-human-as-not-men, and colonized females became not-human-as-not-women. Consequently, colonized females were never understood as lacking because they were not men-like, and were turned into viragos. Colonized men were not understood to be lacking as not being women-like. What has been understood as the "feminization" of colonized "men" seems rather a gesture of humiliation, attributing to them sexual passivity under the threat of rape. This tension between hypersexuality and sexual passivity defines one of the domains of masculine subjection of the colonized.

It is important to note that often, when social scientists investigate colonized societies, the search for the sexual distinction and then the construction of the gender distinction results from observations of the tasks performed by each sex. In so doing they affirm the inseparability of sex and gender characteristic mainly of earlier feminist analysis. More contemporary analysis has introduced arguments for the claim that gender constructs sex. But in the earlier version, sex grounded gender. Often, they became conflated: where you see sex, you will see gender and vice versa. But, if I am right about the coloniality of gender, in the distinction between the human and the non-human, sex had to stand alone. Gender and sex could not be both inseparably tied and racialized. Sexual dimorphism became the grounding for the dichotomous understanding of gender, the human characteristic. One may well be interested in arguing that the sex that stood alone in the bestialization of the colonized, was, after all, gendered. What is important to me here is that sex was made to stand alone in the characterization of the colonized. This strikes me as a good entry point for research that takes coloniality seriously and aims to study the historicity and meaning of the relation between sex and gender.

The colonial "civilizing mission" was the euphemistic mask of brutal access to people's bodies through unimaginable exploitation, violent sexual violation, control of reproduction, and systematic terror (feeding people alive to dogs or making pouches and hats from the vaginas of brutally killed indigenous females, for example). The civilizing mission used the hierarchical gender dichotomy as a judgment, though the attainment of dichotomous gendering for the colonized was not the point of the normative judgment. Turning the colonized into human beings was not a colonial goal. The difficulty of imagining this as a goal can be appreciated clearly when one sees that

this transformation of the colonized into men and women would have been a transformation not in identity, but in nature. But turning the colonized against themselves was included in the civilizing mission's repertoire of justifications for abuse. Christian confession, sin, and the Manichean division between good and evil served to imprint female sexuality as evil, as colonized females were understood in relation to Satan, sometimes as mounted by Satan.

The civilizing transformation justified the colonization of memory, and thus of people's senses of self, of intersubjective relation, of their relation to the spirit world, to land, to the very fabric of their conception of reality, identity, and social, ecological, and cosmological organization. Thus, as Christianity became the most powerful instrument in the mission of transformation, the normativity that connected gender and civilization became intent on erasing community, ecological practices, knowledge of planting, of weaving, of the cosmos, and not only on changing and controlling reproductive and sexual practices. One can begin to appreciate the tie between the colonial introduction of the instrumental modern concept of nature central to capitalism, and the colonial introduction of the modern concept of gender, and appreciate it as macabre and heavy in its impressive ramifications. One can also recognize, in the scope I am giving to the imposition of the modern, colonial, gender system, the dehumanization constitutive of the coloniality of being. The concept of the coloniality of being that I understand as related to the process of dehumanization was developed by Nelson Maldonado Torres (2008).

I use the term *coloniality* following Anibal Quijano's analysis of the capitalist world system of power in terms of "coloniality of power" and of modernity, two inseparable axes in the workings of this system of power. Quijano's analysis provides us with a historical understanding of the inseparability of racialization and capitalist exploitation[4] as constitutive of the capitalist system of power as anchored in the colonization of the Americas. In thinking of the coloniality of gender, I complicate his understanding of the capitalist global system of power, but I also critique his own understanding of gender as only in terms of sexual access to women.[5] In using the term *coloniality* I mean to name not just a classification of people in terms of the coloniality of power and gender, but also the process of active reduction of people, the dehumanization that fits them for the classification, the process of subjectification, the attempt to turn the colonized into less than human beings. This is in stark contrast to the process of conversion that constitutes the Christianizing mission.

II. Theorizing Resistance/Decolonizing Gender

The semantic consequence of the coloniality of gender is that "colonized woman" is an empty category: no women are colonized; no colonized females are women. Thus, the colonial answer to Sojouner Truth is clearly, "no."[6]

Unlike colonization, the coloniality of gender is still with us; it is what lies at the intersection of gender/class/race as central constructs of the capitalist world system of power. Thinking about the coloniality of gender enables us to think of historical beings only one-sidedly, understood as oppressed. As there are no such beings as colonized women, I suggest that we focus on the beings who resist the coloniality of gender from the "colonial difference." Such beings are, as I have suggested, only partially understood as oppressed, as constructed through the coloniality of gender. The suggestion is not to search for a non-colonized construction of gender in indigenous organizations of the social. There is no such thing; "gender" does not travel away from colonial modernity. Resistance to the coloniality of gender is thus historically complex.

When I think of myself as a theorist of resistance, it is not because I think of resistance as the end or goal of political struggle, but rather as its beginning, its possibility. I am interested in the relational subjective/intersubjective spring of liberation, as both adaptive and creatively oppositional. Resistance is the tension between subjectification (the forming/informing of the subject) and active subjectivity, that minimal sense of agency required for the oppressing $\leftarrow\rightarrow$ resisting relation being an active one, without appeal to the maximal sense of agency of the modern subject (Lugones 2003).[7]

Resistant subjectivity often expresses itself infra-politically, rather than in a politics of the public, which has an easy inhabitation of public contestation. Legitimacy, authority, voice, sense, and visibility are denied to resistant subjectivity. Infra-politics marks the turn inward, in a politics of resistance, toward liberation. It shows the power of communities of the oppressed in constituting resistant meaning and each other against the constitution of meaning and social organization by power. In our colonized, racially gendered, oppressed existences we are also other than what the hegemon makes us be. That is an infra-political achievement. If we are exhausted, fully made through and by micro and macro mechanisms and circulations of power, "liberation" loses much of its meaning or ceases to be an intersubjective affair. The very possibility of an identity based on politics (Mignolo 2000) and the project of de-coloniality loses its peopled ground.

As I move methodologically from women of color feminisms to a decolonial feminism, I think about feminism from and at the grassroots, and from and at the colonial difference, with a strong emphasis on ground, on a historicized, incarnate intersubjectivity. The question of the *relation* between resistance or resistant response to the coloniality of gender and de-coloniality is being set up here rather than answered.[8] But I do mean to understand resistance to the coloniality of gender from the perspective of the colonial difference.

Decolonizing gender is necessarily a praxical task. It is to enact a critique of racialized, colonial, and capitalist heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social. As such it places the theorizer in the midst of people

in a historical, peopled, subjective/intersubjective understanding of the oppressing ←→ resisting relation at the intersection of complex systems of oppression. To a significant extent it has to be in accord with the subjectivities and intersubjectivities that partly construct and in part are constructed by "the situation." It must include "learning" peoples. Furthermore, feminism does not just provide an account of the oppression of women. It goes beyond oppression by providing materials that enable women to understand their situation without succumbing to it. Here I begin to provide a way of understanding the oppression of women who have been subalternized through the combined processes of racialization, colonization, capitalist explotation, and heterosexualism. My intent is to focus on the subjective-intersubjective to reveal that disaggregating oppressions disaggregates the subjective-intersubjective springs of colonized women's agency. I call the analysis of racialized, capitalist, gender oppression "the coloniality of gender." I call the possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender "decolonial feminism."

The coloniality of gender enables me to understand the oppressive imposition as a complex interaction of economic, racializing, and gendering systems in which every person in the colonial encounter can be found as a live, historical, fully described being. It is as such that I want to understand the resister as being oppressed by the colonizing construction of the fractured locus. But the coloniality of gender hides the resister as fully informed as a native of communities under cataclysmic attack. So, the coloniality of gender is only one active ingredient in the resister's history. In focusing on the resister at the colonial difference I mean to unveil what is obscured.

The long process of coloniality begins subjectively and intersubjectively in a tense encounter that both forms and will not simply yield to capitalist, modern, colonial normativity. The crucial point about the encounter is that the subjective and intersubjective construction of it informs the resistance offered to the ingredients of colonial domination. The global, capitalist, colonial, modern system of power that Anibal Quijano characterizes as beginning in the sixteenth century in the Americas and enduring until today met not a world to be formed, a world of empty minds and evolving animals (Quijano CAOI; 1995). Rather, it encountered complex cultural, political, economic, and religious beings: selves in complex relations to the cosmos, to other selves, to generation, to the earth, to living beings, to the inorganic, in production; selves whose erotic, aesthetic, and linguistic expressivity, whose knowledges, senses of space, longings, practices, institutions, and forms of government were not to be simply replaced but met, understood, and entered into in tense, violent, risky crossings and dialogues and negotiations that never happened.

Instead, the process of colonization invented the colonized and attempted a full reduction of them to less than human primitives, satanically possessed, infantile, aggressively sexual, and in need of transformation. The process I want

to follow is the oppressing ←→ resisting process at the fractured locus of the colonial difference. That is, I want to follow subjects in intersubjective collaboration and conflict, fully informed as members of Native American or African societies, as they take up, respond, resist, and accommodate to hostile invaders who mean to dispossess and dehumanize them. The invasive presence engages them brutally, in a prepossessing, arrogant, incommunicative and powerful way, leaving little room for adjustments that preserve their own senses of self in community and in the world. But, instead of thinking of the global, capitalist, colonial system as in every way successful in its destruction of peoples, knowledges, relations, and economies, I want to think of the process as continually resisted, and being resisted today. And thus I want to think of the colonized neither as simply imagined and constructed by the colonizer and coloniality in accordance with the colonial imagination and the strictures of the capitalist colonial venture, but as a being who begins to inhabit a fractured locus constructed doubly, who perceives doubly, relates doubly, where the "sides" of the locus are in tension, and the conflict itself actively informs the subjectivity of the colonized self in multiple relation.[9]

The gender system is not just hierarchical but racially differentiated, and the racial differentiation denies humanity and thus gender to the colonized.[10] Irene Silverblatt (1990; 1998), Carolyn Dean (2001), Maria Esther Pozo (Pozo and Ledezma 2006), Pamela Calla and Nina Laurie (2006), Sylvia Marcos (2006), Paula Gunn Allen (1992), Leslie Marmon Silko (2006), Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala (2009), and Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997), among others, enable me to affirm that gender is a colonial imposition, not just as it imposes itself on life as lived in tune with cosmologies incompatible with the modern logic of dichotomies, but also that inhabitations of worlds understood, constructed, and in accordance with such cosmologies animated the self-among-others in resistance from and at the extreme tension of the colonial difference.

The long process of subjectification of the colonized toward adoption/internalization of the men/women dichotomy as a normative construction of the social—a mark of civilization, citizenship, and membership in civil society—was and is constantly renewed. It is met in the flesh over and over by oppositional responses grounded in a long history of oppositional responses and lived as sensical in alternative, resistant socialities at the colonial difference. It is movement toward coalition that impels us to know each other as selves that are thick, in relation, in alternative socialities, and grounded in tense, creative inhabitations of the colonial difference.

I am investigating emphasizing the historicity of the oppressing ←→ resisting relation and thus emphasizing concrete, lived resistances to the coloniality of gender. In particular, I want to mark the need to keep a multiple reading of the resistant self in relation. This is a consequence of the colonial imposition of gender. We see the gender dichotomy operating normatively in

the construction of the social and in the colonial processes of oppressive subjectification. But if we are going to make an-other construction of the self in relation, we need to bracket the dichotomous human/non-human, colonial, gender system that is constituted by the hierarchical dichotomy man/woman for European colonials+the non-gendered, non-human colonized. As Oyewumi makes clear, a colonizing reading of the Yoruba reads the hierarchical dichotomy into the Yoruba society, erasing the reality of the colonial imposition of a multiply oppressive gender system. Thus it is necessary for us to be very careful with the use of the terms *woman* and *man* and bracket them when necessary to weave the logic of the fractured locus, without causing the social sources woven into the resistant responses to disappear. If we only weave man and woman into the very fabric that constitutes the self in relation to resisting, we erase the resistance itself. Only in bracketing [ ] can we appreciate the different logic that organizes the social in the resistant response. Thus the multiple perception and inhabitation, the fracture of the locus, the double or multiple consciousness, is constituted in part by this logical difference. The fractured locus includes the hierarchical dichotomy that constitutes the subjectification of the colonized. But the locus is fractured by the resistant presence, the active subjectivity of the colonized against the colonial invasion of self in community from the inhabitation of that self. We see here the mirroring of the multiplicity of the woman of color in women of color feminisms.

I mentioned above that I was following Aparicio and Blaser's distinction between the modern and non-modern. They make the importance of the distinction clear as they tell us that modernity attempts to control, by denying their existence, the challenge of the existence of other worlds with different ontological presuppositions. It denies their existence by robbing them of validity and of co-evalness. This denial is coloniality. It emerges as constitutive of modernity. The difference between modern and non-modern becomes—from the modern perspective—a colonial difference, a hierarchical relation in which the non-modern is subordinated to the modern. But the exteriority of modernity is not premodern (Aparicio and Blaser, unpublished). It is important to see that a framework may well be fundamentally critical of the "categorical"/essentialist logic of modernity and be critical of the dichotomy between woman and man, and even of the dimorphism between male and female, without seeing coloniality or the colonial difference. Such a framework would not have and may exclude the very possibility of resistance to the modern, colonial, gender system and the coloniality of gender because it cannot see the world multiply through a fractured locus at the colonial difference.

In thinking of the methodology of decoloniality, I move to read the social from the cosmologies that inform it, rather than beginning with a gendered reading of cosmologies informing and constituting perception, motility, embodiment, and relation. Thus the move I am recommending is very

different from one that reads gender into the social. The shift can enable us to understand the organization of the social in terms that unveil the deep disruption of the gender imposition in the self in relation. Translating terms like *koshskalaka*, *chachawarmi*, and *urin* into the vocabulary of gender, into the dichotomous, heterosexual, racialized, and hierarchical conception that gives meaning to the gender distinction is to exercise the coloniality of language through colonial translation and thus erases the possibility of articulating the coloniality of gender and resistance to it.

In a conversation with Filomena Miranda, I asked her about the relation between the Aymara *qamaña* and *utjaña*, both often translated as "living." Her complex answer related *utjaña* to *uta*, dwelling in community in the communal land. She told me that one cannot have *qamaña* without *utjaña*. In her understanding, those who do not have *utjaña* are *waccha* and many become *misti*. Though she lives much of the time in La Paz, away from her communal lands, she maintains *utjaña*, which is now calling her to share in governing. Next year she will govern with her sister. Filomena's sister will replace her father, and thus she will be *chacha* twice, since her community is *chacha* as well as her *father*. Filomena herself will be *chacha* and *warmi*, as she will govern in her mother's stead in a *chacha* community. My contention is that to translate *chacha* and *warmi* as man and woman does violence to the communal relation expressed through *utjaña*. Filomena translated *chachawarmi* into Spanish as complementary opposites. The new Bolivian constitution, the Morales government, and the indigenous movements of Abya Yala express a commitment to the philosophy of *suma qamaña* (often translated as "living well"). The relation between *qamaña* and *utjaña* indicates the importance of complementarity and its inseparability from communal flourishing in the constant production of cosmic balance. *Chachawarmi* is not separable in meaning and practice from *utjaña*; it is rather of a piece with it. Thus the destruction of *chachawarmi* is not compatible with *suma qamaña*.[11]

I am certainly not advocating not reading, or not "seeing" the imposition of the human/non-human, man/woman, or male/female dichotomies in the construction of everyday life, as if that were possible. To do so would be to hide the coloniality of gender, and it would erase the very possibility of sensing—reading—the tense inhabitation of the colonial difference and the responses from it. As I mark the colonial translation from *chachawarmi* to man/woman, I am aware of the use of *man* and *woman* in everyday life in Bolivian communities, including in interracial discourse. The success of the complex gender norming introduced with colonization that goes into the constitution of the coloniality of gender has turned this colonial translation into an everyday affair, but resistance to the coloniality of gender is also lived linguistically in the tension of the colonial wound. The political erasure, the lived tension of *languaging*—of moving between ways of living in language—between *chachawarmi* and

man/woman constitutes loyalty to the coloniality of gender as it erases the history of resistance at the colonial difference. Filomena Miranda's *utjaña* is not a living in the past, only in the *chachawarmi* way of living. The possibility of *utjaña* today depends, in part, on lives lived in the tension of languaging at the colonial difference.

III. The Colonial Difference

Walter Mignolo begins *Local Histories/Global Designs* by telling us that "The main topic of this book is the colonial difference in the formation and transformation of the modern/colonial world system" (Mignolo 2000, ix). As the phrase "the colonial difference" moves through Mignolo's writing, its meaning becomes open-ended. The colonial difference is not defined in *Local Histories*. Indeed, a definitional disposition is unfriendly to Mignolo's introduction of the concept. So as I present some of the quotes from Mignolo's text, I am not introducing them as his definition of "the colonial difference." Rather, these quotes guide my thoughts on resistance to the coloniality of gender at the colonial difference from within the complexity of his text.

> The colonial difference is the space where coloniality of power is enacted. (Mignolo 2000, ix)

> Once coloniality of power is introduced into the analysis, the "colonial difference" becomes visible, and the epistemological fractures between the Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism is distinguished from the critique of Eurocentrism, anchored in the colonial difference. . . . (37)

I have prepared us to hear these assertions. One can look at the colonial past and, as an observer, see the natives negotiating the introduction of foreign beliefs and practices as well as negotiating being assigned to inferior positions and being found polluting and dirty. Clearly, to see this is not to see the coloniality. It is rather to see people—anyone, really—pressed under difficult circumstances to occupy demeaning positions that make them disgusting to the social superiors. To see the coloniality is to see the powerful reduction of human beings to animals, to inferiors by nature, in a schizoid understanding of reality that dichotomizes the human from nature, the human from the non-human, and thus imposes an ontology and a cosmology that, in its power and constitution, disallows all humanity, all possibility of understanding, all possibility of human communication, to dehumanized beings. To see the coloniality is to see both the *jaqi*, the persona, the being that is in a world of meaning without dichotomies, and the beast, both real, both vying under different powers for survival. Thus to see the coloniality is to reveal the very degradation that gives us two

renditions of life and a being rendered by them. The sole possibility of such a being lies in its full inhabitation of this fracture, of this wound, where sense is contradictory and from such contradiction new sense is made anew.

> [The colonial difference] is the space where *local* histories inventing and implementing global designs meet *local* histories, the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored. (Mignolo 2000, ix)

> [The colonial difference] is, finally, the physical as well as imaginary location where the coloniality of power is at work in the confrontation of two kinds of local histories displayed in different spaces and times across the planet. If Western cosmology is the historically unavoidable reference point, the multiple confrontations of two kinds of local histories defy dichotomies. Christian and Native American cosmologies, Christian and Amerindian cosmologies, Christian and Islamic cosmologies, Christian and Confucian cosmologies among others only enact dichotomies where you look at them one at a time, not when you compare them in the geohistorical confines of the modern/colonial world system. (ix)

Thus, it is not an affair of the past. It is a matter of the geopolitics of knowledge. It is a matter of how we produce a feminism that takes the global designs for racialized female and male energy and, erasing the colonial difference, takes that energy to be used toward the destruction of the worlds of meaning of our own possibilities. Our possibilities lie in communality rather than subordination; they do not lie in parity with our superior in the hierarchy that constitutes the coloniality. That construction of the human is vitiated through and through by its intimate relation with violence.

> The colonial difference creates the conditions for dialogic situations in which a fractured enunciation is enacted from the subaltern perspective as a response to the hegemonic discourse and perspective. (Mignolo 2000, x)

> The transcending of the colonial difference can *only* be done from a perspective of subalternity, from decolonization, and, therefore, from a new epistemological terrain where border thinking works. (45)

I see these two paragraphs in tension precisely because if the dialogue is to be had with the modern man, his occupation of the colonial difference involves his redemption but also his self-destruction. Dialogue is not only possible at the colonial difference but necessary for those resisting dehumanization in different

and intermingled locals. So, indeed, the transcending can only be done from the perspective of subalternity, but toward a newness of be-ing.

> Border thinking . . . is a logical consequence of the colonial difference. . . . [T]he fractured locus of enunciation from a subaltern perspective defines border thinking as a response to the colonial difference. (x)
>
> It is also the space where the restitution of subaltern knowledge is taking place and where border thinking is emerging. (ix)
>
> The colonial differences, around the planet, are the house where border epistemology dwells. (37)

I am proposing a feminist border thinking, where the liminality of the border is a ground, a space, a borderlands, to use Gloria Anzaldúa's term, not just a split, not an infinite repetition of dichotomous hierarchies among de-souled specters of the human.

Often in Mignolo's work the colonial difference is invoked at levels other than the subjective/intersubjective. But when he is using it to characterize "border thinking," as he interprets Anzaldúa, he thinks of her as enacting it. In so doing he understands *her* locus as fractured. The reading I want to perform sees the coloniality of gender and rejection, resistance, and response. It adapts to its negotiation always concretely, from within, as it were.

IV. Reading the Fractured Locus

What I am proposing in working toward a decolonial feminism is to learn about each other as resisters to the coloniality of gender at the colonial difference, without necessarily being an insider to the worlds of meaning from which resistance to the coloniality arises. That is, the decolonial feminist's task begins by her seeing the colonial difference, emphatically resisting her epistemological habit of erasing it. Seeing it, she sees the world anew, and then she requires herself to drop her enchantment with "woman," the universal, and begins to learn about other resisters at the colonial difference.[12] The reading moves against the social-scientific objectifying reading, attempting rather to understand subjects, the active subjectivity emphasized as the reading looks for the fractured locus in resistance to the coloniality of gender at a coalitional starting point. In thinking of the starting point as coalitional because the fractured locus is in common, the histories of resistance at the colonial difference are where we need to *dwell*, learning about each other. The coloniality of gender is sensed as concrete, intricately related exercises of power, some body to body, some legal, some inside a room as indigenous female-beasts-not-civilized-women are forced to weave day and night, others at the confessional. The differences in the

concreteness and intricacy of power in circulation are not understood as levels of generality; embodied subjectivity and the institutional are equally concrete.

As the coloniality infiltrates every aspect of living through the circulation of power at the levels of the body, labor, law, imposition of tribute, and the introduction of property and land dispossession, its logic and efficacy are met by different concrete people whose bodies, selves in relation, and relations to the spirit world do not follow the logic of capital. The logic they follow is not countenanced by the logic of power. The movement of these bodies and relations does not repeat itself. It does not become static and ossified. Everything and everyone continues to respond to power and responds much of the time resistantly—which is not to say in open defiance, though some of the time there is open defiance—in ways that may or may not be beneficial to capital, but that are not part of its logic. From the fractured locus, the movement succeeds in retaining creative ways of thinking, behaving, and relating that are antithetical to the logic of capital. Subject, relations, ground, and possibilities are continually transformed, incarnating a weave from the fractured locus that constitutes a creative, peopled re-creation. Adaptation, rejection, adoption, ignoring, and integrating are never just modes in isolation of resistance as they are always performed by an active subject thickly constructed by inhabiting the colonial difference with a fractured locus. I want to see the multiplicity in the fracture of the locus: both the enactment of the coloniality of gender and the resistant response from a subaltern sense of self, of the social, of the self-in-relation, of the cosmos, all grounded in a peopled memory. Without the tense multiplicity, we see only either the coloniality of gender as accomplishment, or a freezing of memory, an ossified understanding of self in relation from a precolonial sense of the social. Part of what I see is tense movement, people moving: the tension between the dehumanization and paralysis of the coloniality of being, and the creative activity of be-ing.

One does not resist the coloniality of gender alone. One resists it from within a way of understanding the world and living in it that is shared and that can understand one's actions, thus providing recognition. Communities rather than individuals enable the doing; one does with someone else, not in individualist isolation. The passing from mouth to mouth, from hand to hand of lived practices, values, beliefs, ontologies, space-times, and cosmologies constitutes one. The production of the everyday within which one exists produces one's self as it provides particular, meaningful clothing, food, economies and ecologies, gestures, rhythms, habitats, and senses of space and time. But it is important that these ways are not just different. They include affirmation of life over profit, communalism over individualism, "estar" over enterprise, beings in relation rather than dichotomously split over and over in hierarchically and violently ordered fragments. These ways of being, valuing, and believing have persisted in the resistant response to the coloniality.

Finally, I mark here the interest in an ethics of coalition-in-the-making in terms of both be-ing, and be-ing in relation that extends and interweaves its peopled ground (Lorde 2007). I can think of the self in relation as responding to the coloniality of gender at the colonial difference from a fractured locus, backed by an alternative communal source of sense that makes possible elaborate responses. The direction of the possibility of strengthening the affirmation and possibility of self in relation lies not through a rethinking of the relation with the oppressor from the point of the oppressed, but through a furthering of the logic of difference and multiplicity and of coalition at the point of difference (Lorde 2007). The emphasis is on maintaining multiplicity at the point of reduction—not in maintaining a hybrid "product," which hides the colonial difference—in the tense workings of more than one logic, not to be synthesized but transcended. Among the logics at work are the many logics meeting the logic of oppression: many colonial differences, but one logic of oppression. *The responses from the fragmented loci can be creatively in coalition*, a way of thinking of the possibility of coalition that takes up the logic of de-coloniality, and the logic of coalition of feminists of color: the oppositional consciousness of a social erotics (Sandoval 2000) that takes on the differences that make be-ing creative, that permits enactments that are thoroughly defiant of the logic of dichotomies (Lorde 2007). The logic of coalition is defiant of the logic of dichotomies; differences are never seen in dichotomous terms, but the logic has as its opposition the logic of power. The multiplicity is never reduced.

So, I mark this as a beginning, but it is a beginning that affirms a profound term that Maldonado Torres has called the "decolonial turn." The questions proliferate at this time and the answers are difficult. They require placing, again, an emphasis on methodologies that work with our lives, so the sense of responsibility is maximal. How do we learn about each other? How do we do it without harming each other but with the courage to take up a weaving of the everyday that may reveal deep betrayals? How do we cross without taking over? With whom do we do this work? The theoretical here is immediately practical. My own life—ways of spending my time, of seeing, of cultivating a depth of sorrow—is animated by great anger and directed by the love that Lorde (2007), Perez (1999), and Sandoval (2000) teach us. How do we practice with each other engaging in dialogue at the colonial difference? How do we know when we are doing it?

Isn't it the case that those of us who rejected the offer made to us over and over by white women in consciousness-raising groups, conferences, workshops, and women's studies program meetings saw the offer as slamming the door to a coalition that would really include us? Isn't it the case that we felt a calm, full, substantial sense of recognition when we asked: "What do you mean "We," White Woman?" Isn't it the case that we rejected the offer from the side of Sojourner Truth and were ready to reject their answer? Isn't it the case that we

refused the offer at the colonial difference, sure that for them there was only one woman, only one reality? Isn't it the case that we already know each other as multiple seers at the colonial difference, intent on a coalition that neither begins nor ends with that offer? We are moving on at a time of crossings, of seeing each other at the colonial difference constructing a new subject of a new feminist geopolitics of knowing and loving.

Notes

1. Juan Ricardo Aparicio and Mario Blaser present this analysis and the relation between knowledge and political practices that focuses on politically committed research in indigenous communities in the Americas, including both academics and activists, insiders and outsiders to the communities in their forthcoming work. This is an important contribution to understanding decolonial, liberatory processes of knowledge production.

2. Since the eighteenth century the dominant Western view "has been that there are two stable, incommensurable, opposite sexes and that the political, economic, and cultural lives of men and women, their gender roles, are somehow based on these "facts"" (Laqueur 1992, 6). Thomas Laqueur also tells us that historically, differentiations of gender preceded differentiations of sex (62). What he terms the "one-sex model" he traces through Greek antiquity to the end of the seventeenth century (and beyond): a world where at least two genders correspond to but one sex, where the boundaries between male and female are of degree and not of kind (25). Laqueur tells us that the longevity of the one-sex model is due to its link to power. "In a world that was overwhelmingly male, the one-sex model displayed what was already massively evident in culture: *man* is the measure of all things, and woman does not exist as an ontologically distinct category" (62). Laqueur sums up the question of perfection by saying that for Aristotle and for "the long tradition founded on his thought, the generative substances are interconvertible elements in the economy of a single-sex body whose higher form is male" (42).

3. There is a tension between the understanding of procreation central to the one-sex model and the Christian advocacy of virginity. Instead of seeing the working of sex as related to the production of heat leading to orgasm, St. Augustine sees it as related to the fall. Idealized Christian sex is without passion (see Laqueur 1992, 59–60). The consequences for the coloniality of gender are evident, as the bestial, colonized males and females are understood as excessively sexual.

4. Anibal Quijano understands the coloniality of power as the specific form that domination and exploitation takes in the constitution of the capitalist world system of power. "Coloniality" refers to: the classification of the world's populations in terms of races—the racialization of the relations between colonizers and colonized; the configuration of a new system of exploitation that articulates in one structure all forms of control of labor around the hegemony of capital, where labor is racialized (wage labor as well as slavery, servitude, and small commodity production all became racialized forms of production; they were all new forms as they were constituted in the service of capitalism); Eurocentrism as the new mode of production and control of subjectivity; a new

system of control of collective authority around the hegemony of the nation-state that excludes populations racialized as inferior from control of collective authority (see Quijano 1991; 1995; and Quijano and Wallerstein 1992).

5. For my argument against Quijano's understanding of the relation of coloniality and sex/gender, see Lugones 2007.

6. "Ain't I a Woman?"; speech given at the Women's Convention in Akron Ohio, May 29, 1851.

7. In Lugones 2003 I introduce the concept of "active subjectivity" to capture the minimal sense of agency of the resister to multiple oppressions whose multiple subjectivity is reduced by hegemonic understandings/colonial understandings/racist-gendered understandings to no agency at all. It is her belonging to impure communities that gives life to her agency.

8. It is outside the scope of this article, but certainly well within the project to which I am committed, to argue that the coloniality of gender is constituted by and constitutive of the coloniality of power, knowledge, being, nature, and language. They are crucially inseparable. One way of expressing this is that the coloniality of knowledge, for example, is gendered and that one has not understood the coloniality of knowledge without understanding its being gendered. But here I want to get ahead of myself in claiming that there is no de-coloniality without de-coloniality of gender. Thus, the modern colonial imposition of an oppressive, racially differentiated, hierarchical gender system permeated through and through by the modern logic of dichotomizing cannot be characterized as a circulation of power that organizes the domestic sphere as opposed to the public domain of authority and the sphere of waged labor (and access and control of sex and reproduction biology) as contrasted to cognitive/epistemic intersubjectivity and knowledge, or nature as opposed to culture.

9. A further note on the relation of intersectionality and categorial purity: intersectionality has become pivotal in U.S. women of color feminisms. As said above, one cannot see, locate, or address women of color (U.S. Latinas, Asians, Chicanas, African Americans, Native American women) in the U.S. legal system and in much of institutionalized U.S. life. As one considers the dominant categories, among them "woman," "black," "poor," they are not articulated in a way that includes people who are women, black, and poor. The intersection of "woman" and "black" reveals the absence of black women rather their presence. That is because the modern categorial logic constructs categories as homogeneous, atomic, separable, and constituted in dichotomous terms. That construction proceeds from the pervasive presence of hierarchical dichotomies in the logic of modernity and modern institutions. The relation between categorial purity and hierarchical dichotomies works as follows. Each homogeneous, separable, atomic category is characterized in terms of the superior member of the dichotomy. Thus "women" stands for white women. "Black" stands for black men. When one is trying to understand women at the intersection of race, class, and gender, non-white black, mestiza, indigenous, and Asian women are impossible beings. They are impossible since they are neither European bourgeois women, nor indigenous males. Intersectionality is important when showing the failures of institutions to include discrimination or oppression against women of color. But here I want to be able to think of their presence as

being both oppressed and resisting. So, I have shifted to the *coloniality of gender* at and from the *colonial difference* to be able to perceive and understand the fractured locus of colonized women and agents fluent in native cultures.

10. I agree with Oyeronke Oyewumi, who makes a similar claim for the colonization of the Yoruba (Oyewumi 1997). But I complicate the claim, as I understand both gender and sex as colonial impositions. That is, the organization of the social in terms of gender is hierarchical and dichotomous, and the organization of the social in terms of sex is dimorphic and relates the male to the man even to mark a lack. The same is true of the female. Thus, Mesoamericans who did not understand sex in dimorphic, separable terms, but in terms of fluid dualisms, became either male or female. Linda Alcoff sees the contribution of sperm and egg in the reproductive act as in some way entailing the sexual division and the gender division. But the contribution of sperm and egg is quite compatible with intersexuality. From "contributes the ovum" or "contributes sperm" to a particular act of conception, it does not follow that the sperm contributor is either male or a man, nor does it follow that the egg contributor is female or a woman. But nothing about the meaning of *male* or *man* would unequivocally point to a sperm contributor who is markedly intersexed as a male man, except again as a matter of normed logic. If the Western, modern, gender dichotomy is conceptually tied to the dimorphic sexual distinction, and production of sperm is the necessary and sufficient condition of maleness, then of course the sperm donor is male and a man. Hormonal and gonadal characteristics are notoriously insufficient in determining gender. Think of the dangerous misfit of male-to-female transsexuals being housed in male prisons to get a feel for this perception embedded in language and popular consciousness.

11. It is important for me not to "translate" here. To do so would enable you to understand what I am saying, but not really, since I cannot say what I want to say having translated the terms. So, if I do not translate and you think you understand less, or do not understand at all, I think that you can understand better why this works as an example of thinking at the colonial difference.

12. Learning each other's histories has been an important ingredient in understanding deep coalitions among U.S. women of color. Here I am giving a new turn to this learning.

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