



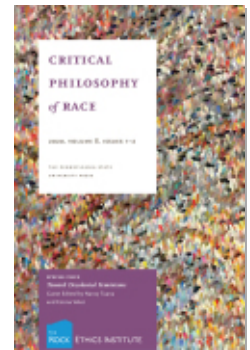
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**GENDER AND
UNIVERSALITY
IN COLONIAL
METHODOLOGY**

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Abstract

This article offers a decolonial methodology that questions the universality tied to the concept of gender. While not questioning that the modern/colonial capitalist gender system is an oppressive, variable, systemic organization of power, it argues that it is not universal; that is, that not all peoples organize their relations in terms of and on the grounds of gender. Its aim is to offer a decolonial methodology to both study colonized people who live at the colonial difference, but also to engage in decolonial coalition. To see the colonial difference is to see coloniality/modernity as the place the colonized inhabit and the situation of oppression from which the colonized create meanings that are not assimilated.

Keywords: decolonial methodology, decolonial difference, decolonial coalition, gender

Introduction

I understand the concept of gender as a central organizational element of the modern neoliberal nation-state that continues to be at work. Anibal Quijano argued that since the sixteenth century race became constitutive of the conquest and colonization of Abya Yala. A central element of the racialization of the peoples of Abya Yala, which came to include Africans who were sold and worked as slaves, was their reduction to subhuman beings, referred to in the chronicles, for example, of Diego Encinas, Francisco Lopez de Gomora, Jose de Acosta among others as animals, beasts, primitives. Sylvia Wynter has argued that Africans came to be later conceived as the missing link between apes and human beings (Wynter 2003, 266, 301, 304). I have argued elsewhere that the gender system that came to the colonies, organizing the relation between European (later white) human beings as part of what Quijano calls the modern colonial capitalist global model of power, included a veiled sinister turn: neither male nor female Indigenous people nor people kidnapped from the African continent and enslaved were considered and treated as gendered. Since animals are not gendered, gender became one of the marks of the human. The Spanish Crown itself found Indigenous people not to be human. The lack of gender was left implicit; my argument demonstrating the coloniality of gender unveils it (Lugones 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012).

This piece goes further than the above summary of my views. It takes up another important aspect of the question of decolonization: What allowed for resistance by the peoples of Abya Yala against their violent conquest and colonization by the Europeans? Here I shift from naming them colonized and slaves and think of them as, and name them as, the peoples of Abya Yala, including the peoples of the Caribbean and the southern and central regions: Mapuches, Onas, Sirionós, Chimú, Aymara, Diaguita, Tehuelche, Chiquitano, Tlaxcala, Aztecs/Mexicas, Maya Quiche, Guaraní, Toba, Chiquitano, Taino, Yanomami, Carib, Pueblos such as Taos and Santa Clara, the Anishinaabe in Canada, and the people of the British colonization of what came to be called the United States such as the Cherokee, Sioux, Piute, Muskogee, Cheyenne, Crow, Comanches, Osage, and many others who were not wanted for their labor, as were the Africans and the peoples from the South, but for their land. Under the “Indian Removal Acts” across the United States, the Sioux and many others were removed from their lands and forcibly relocated to urban sites without any place

of their own. Despite these genocidal attempts, the Indigenous peoples of what came to be called the United States resisted continuous attempts at extermination by settler colonials and the ferocious destruction by the armies of the colonizing government and of the “independent Americans.” Those armies included people who were killers and admired by the settlers and the rest of the white population, such as Andrew Jackson, nicknamed “Indian killer,” who became the president of his country and is called by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, a “genocidal sociopath” (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, 94). African peoples were bought or abducted into a new economy away from the Mediterranean through the triangular Atlantic trade—European ports, African ports, Caribbean ports and back—were also dehumanized and bestialized in all of the aspects central to the idea of race. When De Las Casas argued that the peoples indigenous to the colonial territories were human, he did not assert the same for the African peoples. In time, he came to believe in their humanity.

The Haitian rebellions showed at many levels how mulattoes and Africans had different interests in the plantations and different relations to the plantation masters. Marronage also showed different attitudes and possibilities to those of the indigenous peoples. The development of new religiosities and language expressed not just their intelligence, creativity, and their fundamental rejection of slavery but also their capacity to create communal relations. The brutality of their treatment by the colonizer, the clearest expression of a non-seminal economy, attempted to thoroughly dehumanize enslaved Africans. Slavery presented the captured and enslaved Africans with only one alternative “to work to death in a plantation without respite or to struggle for their freedom and independence from a small society” (Casimir 2012, 32). “The plantation system has two poles: the planter and the captive subjected to slavery. [The planters] do not distinguish between bambaras, mandingas, ibos, ashantis, or congos. The 1804 State limits the origin of the population of African origin to the color of their skin. The planter is not interested in the knowledges brought from Africa . . .” (56). As they did struggle, the relation to whites is well captured by Casimir’s reference to articles 6 and 7 of the Constitution of 1846: “All Africans or Indians and their descendants are entitled to be Haitians [. . .]. No whites, whatever their nation, will be able to acquire the condition of being Haitian”(45). Casimir’s central position is, “The Haitian nation is the result of a cultural synthesis, which is the product of the collective exercise within the same medium of those diverse features from Africa’s many ethnicities” (48).

Both the indigenous and the African peoples were constituted culturally by prequest societies of great age. Their encounter with the Europeans placed them in systems of coloniality so that now something crucial becomes clear: By seeing coloniality, one sees the territories and the peoples in the double visions/realities: the ways of being, relating, and knowing of Indigenous and African peoples and the ways of knowing, being, and relating of Modern Europeans in relation to the inhabitants of Abya Yala whom they reduced to beings inferior by nature. By seeing coloniality, one sees both the reduction *and* the resistance of people instead of dependent nation-states. By seeing coloniality, one comes to see the resistance exercised by Indigenous and African peoples as a complex fabric that includes transculturation as well as the keeping of some beliefs masked through the process of taking Catholic liturgy and imbuing them with their own religious meaning (Mariátegui 1971, Marcos 2006, Pratt 2007, Ortiz 1995). This point connects to my previous work in *Pilgrimages*: the coloniality reveals more than one reality. The reality of the dominators who imagine the peoples to be animals, beasts, dangerous cannibals and aggressive sexual beings; the realities of those who see and resist the coloniality within it and are as resisters constituted by the cultural, relational, cosmological shared practices, values, knowledges that animate their resistance. Though they change, the changes are not out of the creative control of their constitution as peoples of Abya Yala.

This piece offers a decolonial methodology that is frankly political in its confrontation with feminism in its universal face. Yet, I offer it as a conversation with social scientists, feminist philosophers, and theorists to think together about gender. I mean gender, the concept, not specific instances of use or unexamined common usage in which “gender” has become interchangeable with “women” in many contexts. Here, I am questioning the universality tied to the concept, not the characteristics of particular gender systems. I am not questioning that the modern/colonial capitalist gender system is an oppressive, variable, systemic organization of power, I am just arguing that it is not universal, that is, that not all peoples organize their relations in terms of and on the grounds of gender. This gender system that applies most forcefully to bourgeois white women has been resisted, but this resistance continues to retain two egregious faults: (1) it does not address the conditions of subordination and oppression of non-white women (Amos and Prarmar 1984), and (2) it fails to offer

another humanity, another sense of being a woman, if such a being should continue to exist under that name. That is, it fails to offer a sense of being a woman who does not follow the positions and aspirations of white men, but rather is a being different, distant, and at odds with whiteness, capitalism, and neoliberalism; a sense of being a woman that arises from an understanding of and dealing with the travails, difficulties, and possibilities of the times we live in. They fail to conceive the possibility that other peoples have knowledges that constitute “woman” and the “human” with very different, appreciable meanings.

Feminist anthropologists of racialized peoples in the Americas tend not to think about the concept of gender when they use the term as a classificatory instrument, they take its meaning for granted. This, I claim, is an example of a colonial methodology. Though the claim that gender, the concept, applies universally is not explicitly stated, it is implied. In both group and conference conversations I have heard the claim that “gender is everywhere,” meaning, technically, that sexual difference is socialized everywhere. The claim, implied or explicit, is that all societies organize dimorphic sexuality, reproductive sexuality, in terms of dichotomous roles that are hierarchically arranged and normatively enforced. That is, gender is the normative social conceptualization of sex, the biological fact of the matter. The claim regarding the necessity of gender in the organization of social, political, economic life is sometimes justified or explained in terms of the nature of humans, their experiences, and the nature of biological and social reproduction. No characterization of particular social, political, economic, religious, or moral life is given as necessitating gender given the assumed facts of sex or of reproduction. The claim is not about desirability of oppression but about a descriptive fact: gender is a reality of social, economic, and political organization, though the forms it takes are variable.

The position is stated briefly, for it is treated as obvious—“gender is everywhere, of course.” It is the “of course” that betrays the universalism. It is not a claim that results from a critical use of gender, the concept. Indeed, to claim the necessity of gender is quite different from claiming the necessity of sex. The latter, sex, is a given, assumed to be dimorphic as a fact. The former, gender, is the socially necessary regulated version of sex, necessary because sex needs to be regulated as the case of the colonized and enslaved makes clear: without regulation sex is wild. Though variation among societies is quite possible, gender is generally understood to take a normative,

dichotomous hierarchical form. The term “gender” was introduced into the vocabulary of feminism and psychology with this meaning rather than the prior grammatical one of the early 1970s. For example, in Spanish words which end in “a” are feminine while those ending “o” are masculine. Thus, *ciruela* and *máquina* (plum and machine) are feminine and *cuadro* and *perro* (tractor and color) are masculine. Before the 1970s there was no sex/gender distinction, gendered social roles as well as biological marks were thought to be natural.

New thinking about gender has accompanied the critique of the binary provoked by focusing on intersexuality, transgender, transsexuality, and the introduction of “queer” as a non-binary understanding of gender. Yet, the critique of the binary has not been accompanied by an unveiling of the relation between colonization, race, and gender, nor by an analysis of gender as a colonial introduction of control of the humanity of the colonized, nor by an understanding that gender obscures rather than uncovers the organization of life among the colonized. The critique has favored thinking of more sexes and genders than two, yet it has not abandoned the universality of gender arrangements. So, given the critique of the binary, one can think of gender as the socialization of reconceived sexual differences, remembering that not all sexual differences have been unambiguously socialized.

In giving attention to gender, the concept, the direction of this piece is to theorize the relation between the user of the concept and the one being referred to as situated in particular geographies, times, and worlds of meaning that permeate the structures and institutions of particular societies. My focus on methodology is an attempt to offer a decolonial methodology to both study colonized people who live at the colonial difference, but also to engage in decolonial coalition. To see the colonial difference is to see coloniality/modernity as the place the colonized inhabits and the situation of oppression from which the colonized creates meanings that are not assimilated; meanings that are not the “original” Indigenous meanings but new meanings that reject, resist, and decry the coloniality/modernity relation and its logics. Thinking about this direction, I need to answer the question I ask myself when I address this task: Why am I spending so much of my time and intellectual energy addressing a question that seems banal or misguided to people? Why am I not happy with letting go and telling myself, “There is gender everywhere, of course. I see it. It is obvious”?

Why Meta-think Gender?

I can state why I am keen on scrutinizing gender in this direction briefly:

1. Indigenous and African people in the Americas were denied humanity, and thus, gender.
2. Their struggle against the denial of humanity (Quijano 2000) did not lead to acceptance of the colonial culture's gender system by Indigenous women and women of African descent. Even when their ways transculturated, the "hard core," as Silvia Marcos calls it, that is, the cosmological grounding, continued to have vitality, particularly in their ritual knowledge (Marcos 2006).
3. If we take seriously that the denial of humanity of the people of Abya Yala and the people of the African diaspora is still very much with us, then using gender when entering into a study of people who have been dehumanized is to deny or hide the colonial denial resulting in a double denial.
4. Understanding the group or people under study with gender on one's mind, one would indeed see gender everywhere, thus imposing an order of relations uncritically as if coloniality had been completely successful both in erasing other meanings and in people having totally assimilated. The claim that "there is gender everywhere" thus becomes a necessary, if unfounded, denial of my claims.
5. The emphasis on the human/non-human dichotomy was accompanied by the imposition in Abya Yala and other colonized territories of the structural differences of modern/colonial life. Differences understood as dichotomies in the organization of life in terms of the knowledge, economics, politics, institutions, and practices of modern/colonial thought. Paradoxically the emphasis on the human/non-human dichotomy also emphasized the logic of quantities and of the same. The logic of quantities is in the language and understanding of the production of profit/surplus value of those who produce it, where it is produced, what is its value, a non-seminal economy where seminality conceives an economy "uniformly tinted by sentiment," in which the individual accepts regulation by the community. Labor is sacred.

Through these logics, the people of the African diaspora and the colonized of Abya Yala have come to be conceived as not-quite-human. Elizabeth Spelman clearly expresses the logic of the same as she says, "[W]hite kids

like [her] were taught that blacks are just like whites but that whites are not like blacks” (Spelman 1988). The same and yet fundamentally different.

Without further development, these five reasons will probably be dismissed as contrary to good reason and very much in need of argument, so I begin by elaborating them. It is in relation to the process of argumentation that I welcome dialogue. Understanding the forms of organization and relations that people who were and continue to be racialized had and have in their own habitat is a complex task that requires the intelligence, energy, and desire for interculturality of many people. It is a necessary task toward decolonial coalition and toward the study and learning of people with a history or colonization and racialization. In what follows I provide my reasoning and further clarification in correspondence to the points raised above. The unveiling of the relation between “gender,” colonization, and race is a decolonial task, one that I pursue because I continue to be interested in questions of liberation, and possibilities for those of us who have survived in spite of the coloniality.

Reasoning and Clarifying Points 1–5

Point 1

Spanish and Portuguese colonizers perceived, conceived, and treated the peoples in the Americas as non-human. What I think of as the “modern, capitalist, colonial gender system” includes the conception of the human of early European modernity, thoroughly developed during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. In this system, the human was separated from the non-human emphatically. “Nature” is non-human in this view and it is to be treated so as to reap the greatest benefits from it for the Man of Reason (Wynter 2003, Foucault 1978). To the colonizers, the Church and the Crown, the people they encountered in what they came to call América, after the Italian Amerigo Vespucci, were animals and so they were classified as inferior by nature to European men (Quijano 2000). As animals, they could not be gendered, that is, they were not men and women; they were like other animals classified as male and female only based on their sexual organs (Lugones 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012). They were also property and, as property, useful bodies to be bought and sold on the block.

In the fully developed understanding of man as human under this system, it is rationality that is the central characteristic of humanity, and what enables men to govern, to know, to separate the body and the mind. Because Rousseau understood European bourgeois women as properly charged with the moral education of children (Rousseau 2017), and Hobbes understood them as instrumentally rational (Hobbes 1994), I think of bourgeois modern women as gendered and human, for moral education is seen as a human task, and, most importantly, they are seen as capable of reproducing the human, namely, the men of reason as well as capital, and during coloniality, also race. Even at a time when their reason was not considered fully functional in the respects necessary for producing knowledge and engaging in moral decision making, they were still considered able to teach right- and wrongdoing to their children. Thus, the human/non-human distinction plus the gendering of bourgeois European women made gender a mark of the human heterosexual couple. This is what I call the “coloniality of gender,” the dehumanization of colonized and African-diasporic women as lacking gender, one of the marks of the human, and thus being reduced to labor and to raw sex, conceived as non-socializable sexual difference—their offspring also slaves from birth and thus not their own, as Hortense Spillers says, the female slaves were denied mother right.

This denial of humanity, or of full humanity, is still alive in the Americas. People, both men and women, who are racialized with a history of colonization are criminalized and denied authority, including the authority of knowledge. They are taken to be ignorant of how to conduct themselves with respect to the duties of citizenship, of the family, of health. They are also not considered rapeable, that is, their violation is not a crime. They were sexualized as predatory animals—as females and males—given the recent sexual dimorphic model. Thus they were males and females, not men and women. The gender system introduced by the colonizers only constituted European bourgeois men and women as gendered, their sexual difference socialized as emphatically heterosexual. The sexual difference of the colonized was not socializable; rather, it was understood as raw, animal biology, outside civil society. Thus, gender became a human trait that was codified and normed in the social, political, and economic structures of European modern societies. However, gender did not become a category of thought, an a priori without which the human could not be human for a thinker like Kant, like the necessary relation between cause and effect. Indeed, Kant did not try or think it valuable to derive gender

through transcendental argumentation, even when the experience of being gendered could not be separated from the lives of animals except through the pairing of men and women given the a priori concept of being human in modern European eyes, outlined above.

Point 2

When someone is oppressed, particularly in the brutal ways that the colonized and enslaved in the Americas have been oppressed, they resist. For human beings not to resist the dire circumstances of being dehumanized, their ways, practices, personalities, selves, ways of relation, access to cultural and shared social backing, and practices of ritual knowledge would have been erased. Not resisting means the person's motivational structure must have been undermined. It is to be expected that those who are in the process of being disintegrated and feel it as something terrible will resist, even if in imperceptible ways to the oppressor. Indeed, the communal feeling of pain at the lashes inflicted on a member of one's oppressed group is a form of resistance that does not issue from a calculated strategy (Weheliye 2014, Lugones 2003).

Foucault's account of resistance coincides with my argument in thinking that oppression calls resistance forth, but he misses what I think is crucial to resistance (Foucault, 1978). He does not see that the agency of the resistor in these cases is what I call "active subjectivity" (Lugones 2003), a minimal form of agency that includes habit, reflection, desire, the use of daily practices, languages, ritual knowledge, a thinking-feeling way of decision making, which may not be part of the meanings of the institutional and structural meanings of the society but may be part of the meanings in the resistant circle. Thus, the meaning of the resistance will be unintelligible to the oppressor and may be done with or without critical reflection, but always without an understanding in common between oppressor and oppressed. In the terrible encounter with the conqueror and the colonizer, Indigenous and African resisters were fully formed as people in communities and worlds of sense. So, their resistance is thoroughly informed by that constitution and by the communal circle of meaning that permits the exercise of oneself as a person.

In her description of transculturation, Mary Louise Pratt tells us that "though subjugated people cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own and what they use it for" (Pratt 2007). Transculturation

speaks to the multifaceted process in which hegemonic cultures influence subjugated ones, in which subjugated cultures give up old and acquire new values and meanings, and in which completely new cultural forms are created (Horswell 2006, 6). The creation of new cultural forms, then, needs to be understood through accessing the process of the creation, the process of transculturation, rather than taking at face value the organization of the social. Here questioning one's locus will disallow interpreting the new as acculturation. Transculturation always brings in the shared culture, ways of life, ways of knowing, understanding of the self in relation that are not static, rather they are always changing and transforming the meanings of colonial, modern, capitalist structures of meaning (Ortiz 1995, Pratt 2007). That is, not passively taking those meanings *in toto* from the colonial direction.

Point 3

If something has been broken, to call it "whole" hides or denies the breakage. Paradoxically, then, if a human being has been denied and continues to be denied her humanity, that person has been made real as an animal in a version of reality that is Western, colonial, and powerful. Thus, for a person from the outside of her history of resistance to that denial of humanity to come into her community and say, "You are human," in the sense of "human" of the version of reality controlled by power, will hide something since the denial of humanity is itself being denied without the necessary move of *joining the resistance*. That is, this person is just taking up the Western, modern, capitalist understanding of "human" and thus of gender.

When Sojourner Truth asked her famous and powerful question, "Ain't I a woman?" (Truth 1851), she was uttering the question to a group of white women going for the vote for white women. It was certainly clear, then, to Sojourner Truth that "woman" is not a universal term. The used and abused body is not socializable as that of a woman. Sojourner Truth interpellates the white women powerfully, exploding the sound WOMAN with the meanings of her body: her body is just as strong as a man's, thus she is a producer of surplus value, her body and work quantified. She also reproduces, but what issues from her body is not hers, it is property, and the extremity of reaping her off is that white women's babies suckle the milk that should make her baby strong. The white woman benefits from the black slave woman's bodily productive coercion. So, is she a woman? How can the meaning of the word include her, a quantity, productive, non-human? The desire for an organic creation of a new meaning can be heard

as an echo in her invasive interpellation. When Fanon, in the inescapable split between black and white, asks whether he is human, he calls for an alternative understanding of the human, since the human/non-human distinction in modern/colonial matrix of power denies his humanity (Fanon 2005). Following that alternative understanding of the human, I am also calling for a new understanding of human relations toward what Fanon called for, a new humanity and thus new men *and* new women, or not necessarily men and women but new people—*gente*—the peopled habitat (Fanon 2005). Gender as a concept does not belong in this alternative vision; thus to presuppose that standing at the colonial difference the new men and new women would understand themselves in terms of a socio-economic-legal-political-Western modern/colonial form of society is to make the wrong presupposition. I want to repeat that it is within our possibilities to desire a sense of being a woman who does not follow the positions and aspirations of white men, but rather is a being different, distant, and at odds with whiteness, capitalism, normative heterosexuality, and neoliberalism, who arises from an understanding of dealing with the travails, difficulties, and possibilities of the times we live in.

Point 4

Understanding the group with gender on one's mind, one would see gender everywhere (Oyéwùmí 1997), imposing an order of relations uncritically as if coloniality had been completely successful both in erasing other meanings and people had totally assimilated, or as if they had always had the socio-political-economic structure that constitutes and is constituted by what Butler calls the gender norm inscribed in the organization of their relations (Butler 2004 and 2011). Thus, the claim "There is gender everywhere" is false, given my elaborations in points one to three, since for a colonized, non-Western people to have their socio-political-economic relations regulated by gender would mean that the conceptual and structural framework of their society fits the conceptual and structural framework of colonial or neocolonial and imperialist societies. The only way they could be seen to fit is when they are already looked at as attachments to those frameworks, erasing them as the people they have been, are, and are becoming in a line of continuity woven by resistance to multiple forms of coloniality and in so doing maintaining their belief system or transculturating it to some extent in resistance to colonial domination.

Point 5

The distinction between human and non-human beings is at the center of my concerns in this article. Indigenous and Afro-diasporic peoples are not human in the colonial logic yet they produce surplus value and thus they fit in the logic of the same through the quantification of labor and its products (Quijano 2000). In the colonial imagination they are active but not agents, certainly not autonomous agents as are wage earners. The Argentinean philosopher of liberation Rodolfo Kusch finds in the indigenous people a way of thinking and of producing that he calls “seminal.” A seminal economy is an economy not tied to the ego, non-quantifiable, guided by an organic vision of reality “uniformly tinted by sentiment, in which the individuals are regulated by the community and labor is sacred” (Kusch 2010). In contrast to the urban economy, for Kusch, the urban South American acts and understands his world in terms of causes, activity, individual autonomy, quantities over qualities, the value of work and production in terms of rationality, solutions, money, science. Kusch explains “In indigenous society the individual cannot use his ego as a weapon, but rather allows himself to be led by custom, which in turn is regulated by the community. Furthermore, his regimen will also be irrational, and thus the individual will not quantify either his labor or his production” (Kusch, 135). Thus, labor cannot be quantified and there cannot be a separation between the individual and the community. Labor exists in the tension—opposition—between the favorable and the unfavorable, germination on the one hand and disease, death, devastation on the other. The community in the habitat enacts germination through labor. On the other hand, the fiction that separates a person from his labor in the causal living of the urban South American, informs the fiction of autonomy. But the fiction is central to who the worker is, an autonomous individual. As such, his individual labor and production have a quantifiable value. The autonomous individual is split, not active, not an agent except as a seller of his own labor. This is not a communal act, it cannot be. He does not acquire worth through the value of his labor, his rationality does not lie in the market, his price is fixed, the price of his labor is his autonomy. But labor is not, as it is for the indigenous people, sacred. “A seminal thinking humanizes the habitat in which one lives . . .” (Kusch, 141); “in South America there is an indigenous cultural structure mounted on a thinking through inward directness which personalizes the world; it emphasizes its globality because it faces the original tearing between the favorable and the unfavorable . . .” (Kusch, 126). The contrasts are ubiquitous, they permeate everything, and

they are, as Kusch says, impermeable to each other. A seminal economy and seminal thinking constitute the person who resists the reduction to a working beast who produces surplus value, reduced to a quantity both in terms of what it produces and in terms of its being a piece of property. Food and people are quantified. “It is most of all a reaction to a quantitative economy that places a price on bread” (Kusch, 140). Kusch seeks to understand the possibilities of their interaction.

The relation of opposition as tension that transcends a causal logic is for Kusch present in many indigenous peoples. I think that one such opposition is between sexed beings who produce together the food for the community. “The” sexes are opposites in this sense of tension seeking for balance and germination. The colonizers broke this relation in production. The community was thus seriously broken, split in colonial halves and thus placed in a situation of disintegration.

A Decolonial Methodology Toward Decolonial Coalition

I am ready, then, to suggest a decolonial methodology in the study of colonized people who live at the colonial difference with respect to the attribution of gender, and thus with respect to an understanding of their relations to self, to others, to their community, to their habitat, and to the cosmos in a historical line that takes into account their resistance to the denial of their humanity and to the complexity of what decolonial thinkers such as Mignolo, Quijano, Maldonado Torres, Arturo Escobar, Madina Tlostanova, Rolando Vazquez, and Catherine Walsh call the coloniality of power, knowledge, being, and gender. I am also suggesting that this methodology is important if we want to form decolonial coalitions among colonized peoples. As coloniality is constituted by a denial of coevalness, resistance to coloniality denies the linearity of colonial time. Methodologically, then, I will suggest the following:

- The people, nation, community that are being approached by those who are not of them, outsiders to the communities, who want to learn them for the sake of coalition or who want to study them in an academic vein, need to be understood historically, not in the linear progressive understanding of the history of Western modernity, but with an understanding of indigenous conceptions of time, including the sense of time arising from the history of encounter and of resistance to dehumanization. It is the

indigenous peoples' own understanding of time, such as the balancing of opposites for example, *pachakuti* and *pachayachachic*—the unnameable opposites—in the Andean case that the historization needs to consider. The time of the outsider invades colonially.

- In this history people come to be at the colonial difference and the colonial wound, which are terrifying positionalities from which coloniality is vivid and is resisted non-dichotomously (Mignolo 2012). Dichotomous and categorical thinking are central to Western modernity and are absent in all the Indigenous understandings of reality with which I have become familiar. I know the Andean and Mesoamerican cases the best. For Andean peoples the mountain and the valley are opposites, but like night and day, man and woman, they are not dichotomous opposites. None of these are bounded categories; indeed they do not make sense except as interconnected, inseparable, fluid.
- Colonized peoples face colonial domination as *fully constituted peoples* who make life in their habitats rather than work for others for profit or surplus value. As people who hold particular understandings of knowledge, values, and relations in the extensive world that includes all there is and, in particular, in relations to understandings of self, relations to the spirit world, relations to other people in the communities, nations, tribes, groups, communities that they call their own, they do not separate the human and the non-human, or the human from nature, that Modern/colonial invention. Everything is interconnected, including the *almas*, souls, everything in the cosmos. There are no transcendent, non-connected beings.
- Whether they are the same or different, the sameness is not reciprocal. Sameness is weighed in terms of abstract measurement of land, labor, production. It is clear that it is neither a reciprocal difference nor those non-hegemonic differences that Lorde celebrates when she thinks of differences as “a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic.” Differences enable different women to interdependence that “allows the I to *be*, not in order to be used, but in order to be creative. This is a difference between the passive *be* and the active *being*” (Lorde 1984, 111). A shift to a creative sense of being
- Attention needs to be paid to the concepts behind any assertion of gender. Western/colonial understanding of concepts construes them as a universal. The concept can be applied differently by different people but it is the same concept, even by those who acknowledge different

gender arrangements, for example what Rita Segato calls “a low intensity patriarchy” and “high intensity patriarchy” (Segato 2015) or what Julieta Paredes calls “patriarchal entronques” (Paredes 2010). Thus, my critique of the use of gender as it is used in the study of colonized peoples is that it is a concept to be understood and used by experts from the outside. As a “meta” conceptual category it is not used as if it needs to be clear and useful to those studied. Paradoxically, the category does not apply to the colonized because they are not human, or they are human anew, in a double denial since the colonial relation is not undone but repeated. Indeed, this exclusion as well as the lack of its use by the colonized themselves does not invalidate its use by experts in the experts’ own judgment. Why not? It is their life, their communities, their realities being organized against their possibilities. This indifference regarding the usefulness of the category to the subjects under study demonstrates that the exclusion is methodologically colonial in its imposition (Abu-Luhgod 1993, Oyěwùmí 2001).

- A presentist interpretation of a people without a historico-cultural understanding is one that lacks a history of colonial domination and of resistance to colonial domination. Neither transculturation as a creation or oppression are unveiled by a presentist interpretation. The claim that “history does not matter” supports and denies the “all people are the same as human.” Thus, presentism and universalism go well together.
- Gender has been understood as the socializing of the sexual difference in terms of power (Scott 1999). I think that the sexual difference implies relational individualism among separate people, even when we are thinking of more than two genders. The colonized have kept a sense of self struggling against dehumanization, against assimilation, keeping resistant senses of self, transculturated, recovered, or new. In particular, they have struggled to keep a communal sense of self. Whether they have become gendered is a question to investigate not to assume. That is a legal, political, economic, social question that goes to the structure of the society and the grounding of that structure. Whether it is the community or the nation-state that is the point of reference is a central question for the investigation. It is also a question that needs to take carefully and seriously the meanings from below, of individuals and groups who resist dehumanization and assimilation. Of course, if the group of people have been thoroughly colonized and have completely lost their world of meaning, they will be attached to the colonial world of meaning, but that is a part of the investigation. The social scientist is placing or replacing the

relations among the people directly to the colonial structure, bypassing their own sense of themselves which in the organizing relations may be in cosmological terms.

I suggest this methodology or these first steps toward a decolonial methodology as necessary for those of us committed to decolonial coalition among colonized peoples. The fact that European colonizers reduced people to animality and thus distinguished between the human and the nonhuman does not mean that Indigenous people anywhere in Abya Yala made this human/nonhuman distinction themselves. Gender is tied to the distinction, so for peoples who do not make that distinction, gender cannot be part of their relational organization. So, in understanding their socio-political-economic organization, it is important to understand whether reproduction of Indigenous peoples was given a specific conceptual understanding that does or does not incorporate the distinction between the human and the nonhuman and thus the distinction between human and non-human reproduction.

“Do not forget sociogeny,” Fanon would tell us as he asks for an alternative understanding of the human. How the people under study or with whom one seeks coalition understand themselves as people, as the people they are individually and collectively, is the beginning of a search as to whether the effects of colonization produced an unescapable split between being human—and thus like the colonizer—or non-human—and thus colonized. Looking to Fanon’s work points us to a sociogenical understanding of people in their history. For the colonized and the enslaved, the split makes attempting to live a human life in the colonial matrix of power impossible. For the colonized and the enslaved to live a human life requires a new understanding of the human and a new understanding of relation; but that is an understanding outside the colonial matrix. Assimilation, loss of value and accepting the imposition of colonial values produced and produces an impasse, a crossroads, a giving up, and so requires a new understanding of “human” and “humans in relation.”

We must move away from gender as a reduction through the governmental apparatuses that inscribe it everywhere in the social and reduce men and women to an understanding of relations tied to the development of capitalism in global modernity. As I am understanding the concept of gender, there is no escaping the tie between the Western modern/colonial capitalist conception of humanity and the concept of gender. The split between white human (man of reason, woman as reproducer of humans

and moral educator) and non-human (animal, nonwhite) is not an escapable split without a different understanding of the human than the modern colonial capitalist one (Fanon 2005, Haraway 1998). For example, *warmi*, an Aymara word that is usually translated as *mujer* (woman) is decidedly not “woman.” The meaning of *warmi* is tied to the cosmology and to the organization of the *ayllu*, the Aymara and Quechua community, which is itself organized in cosmological terms. “Woman” is constituted differently. It is tied to modern Western law, the Western production of knowledge, the nation-state, individualist morality, capitalist economy, all in modern Western terms, thus it is tied to state and colonial power. The nature of the modern concept of law and the modern/colonial capitalist understanding of law is not a question that arises in Indigenous communities in Abya Yala, since the institution of the law and its nature is not part of societies for which ritual knowledge and cosmology are central to the organization of the social. The nation-state is a problematic introduction for Indigenous and Afro-diasporic people seeking a new possibility for themselves not allowed by the human/non-human split.

If we think of transculturated Indigenous ways of living, the question is whether our interpretation of the organization of relations reproduces colonial relations where the relation is to the nation-state, global capital, and the enduring conceptual framework of modernity. Is the Foucaultian understanding of power that Foucault sees in the people of modern nations also held in Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities with a history of colonization who may have transculturated? In this investigation one wants to know whether and how people want to recover the ways of relation that have been destroyed and replaced with colonial ones. For example, how do we understand Indigenous people who are members of communities with a history of colonization who relate to national governments “representing” their communities and who make pacts with the government? Do they include or exclude women? Is the inclusion one that is poorly understood as exclusion? Are the women included in a manner that does not count as representation in the liberal sense? Is the exclusion transculturated? Does the exclusion change women’s standing, rendering women secondary in decision-making?

Gloria Wekker interprets the meaning of “woman” among the Surinamese creole as very different from any colonial understanding (Wekker 2016). Jean Casimir thinks of what Wekker is describing as a creation that also obtains in Haiti where those who were captured, sold

into slavery and treated as animals created an arrangement of the social that, in Haiti, is what constitutes the Haitian people as a sovereign people. According to Casimir, this is a creation done by women (Casimir, personal correspondence). In Wekker, women are central in the organization of the social world in which they live. Their principal ritual and social relations are to other women with whom they do the *matti* work. Women are central in the creolization of Surinam and Haiti according to both Wekker and Casimir. Among the Aymara, *chacha* and *warmi* are opposites but they cannot be hierarchal opposites, one inferior to the other, because there could not be any searching for balance between *pachakuti* and *pachayachachi* between them as there is between all opposites in the order of the cosmos.

Unless attention is paid to the changes in the understanding, grounding, and practices of sexuality in particular Indigenous societies and the deep changes constituted by coloniality regarding the body, the sensual, and the sexual such as changes in meaning and the demonization of non-heterosexual practices, including ritual practices, the reductive centering of the reproductive organs in the animal body will not be seen and the heterosexual matrix will be presupposed. For example, Silvia Marcos finds in many Mesoamerican understandings of opposition the idea that day and night mutate, they touch each other every day, and the sexual in us does the same (Marcos 2006). In her work on religiosity in Mesoamerica, she has found an understanding of sexuality as fluid and mutating, not fixed but in “homeorrhic equilibrium” (Marcos 2006, 13). The same can be said about hot and cold, night and day, and other extremes in oppositional fluid change. As part of the creolization in the Caribbean context, the understanding of what it is to be a sexual person became important in the creation of spiritualities such as Voudun, Santería, and candomblé, new creations in colonial Abya Yala, where sexualities are also mutating and cosmologically grounded.

Conclusion

To end, the question is whether gender is a meaningful concept—understood, as I have shown, as a system of control and classification that splits up people hierarchically in fundamental ways—without the Western legal structures, the non-seminal economic system, the system of production and legitimation of knowledge, and the moral order; without the modern/

colonial Western understanding of humanity that gives “human” meaning; without the Western system of thought and cosmology that give meaning to gender; without transcendent understandings of religion that make people into either fallen flesh or self-determining beings—both Western understandings. It is almost obvious that approaching the people whose lives one seeks to devote one’s attention to and looking for their place and who they are in it, whether as someone to enter into coalition with or someone to be studied without generalization as a member of an Indigenous or Afro society, searching only for gendered forms of sexual difference will not do.

Yet, this colonial attitude persists and the Indigenous person and African descended person have been and continue to be reduced to animality. Suppose that with our investigation of any animal we begin there with sexual difference, recognizing the organs of reproduction and categorizing them as male and female, leaving those considered abnormal by the scientist aside, and examine their behavior: The male takes care of the eggs till the babies are independent and can be on their own. The female kills the male after impregnation. Both get the meat out of the nuts by throwing them on the road and waiting for cars to run over them, both communicate by turning their lights on. The female carries the baby close to her chest, the male sleeps all day. The female kills prey for the pack, the drones build fantastic nests with saliva and sawdust and so on. If “male” is the biological classification and taking care of the eggs is what they do, what are they socially? In assigning gender to them, one puts the reproductive traits together with tasks done by the one, with this or that trait, and one still could not assign gender because there is no clarity about the organization of the social, the economy, and the order of relations. Clearly doing this would not make the animals whose behaviors I described above “men” or “women,” nor would it make them in the same situation as the inhabitants of Abya Yala or those who were from other continents who were dehumanized, bestialized by the modern/colonial capitalist gender system.

This dehumanization and bestialization occurred precisely because these people were not understood by the colonizers and enslavers as social agents, and thus their sexual difference not socializable. Thus, one does not find gender; animals do not have gender. But, I think, neither do those who ground the order of their world in cosmological terms. But not for the same reasons, that should be clear. If one recognizes the denial of humanity to Africans and Indigenous peoples in Abya Yala by the modern/colonial capitalist system, a denial that also excluded them from participating in the colonizing civil society, and centrally, if one recognizes that

these denials meant a further denial that they, in their own communities, have structured civil societies—structures with a human grounding, where human is understood in modern/colonial terms—then one can recognize that they cannot have gender. Further, their lack of humanity consistently indicates that they cannot be said to have membership in the structures or institutions of colonizing civil society that order their world and thus give their gender a modern/colonial meaning in the very conceptual constitution of those structures and institutions.

The contradictions that I see as I see the coloniality keep me from forgetting that gender is irrevocably white, European, and modern and that the modern/colonial capitalist gender system necessarily denies gender to the colonized and enslaved. Rather, they are not human, non-human, not fully human. It is interesting and important that in their understanding of their own racial superiority, Anglo-, European-, white women struggle both to keep and to change gender. Their struggle for change does not address the inhumane and inhuman positions, tasks, and conceptions of the racist white imagination nor the social, political, and economic structure of racial states but rather their attempts continue to universalize the category “woman” as if the colonized and enslaved females of the planet were included among the human. While the concept of gender is deeply embedded in the structure of Western nation-states, societies, and economies, it is absent in the racist, colonial imagination and conception of the non-white, non-human. To approach Indigenous and Afro societies under the colonial nation-state as if they had gender is to deny them twice as I have argued. Why does anyone want to insist on finding gender among all the peoples of our planet? What is good about the concept that we would want to keep it at the center of our “liberation”?

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