

Originally coined by the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the concept of *coloniality* seeks to encompass all the different aspects that gave rise to the constitution of a global power, which, according to Quijano, is organized through the social classification of the world's population around the idea of race and the control of labor for the benefit of the capitalist distribution of resources—natural and human. Coloniality survives the end of colonial administrations and functions as a model for the continuation of center-periphery relations established on a global scale.

NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS ARTISTIC PRACTICES AND DECOLONIAL STRATEGIES

Mariel Rodríguez

In the twentieth century the development of anticolonial and liberation movements, second and third wave feminism, postcolonial scholarship and, economic world system theories helped to shape a specific form of intellectual, activist, academic and political discourse that by the end of the century crystallized into what we call now the *decolonial turn*. Rooted in Latin American critical theory, the idea of *coloniality*—central to this turn in knowledge production—encompassed a broad consensus among scholars that colonialism goes beyond the territorial and economic domination of one nation by another and that the formal end of colonial rule was not able to dismantle the hierarchies and violent structures of subjugation faced by the post-colonial states. For Walter D. Mignolo, “the basic thesis is the following: ‘modernity’ is a European narrative that hides its darker side, ‘coloniality’. Coloniality, in other words, is constitutive of modernity—there is no modernity without coloniality.” (2011, 39) In this sense, the notion of decoloniality challenges the epistemic foundations of modernity, unveiling how, its ideological underpinnings are woven as threads of extinction and destruction.⁸ The contributions collected in this volume, tackle some of the main critiques posed in this context.

Part one centers on languages. Many decolonial thinkers have recognized how colonialism endangers linguistic diversity, impoverishing reality. When a language dies, a whole universe of meaning disappears and with it, the possibility of different answers for problems and questions. With the death of a worldview contained in a language, possible futures disappear. In his book *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Kenyan writer and activist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o argues that the imposition of colonial languages and the suppression of native ones was one of the main tools of epistemic domination and a weapon for the subjugation of the imaginaries of the colonized. Focusing on the African experience, for him to practice local languages, implies not only the possibility of perpetuating traditions and a sense of belonging that is essential to reclaim an African identity but also to free oneself from the effects of colonial domination and the *double consciousness* (Du Bois 1903) that colonized subjects experience through the interiorization of colonial languages and the worldviews these entail.

Mariel Rodríguez, Notes on the contributions: Artistic practices and decolonial strategies, in: Amalia Barboza, Mariel Rodríguez (ed.), *Umwege / Detour. Künstlerische Wissenspraktiken als dekoloniale Strategien / Artistic Knowledge Practices as Decolonial Strategies*, Heidelberg: arthistoricum.net 2025, pp.27-34, <https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.1588.c22900>

When subaltern subjects internalize the demands of the colonial regime while at the same time continue to think, act and often feel the emotions of their first nation, they feel divided. In *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), Gloria Anzaldúa also speaks of this split in consciousness as an in-between space among cultures, languages and territories, she calls it *nepantla*, it is a destabilizing position that demands the use of imagination to navigate contradictions. A reflection on this in-between as well as on the question of the hierarchical structures imposed by colonial languages in educational contexts is addressed in the contribution by **Janna El-Daly, Eeva Langeveld and Rita Maricocchi**, who critique the monolingual norms of academia and advocate that classrooms should be sites of linguistic experimentation where migration and diasporic experiences can be expressed through multilingualism and with the aim of transforming how knowledge is produced, received and passed on. **El-Daly, Langenveld and Maricocchi** conceived a multilingual workshop where participants test the emotional and social implications of language diversity in academic spaces. Through it, they question the ownership and legitimacy of knowledge produced in universities, and bring forward personal experiences and specific cultural contexts as part of the learning experience. Their reflections question what is considered “valid knowledge” and which voices are amplified or erased in academic settings.

The diminishment, neglect and suppression of certain languages does not only represent the loss of a particular syntax of the world but also losing connection to specific practices linked to communication. For instance, telling stories is an inherent and defining aspect of being human that is tightly linked to oral traditions. We create ourselves as subjects and our worldview through the stories we live and tell. To reflect on our role as storytellers along with our social background and our cultural experiences, allows us to imagine different representations of the world. The text by **Ruben Hordijk** illustrated by **Theo Ilichenko**, highlights the capacity of storytelling to resist the colonial reduction of knowledge to abstract, universalist frameworks to bring them again into the social realm and to revalorize active and relational listening in a world which is dominated by representation. In a similar approach **Deniz Sözen and Vayu Naidu** investigate how storytelling can be used as a decolonial method in the realm of digital archiving. This involves generating knowledge that is situated, relational, and sensitive to diverse lived realities, posing a strong contrast to the fixed categorizations common to archival practices and the deterritorialization that occurs through digitalization.

The languages of communication which tend to privilege enunciation before listening and enforce linguistic colonial hierarchies are strengthened through hegemonic institutions such as the university. Sociologist Edgardo Lander (2000) argues that universities not only function as sites for the production and reproduction of epistemic privilege, but have also historically internalized various forms of colonial violence, such as gender, class and racial discrimination. Through it, the narrative that western

perspectives on knowledge as objective, scientific and universal is disseminated and presented as more advanced and desirable than “other” forms of knowledge, produced out of these contexts. The sociologist and historian Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui developed a “sociology of the image”, with which to bring to the foreground forms of knowledge that have for a long time been censored, excluded or enshrouded. Through an analysis of the work of Waman Poma de Ayala as well as in her *Taller de Historia Oral Andino* (THOA), Cusicanqui has developed a method for transforming implicit into explicit knowledge. The interplay between what is visible and invisible and silenced vs heard in Cusicanqui’s work is the topic of **Luana Goulart’s** contribution to this book, which highlights how in colonial contexts visual languages have been used to express what cannot be said in words. In her essay, **Luisa E. Standop** also points out that the modern university is a hegemonic institution that marginalizes non-hegemonic subjects. Also inspired by Cusicanqui’s approach, **Standop** takes ventriloquism as a metaphor to think about the production of knowledge in university contexts and, moreover, how it appropriates subaltern knowledge for the benefit of usually *white*, male subjects. **Standop** explores not only how subaltern voices are often appropriated or silenced at the discursive level, but also how violence occurs at the level of everyday interactions within university spaces. By making specific reference to a recent abuse of power committed by a professor against his female students, she shows how the intersection of patriarchy and epistemic violence creates threatening spaces for non-hegemonic subjects. **Standop’s** text is accompanied by images of a video work produced by **Amina Lehner** together with **Luisa E. Standop** in the context of the workshop *Stimmen bestimmen* presented during the conference in 2021 and developed as part of a seminar on Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui’s book *Ch’ixinakax utxiwa: On Decolonising Practices and Discourses* (2018) offered by Amalia Barboza and myself on the occasion of the translation of the book into German.

In part two we move from language into the body and its relationality and embeddedness with the recognition that “nobody escapes the class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical, and racial hierarchies of the ‘modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world system.’” (Grosfoguel 2007, 6) As Donna Haraway puts it, all forms of knowledge are situated, but not all cognoscent subjects recognize their locus of enunciation as determinant for the type of knowledge they produce. Situating knowledge means recognizing the network of interconnections in which we find ourselves immersed and that only by taking into account one’s positionality can any form of objectivity be achieved. In their contribution, **Goran Bećirčić** and **Monica Parii** explore power, citizenship, identity and privilege through a situated perspective and a cinematic view. By examining how desire operates within the hegemonic narratives of nation-states, **Bećirčić** and **Parii** question the construction of identity as a static, bounded phenomenon. **Bitá Bell** does not deal directly with citizenship, but she also explores questions of desire and belonging in relation to national identities. In her text, **Bell** examines how everyday ob-

jects such as a Persian carpet are imbued with layers of identity, history, and memory. Adopting a poetic stance, she embodies the personal and collective narratives embedded in cultural objects posing a critique on orientalist forms of objectification. Her practical investigation of material artifacts as witnesses to historical and cultural processes, which emphasizes how such objects mediate relationships between bodies, histories, and spaces, resonates with Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the *Third Space*, a key idea in postcolonial theory, which emphasizes hybridity and interaction between cultures. The *Third Space* refers to an in-between- metaphorical space in which cultural meanings and identities are constantly negotiated, contested and redefined. This cultural in-between is embodied and explored in **Andressa Miyazato's** text, a reflection on her dance improvisation presented during the conference. Through performance and improvisation, **Miyazato** engages with space, audience and memory, producing a dynamic exchange of stories and emotions. Similarly, **Nora Haakh** uses speculative fabulation and performative engagement with trees and passersby to explore interspecies communication and the potential of spontaneous and unanticipated encounters to disrupt anthropocentric modes of knowing.

Part three delves into the intersections of the ecological catastrophe, mourning, feminism and the decolonial transformation of knowledge through various strategies of co-creation and participation. Many of the social movements taking place today on a global scale represent cracks from which new ways of relating are being practiced. The continuous exploitation of natural resources goes hand in hand with the exploitation of communities for the benefit of the reproduction of capital. Extractivism is the most palpable continuity of the capitalist/colonial/modern episteme. We witness the destruction of the environment, the extraction of ancestral knowledge by large transnational corporations, we read every day about communities expelled from their lands, of environmentalists murdered for defending their territories and their rights. The losses are countless and insurmountable, but the great machinery of *racial capitalism*⁹ continues to advance while subaltern subjects and communities are left wounded and without time to adequately mourn the losses. We are struck by grief because even grief is instrumentalized in the face of global extractivism and neocolonial forms of plunder.

Against these constant violations, mourning, as described by Cindy Milstein in her book *Rebellious Mourning* (2017), emerges as a collective and political act, a process through which it can be transformed into resistance and solidarity. **Paul Botes, Maren Grimm, Jakob Krameritsch, Ntombizolile Mosebetsane, Agnes Makopano Thelejane** and **Niren Tolsi** explore the transformative force of mourning through collective and creative acts such as *body mapping* and community work. In their contribution to this book, they address their work with the widows of the Marikana massacre in South Africa and how they have employed body maps as tools for processing trauma, collectively grieving and resisting injustice. The case of the Marikana massacre carried out

9

In his book *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983), Cedric J. Robinson develops the concept of *racial capitalism* to explain how processes of racialization and capitalism cannot be separated from one another.

10

The concept of *necropolitics* was coined by Achille Mbembe to describe how in contemporary politics "the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die." (2011, 11)

against protesting miners fighting for a wage, for the right to a better life, appears as just another iteration of the application of *necropolitics*¹⁰ in the twenty-first century.

Eliana Otta's contribution also deals with the wounds inflicted by *necropolitics* and *racial capitalism* and how through world-making practices and imagination, grief can be collectively processed. Otta works with mourning in the context of environmental and cultural loss. Her contribution reflects on strategies to mourn the murders of environmental activists and defenders in indigenous communities in the Amazon. Just as the team working with grief in Marikana, **Otta** recurs as well to mapping, just in this case she makes use of territorial mapping as a method for articulating a form of healing the pain of losing various community members. **Otta** points out a connection between land, memory, and collective healing while addressing technology and its potential to foster forms of belonging and solidarity in the face of global and local injustices. Whether body mapping or territorial mapping, this artistic strategy proves helpful not only to document personal and collective mourning, but also as calls for justice and bringing forward demands for restitution. In both contributions the maps raise questions such as: Who has the privilege to mourn, and who can dream of better, more just societies? Who is allowed to have a future? How can subaltern communities reclaim the power to imagine their own futures?

The idea that some forms of knowledge are deemed irrelevant, unscientific or invalid due to their contextual outset and scope is present as well in the collage-like contribution by **Sofia Bempeza** and **Ines Kleesattel**. By putting together a series of recipes, images, quotes, ideas and reflections from a feminist context the authors compile a series of affective, intellectual and memorial elements to give account of the form of embodied knowledges that they practiced during a workshop held in 2021, where they merged artistic and everyday practices to challenge traditional knowledge hierarchies. The embodied and relational nature of knowledge along with the importance of rituals, and celebration for fostering forms of community building as decolonial strategy is at the center of **Imayna Caceres'** contribution but also in her overall artistic and theoretical practice of the last years in which she draws on her diverse cultural heritage, her migration experience as well as everyday practices such as swimming, dancing, and singing to propose new ways of relating to the ecosystems we inhabit.

Part four questions the role of hegemonic institutions such as museums and archives as pillars of colonial, capitalist, and Eurocentric frameworks. Scholar Rolando Vázquez has studied how the museum and western aesthetics have played a crucial role in the construction and legitimization of colonial knowledge. He argues that by categorizing and displaying objects and cultures through a Eurocentric lens, museums have contributed to the construction of a racialized hierarchy, positioning non-western societies as “inferior” and “other”. In his text for this book, **Kervin Saint Pere** contrasts the material violence of rubber extraction during the Am-

azon rubber boom with the epistemic violence of museum practices. For him, decolonizing the museum involves not only reevaluating how collections are displayed, but also reconsidering the very structures and practices that museums embody such as naming and cataloguing. This requires dismantling the colonial frameworks in which museums operate, such as the authority of western knowledge systems and the colonial gaze that frames non-western objects and peoples as “backwards”, “primitive” or “closer to nature”. *Coloniality* is also perpetuated in cultural institutions through representational practices. **claudia* sandoval romero**’s research examines the underrepresentation of non-western artists at the Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (mumok) between 1998 and 2018. She critiques the institution’s exclusionary practices, her analysis reveals how modern art museums continue to function as gatekeepers of cultural capital, reinforcing systemic inequalities through their curatorial and acquisition decisions. Decolonial strategies within institutional frameworks also involve the creation of participatory spaces that address inequalities within the cultural sector. As part of the D-Arts network, **Elisabeth Bernroitner, Ivana Pilić and Zuzana Ernst** aim to dismantle the hegemonic structures of the Austrian cultural sector by encouraging dialogue and interventions that prioritize diversity. The collective **Decolonizing in Vienna!** practices a similar interventionist strategy, but instead of pointing out institutional frameworks, they work in and with public space. During the conference, the collective presented a thematic decolonial walk through the University of Vienna as a strategy of decolonization.

The appropriation of cultural artifacts also calls for symbolic and material forms of reparation, a theme explored by the team of *Repatriates* consisting of **Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, Adéwolé Faladé, Samson Ogiamien, Verena Melgarejo Weinandt, Julian Reinisch and Bronwyn Lace**. Drawing on rituals of repatriation, they present a series of performative acts that address the damage caused by the colonial archive and museum. Their rituals operate as decolonial praxis, as they break with self or externally imposed forms of silence, through strong auto-theoretical perspectives they expand the boundaries imposed by institutional frameworks and reclaim their own personal stories as tied to stolen objects. The team conceives of these rituals as moments of rupture to create spaces for alternative narratives. The dialogical format of the contribution emphasizes the importance of listening against looking, posing thus a critique on museums as places that privilege representing subjects and communities over listening to them. Through the repatriation of objects, the inclusion of subaltern voices, and the development of alternative narratives to understand cultural heritage anew. Their narratives open up to the potential of transforming museums into spaces where healing can take place.

The eighteen essays in this volume explore ways of questioning *coloniality* through art-based and activist strategies. Rather than presenting a unified decolonial position or attempting to braid definitive arguments, the essays gathered here can be

seen, as Walter Mignolo would like it, as critical “options” that share a commitment to a research ethics in which the question of who produces knowledge, for whom, and in what context is the central matter.