

Re-Activating  
Critical Thinking  
in the Midst of  
Necropolitical  
Realities



# Re-Activating Critical Thinking in the Midst of Necropolitical Realities:

*For Radical Change*

Edited by

Marina Gržinić and Jovita Pristovšek

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For Radical Change

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Marina Gržinić and Jovita Pristovšek



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## INTRODUCTION

MARINA GRŽINIĆ AND JOVITA PRISTOVŠEK

The volume *Re-Activating Critical Thinking in the Midst of Necropolitical Realities: For Radical Change* springs from the desire and need to rethink notions of space, time, and subject (of agency) along with structures of racialized violence, plunder, and exploitation that persist to this day and have been exacerbated and exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Amidst various specters of necropolitical realities once reserved for the colonies and later the colonial periphery and now emerging at the center of the so-called first capitalist world, this collection takes as its starting point the idea of gathering critical writings that bear witness to practices that seek ways to radically transform the world we inhabit today.

The aim is to take a radical look at what a new generation of thinkers can produce in a particular geopolitical context, on an axis that stretches from Austria and the EU deep into the Balkans, but also on the axis that leads to the global world. The volume takes as its starting point the question of whether there is a pluriversal generation, a group of scholars who do not necessarily collaborate or know each other, but who are currently forming a radical structure that is viral in thought production and reflective on the current global recalibration of social relations brought about by the necropolitical and necrocapitalist governmentality emerging worldwide. This has not only accelerated inequalities, many of which are deeply rooted in colonial history, but also nullified the conditions of life and completely negated the meaning of life as such.

This volume is the result of a programmatic and highly engaged collaboration. Some of us have never met in person, but only through Zoom or other digital connections. However, what unites this axis, which stretches between Mexico, Slovenia, Austria, Korea, the former Yugoslavia, Turkey, the United States, Spain, Germany, Israel, and Japan, are the writings and practices that strive to seed the idea of other worlds, worlds that are similar but also have differences, worlds that could coexist in mutual respect and recognition (Mbembe 2017, 178).

In December 2020, in the midst of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic and following movement restrictions, we have decided to propose a book for the Cambridge Scholars Publishing Showcase Collection that deals with broad themes of racialization, extraction, subjectivities, violence, time, realities, death, flesh, epistemologies, fetishism, and last but not least, access and threshold.

The twenty-four positions assembled in this volume transcend geographical boundaries, conceive of the world as a single entity, and develop strategies for radical change. They are presented in five subchapters with two lines of demarcation, one for entry, invention, and potentiality, and the other for a grim threshold. The collection brings together a generation of writers from an axis of radical philosophical and critical thought.

The critical writings gathered in this collection are fueled by an imagination that transcends the boundaries of the comfort zone of academic writing, both in content and form. Topics covered include trans\*, technology, contagion, capitalism, necropolitics, performativity, and political economy.

This volume is not without a history of relations.

The connection to the contributors is also diverse-institutional, professional, and personal, and draws on previous work and research in the Balkan region, Spain, Japan, and Vienna. As for the Balkan region, Marina Gržinić's students, most of whom are featured in this volume, have already completed their PhDs and published books: Nina Cvar (2021), Adla Isanović (2021), Saša Kesić (2020), Jovita Pristovšek (2019), Tjaša Kancler (2018), Šefik Tatlić (2015; see also Gržinić and Tatlić 2014). A group of positions is supervised in Vienna by Gržinić in the doctoral program in philosophy at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna: Yela An, Diana Bulzan, Kyungrim Lim Jang, Taida Kusturica, Cathérine Lehnerer, and Mika Maruyama.

In 2018, the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna provided the perfect setting for a theoretical debate manifested in *Border Thinking: Disassembling Histories of Racialized Violence*, a volume in the publication series of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, published in collaboration with Sternberg Press, where we have previously worked with Kancler, Stanimir Panayotov and Joshua Simon (see Gržinić 2018).

Research activities at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna have also allowed us to build and maintain alliances with some of the featured authors through our recent and current art-based research projects: FWF PEEK project “Genealogy of Amnesia: Rethinking the Past for a New Future of Conviviality” (AR 439; 2018–2021), and FWF PEEK project “Conviviality as Potentiality: From Amnesia and Pandemic towards a Convivial Epistemology” (AR 679; 2021–2025), both funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and developed at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.<sup>1</sup>

Tatlić and Kancler worked with us on the project “Genealogy of Amnesia,” in which we conducted eighty-two interviews/positions in the form of collaborative dialogs, including with Esther (Mayoko) Ortega Arjonilla (2019), who is also featured in this volume. We have developed an online video archive called “Countering the Genealogy of Amnesia,” from which we have published *Dialogues for the Future: Countering the Genealogy of Amnesia* (see Gržinić and Tatlić 2020). Shortly before that, we also collaborated with Cambridge Scholars Publishing and published a volume *Opposing Colonialism, Antisemitism, and Turbo-Nationalism: Rethinking the Past for New Conviviality* (see Gržinić, Pristovšek, and Uitz 2020).

Also as part of the “Genealogy of Amnesia” project, we showcased the exhibition “Stories of Traumatic Pasts: Counter-Archives for Future Memories” at the Weltmuseum Wien (October 8, 2020–April 3, 2021), curated by Gržinić, Christina Jauernik, and Sophie Uitz. It was also realized with the assistance and participation of Maruyama and İklım Doğan. On this occasion, we published the exhibition catalogue *Stories of Traumatic Pasts: Colonialism, Antisemitism, and Turbo-Nationalism* (see Gržinić, Pristovšek, Uitz, and Jauernik 2020).

We collaborated with Kancler and Piro Rexhepi on the paper on decolonial encounters (see Gržinić, Kancler, and Rexhepi 2020) and then again in the framework of the international online colloquium “Re-Activating Critical Thinking in Contemporary Philosophy and Theory” that we organized in January 2021 at the Postgraduate School of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU) in Ljubljana, with Lina Gonan and Mia Gonan also participating. Lina Gonan (2019) was also one of the interviewees for our video archive “Countering the Genealogy of Amnesia.”

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<sup>1</sup> For both projects, see Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (n.d., “Conviviality as Potentiality”; n.d., “Genealogy of Amnesia”).

Some of the interviews conducted as part of the project “Genealogy of Amnesia” were also published in an electronic publication *Theoretical-Critical Horizons: Shifting Baselines* (see Pristovšek and Gržinić 2021), to which Kancler, Tatlić and Panayotov contributed. It was published as part of the international project “Shifting Baselines,” which links three countries—Slovenia, Germany and Austria—and was co-produced and supported by the Goethe-Institut, the Nagib Association and the Austrian Cultural Forum.

In addition to the contributions by An, Rexhepi, Kesić, Gonan, and Gonan, the interview with Ortega Arjonilla conducted by Kancler was translated into Slovenian and published in the special issue of *Časopis za kritiko znanosti* entitled “Racial Capitalism: Intersectionality of Sexuality, Struggles and Bodies as Borders” (see Kancler and Gržinić 2020). The theme of this issue opened the way for collaboration with Lucrecia Masson Córdoba and iki yos piña narváez funes, who are also featured in this volume.

The connection also stems from the exchanges between Gržinić and Antonio Fuentes Díaz and Gržinić and Maja Breznik, both scholars of international repute.

The meeting with Liliana Conlisk Gallegos, who moderated the panel with Kathy Rae Huffman of ACM SIGGRAPH Digital Arts Community’s 2020 online exhibition “Digital Power: Activism, Advocacy and the Influence of Women Online,” curated by Kathy Rae Huffman (see ACM SIGGRAPH Digital Arts Community, n.d.), was seminal.

In short, building on these alliances, *Re-Activating Critical Thinking in the Midst of Necropolitical Realities: For Radical Change* seeks to reconceptualize, reassess, and reactivate the work of theoretical thinking, critical discourses, and practices that reflect the present moment in society, while providing strategies for possible emancipatory political practices (if emancipation is still to be understood as a practice of change). What are the ways, strategies and modes of conceptualizing change? Can difference be made tangible and how? Can we free ourselves from modernist notions of emancipation? Can we act on the terrain of necropolitical realities themselves? What content and form would this agency take?

We have envisioned this book as a compilation of writings, quotations, thoughts, and images that disrupt the necrospace, the necrocaptalist

reproduction of the present, and the forms of collectivity and (non-) relationality (Karera 2019) in which we currently live.

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# ACCESS

THE COLONIALITY OF THE QUOTIDIAN:  
A TRANSBORDER PERSPECTIVE  
ON THE MATRIX OF COLONIAL POWER  
AND THE AGENTS OF SUPREMACY  
(THE EVERYONE THAT IS NO ONE)

LILIANA CONLISK GALLEGOS

You do not see me because you do not see yourself and you do not see yourself because you declare yourself outside of culture. But declaring yourself outside of culture is self-deceiving.

María Lugones, "Hablando cara a cara"

At the very moment when the native intellectual is anxiously trying to create a cultural work he fails to realize that he is utilizing techniques and language which are borrowed from the stranger in his country.

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

You have to understand, most of these people are not ready to be unplugged. And many of them are so injured, so hopelessly dependent on the system, that they will fight to protect it.

Morpheus, *The Matrix*

I am grateful to the Yuhaviatam (Serrano) First Nation and to those Indigenous First Nations who remain unrecognized, whose unceded stolen traditional Indigenous homelands I call and have called home. I acknowledge that there needs to be a stop to the cruel and continuous removal of Indigenous peoples from their homelands for any reason, including due to rising housing prices. Give land back and respect Indigenous sovereignty! I join my voice to the demand that the forced fragmentation, suppression, dehumanization, and cutting down of Indigenous lands, knowledges, and peoples of the Americas is acknowledged as what it is, a genocide (Stannard 1992; Churchill 1997; Hinton, La Pointe, and Irvin-Erickson 2013; Woolford, Benvenuto, and Hinton 2014), an extended holocaust that continues to take place under the matrix of colonial power, the current global necropolitical *telos* that

continues to function in detriment of a majority for the benefit of an extreme minority privileged by white supremacy in all of its forms.

Individualism, decontextualization, oversimplification, hierarchical and binary thinking are all persistent elements of the logic of coloniality that is both cause and effect of the colonial matrix of power. Roughly 529 years of quotidian acts, ways of thinking, being and doing by individuals emboldened and supported by the matrix of colonial power are yet to be fully exposed, recorded and analyzed. I see some issues in current general attempts to liberate and decolonize and continuously at the level of the individual colonized intellectual, when institutions “deeply implanted in the minds of the colonized intellectual that the essential qualities remain eternal in spite of all the blunders men may make: the essential qualities of the West, of course” (Fanon 1963, 46). We are better acquainted with the ways in which white supremacists and oppressed oppressors who embrace hierarchy function in defense of coloniality. We are less familiar with how self-proclaimed woke individuals may fall into the trap of performing liberation, approaching it as one does a capital good or gain, abusing decolonial discourse to help increase future production or prestige within the colonial matrix. With this, these individuals uphold the supremacy of the current hierarchical order at the cost of further marginalization in coloniality. The mere attempt at rising within the hierarchy of coloniality centers on limited and strictly scripted ideals and the individual must think in terms of order and progress, pinnacles of Eurocentric modernity, which come with a format, logic and attitude of individualism, binary oversimplification, decontextualization and exceptionalism through the minimization, occlusion, and/or active exclusion of other formats, of other ways, knowledges and experiences outside coloniality’s goals.

The invention of merit guided by “survival of the fittest” social Darwinist ideas has been used to place blame on the individual who will not or is not able to succeed within the organizations of coloniality. Decontextualization and oversimplification are a consequence of the logic of coloniality, and in attempts to swiftly counteract, oversimplified interpretations such as that of merit are usually met with equally oversimplified responses. Popular decolonial discourse centers on the idea that the ultimate expression of coloniality lies in the institution and not on the individual. A national culture is the product of coloniality, and “the result of internal and external tensions exerted over society as a whole and also at every level of that society” (Fanon 1963, 244). Institutions are made up of multiple actants both

oppressors and oppressed which are behind the machine, usually in conflict, yet making it appear as if in unison.

Coloniality functions in degrees. The limits of coloniality lie on the agency of the colonized, fundamentally, and particularly on the actions of those actants working and enforcing or resisting the will of institutions. Sometimes, as colonized individuals, our decisions are dictated by our survival, but sometimes our decisions are dictated by our comfort. To individually exercise and unconsciously perform the logic of coloniality for comfort or an upper hand is to further justify and proxy manifestations of the global matrix of colonial power. What does coloniality look like beyond survival in the perks of the quotidian? What are the complexities that lie behind manifestations of coloniality that are lost to a discourse that only focuses on the colonialist functions of institutions? How can border life experiences leading to transborder thinking help explore the role of individuals within the matrix of colonial power? How can the individual and the community find empowerment through a critical consciousness of quotidian coloniality when navigating institutions while subversively resisting to participate as an agent of supremacy?

The way knowledge comes to minds is diverse. The colonized lens may deem some ways as “unexpected.” Grandmas spew theory in the kitchen, while children design methodologies through play. In coloniality, we minimize value in diverse dimensions of life. We do it to people, we do it to knowledge, we do it to food. Gourmet, organic tacos, made with environmentally conscious locally grown ingredients in a corner of the city of Ensenada, Baja California are nothing but part of the daily backdrop of life, yet as soon as these elements become appropriated by actants of the logic of coloniality, we get served half the ration for triple the price, and the locals would no longer afford their own way of life. Nobody escapes, even if it may seem like the privileged do. Everyone is paying a price and in many more ways than in the literal sense. As a *transfronteriza* (*transborderite*), Indigenous, mythically mestiza, Chicana, *nepantlera* I want to share my very own *unexpected* philosophical stream of critical consciousness to revisit and reconceptualize the complex input of the colonized individual as present in exemplars of the phenomenon of virtual, digital, and popular US mass media which has been functioning as the main source of information, or the new school of the masses within current coloniality.

When in his last Netflix special *The Closer* (Lathan 2021), US African American comedian Dave Chappelle, comes out as “Team TERF” (trans-exclusionary radical feminist), basically a transphobe, his discourse presupposes a divisive border between Queer and Black struggles. Though his intention may have been to speak to those liberals who are agents of ~~supremacy~~ when they hypocritically defend LGBT\*QI+ human rights while ignoring and thus perpetrating violence against Black and other People of Color; a lack of complexity and context resulted in an internet explosion of mass confusion. Videos and posts made by white supremacists and other oppressed oppressors who wretchedly troll on any opportunity to try to climb up in the ideological hierarchical social ladder of coloniality, continued to ignore the critique of white ~~supremacy~~ while uplifting only the selected part of Chappelle’s comedic discourse that in their heads further justified their “punch-down” on the transgender and LGBT\*QI+ human experience.

Ironically, these ~~supremacy~~ hopefuls are doing exactly what Chappelle was critiquing the hypocrite liberal white supremacist society for; grossly they *still* continue to ignore his primary plight, that of a Black man fighting against white ~~supremacy~~. His basic questioning was valid: why is there so much white outrage and upset over LGBT\*QI+ marginalization as an issue of human rights and yet there is still much silence about topics of racism such as the incarceration and murder of Black and Brown people by police and children in cages at the border? He questioned this while at the same time further marginalizing the LGBT\*QI+ community with homophobic and transphobic jokes. This example demonstrates that the issue at hand is one created by a binary “either/or” mentality which emulates the hierarchical logic where Chappelle’s initial controversy lies; individualism, responsiveness is dependent on if the issue of marginalization/dehumanization touches individuals personally. This quotidian coloniality functions as an extension that serves to uphold in this case transphobia, but in other cases one or more of the following: racism, sexism, ableism, and all other -isms/-phobias.

Scholars have hinted at the coloniality of the quotidian. For example, Yoruba scholar Oyèrónkẹ̀ Oyèwùmí (2011) notes the experience of quotidian coloniality within gender violence in male-dominated scholar circles. Mark Rifkin’s *Settler Common Sense* takes note of the decontextualized “structures of feeling [...] vital in the ongoing performance of quotidian modes of inhabitation and selfhood” (2014, 330). Like these scholars, I too as a *transfronteriza* hold specific resistant

philosophical and mental processes that guide me into this reconceptualization of the matrix of colonial power through my lived experiences in relation to the conceptualization of the coloniality of the quotidian. By sharing my lesser known even niche perspective with a global audience, I seek to add my voice to show individuals living under the oppression of coloniality the ways in which we may unknowingly be serving as agents of the matrix of colonial power, supporting and enforcing coloniality and marginalization, through incidents and acts which internalize and enact the binary and hierarchical *formats* of supremacy even when claiming to be for liberation from coloniality.

### **Colonialism and coloniality**

Peruvian sociologist and political theorist Aníbal Quijano Obregón (1930–2018) thoroughly explained the history and details of the existence of a coloniality of power or the matrix of colonial power. In “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” he states: “With the conquest of the societies and the cultures which inhabit what today is called Latin America, began the constitution of a new world order, culminating, five hundred years later, in a global power covering the whole planet.” (Quijano 2010, 22) Quijano further explains that the coloniality of power constitutes a matrix of methods and patterns of power embedded in our world system and made possible by racial and revamped discriminations which were originally meant for gender. Quijano’s perspective was not rare or new, it comes from a lineage of decolonial resistance work in support of Indigenous farmworker, student, and working-class movements ignored by the colonial center. His indigenized decolonial and critical ideas were inspired by Peruvian journalist, activist José Carlos Mariátegui La Chira, who Quijano credits as one of the first critics in the Americas to successfully unplug from the matrix of colonial power, which leaked beyond colonial institutions infecting world systems, into our everyday life and sense of existence.

Furthermore, constructions that were products of colonial domination were widely spread by Euro dominant history and pseudo-science, educating us all with decontextualized and biased information “presented as objective and scientific categories with a supposed ahistorical meaning, presented as organic and not as a direct result of the history of power” (Quijano 1992,

12).<sup>1</sup> The marginality experienced by those most impacted by colonization in their lands and in the diasporas into the so-called First World doesn't grow from within our non-white, Queer, trans identities, cultures, or races/ethnicities, but as a reaction to the violence of coloniality which has been forcefully and generationally centralized in our psyche and which has decontextualized the nature and roots of our colonized existence and thus our logic and ways of thinking and doing. In another dimension, those privileged by coloniality, their minds and thoughts are also groomed by the systematic repression of the story of humanity.

The colonial matrix of power has multiple dimensions and they are inseparable. Coloniality was the result of colonialism's

systematic repression, not only of the specific beliefs, ideas, images, symbols or knowledge[s] that were not useful to global colonial domination [...]. The repression fell, above all, over the modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images [...] followed by the imposition of the use of the rulers' own patterns of expression, and of their beliefs and images [...] to impede the cultural production of the dominated, but also as a very efficient means of social and cultural control, when the immediate repression ceased to be constant and systematic. (Quijano 2010, 23)

Anyone who supports coloniality is an agent of supremacy, but due to the decontextualized picture and binary formulation we receive, we tend to notice this more when the individual is not a white cis hetero. Dave Chappelle is not the only example of a person from a marginalized community doing work which inadvertently helps support the power of coloniality over marginalized categories that they do not identify with. In the United States, we have Latina/o/x undocumented communities who support Donald Trump's plan to restrict immigration and build the wall. In their adoption of the quotidian logic of coloniality, they adopt a parallel thinking to white European descendants of white settlers: undocumented

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<sup>1</sup> I decided to translate the original Spanish text myself because I noticed some minor discrepancies and errors that changed the rhetoric of the text. This is an example of an error in the English translation of the original Spanish text: Quijano wrote "ahistorical," not "a historical." When we say "a historical," we are focused on Eurocentered history, whereas Quijano was referring to a general history or a relation to past events. The English translation is as follows: "These intersubjective constructions, product of Eurocentered colonial domination were even assumed to be 'objective', 'scientific', categories, then of a historical significance." (Quijano 2010, 22)

immigrants who have been here longer have more rights than those who are just coming in. The phenomena of quotidian coloniality results from and produces more oversimplified binary and hierarchical thinking, uncritical emulation of format, the decontextualization of history, the appropriation and suppression of knowledge production that does not support the goals of the myth of modernity, and the oversimplification of complex concepts such as identity and diverse human experience.

Quijano stated colonial discriminations based on race were simply oversimplified imitations incorporating previous gender-based discriminations. In the Americas, a cisgender heterosexual (cishet) white woman was suddenly superior to a cishet man of any other race than white, and any cishet man of any color was superior to any cishet Woman of Color. María Lugones explained how

understanding these features of the organization of gender in the modern/colonial gender system—the biological dimorphism, the patriarchal and heterosexual organizations of relations—is crucial to an understanding of the differential gender arrangements along “racial” lines. Biological dimorphism, heterosexual patriarchy are all characteristic of what I call the “light” side of the colonial/modern organization of gender. Hegemonically these are written large over the meaning of gender. (Lugones 2008, 2)

The binaries were not preexistent and organized by colonialism, the binaries and limited conceptualizations on sex, gender, and race were imposed by it...

The sexuality [or identities] that emerges within the matrix of power relations is not a simple replication or copy of the law itself, a uniform repetition of a masculinist economy of identity. The productions swerve from their original purposes and inadvertently mobilize possibilities of “subjects” that do not merely exceed the bounds of cultural intelligibility, but effectively expand the boundaries of what is, in fact, culturally intelligible. (Butler 1990, 29)

Identities subversive and resistant to the heterosexual matrix of power are not passive observants, they are and have continuously been pushing for the expansion of the boundaries, the borders of what *actually* exists but we keep interpreting this as what *can* exist.

The limited format of hierarchical and binary thinking and doing that was imposed during colonialism generated more hierarchies and

subcategorizations based on an oversimplified understanding of a suspended identity which would, depending on the context, become based on sexuality, physical and mental abilities, social class, spirituality, and much more. Due to their intersectional character, identities break with the expectation of their fixity, yet regardless of our intention, they are located in a finite set of diverse locations depending on the context at hand and on their proximity to the supreme ideological markers of whiteness, higher class, of physical and mental abilities privileged by capitalism, language, religion, etc.

Colonial ideas propagated further through the exclusively European phenomenon of the myth of modernity, which “includes a rational ‘concept’ of emancipation that we affirm and subsume. But, at the same time, it develops an irrational myth, a justification for genocidal violence.” (Dussel 1993, 66) When we remain unconscious of the history and context of the ideas that have connotations of moving forward, becoming better, advancing, all as ideals of modernity, this can keep us wretchedly competing for that promised higher rank in the hierarchy of coloniality while marginalizing others and even parts of our own selves by unconsciously serving as agents of ~~supremacy~~ <sup>supremacy</sup>.

In the western Eurocentric take on what *defines* progress in an imposed rigged competition, all other possible formats and locations outside those goals are irrational or simply “developing” or “failing.” Enrique Dussel (1994) explains that the violence generated by the myth of modernity is what is truly irrational. In the name of such “progress,” dehumanization, robbery, and murder are justified in multiple dimensions including those of a quotidian nature. Coloniality and modernity are two sides of the same coin (Quijano 2010; Dussel 1993; Mignolo 2007) and quotidian thoughts, ideas, the lack of questioning or lack of interest are also another side of the matrix of colonial power. The quotidian is impacted by what counts as knowledge and how it should be made, collected, and shared; this has been defined by institutions but also by individually seduced agents. Moreover, “European culture was made seductive: it gave access to power. After all, beyond repression, the main instrument of all power is its seduction.” (Quijano 2010, 23)

The few colonized who were educated (religiously and secularly) were given perks of power in exchange for them serving as agents of ~~supremacy~~ <sup>supremacy</sup>. Hierarchical and binary ways of thinking and doing were widespread through communication tools such as mass media. While

entertained we are programmed to follow formats and ways of doing coloniality. The promise of access to power seduces into becoming a willful agent of the matrix, aspiring to advance and “progress” within the confines of the system, no matter the cost. Yet, thinking we can impose the logic of coloniality onto others and be liberated ourselves is like pissing into the wind. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970) explains that those who support the colonization of the imaginary and follow it blindly are nothing more than oppressed oppressors. Maybe to simply begin to complexify our perspective and expand our sensibility to the details of this phenomenon could serve as key toward our broader liberation.

### **Trans-border thinking: Chicana Indigenous/mestiza *transfronteriza nepantlera* sensibility**

In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Gloria E. Anzaldúa re-claimed that the consciousness of the new mestiza, who with her existence as one who lives among and/or is one of those who cross over through the confines of the “normal,” “*los atravesados* [the ones who are crossed over] [...] the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead” (1987, 3), stands in such an exacerbated location of coloniality that her work leads to the undoing and “massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness” (80); the macrocosmic and microcosmic planes. The expression and application of the lived mestiza consciousness in border thinking is “the epistemology of the exteriority; that is, of the outside created from the inside” (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2006, 206) and it is not only alternative to a centralized coloniality, it resists coloniality and exists despite of its attempts to destroy it.

Walter Mignolo (2017, 13) claims border thinking implies “dwelling in the border, not crossing borders [...], but a conceptualization of the experience of living in the border.” Yet not all experiences living in the border are the same. As in the spatial frontiers, in the conceptual border there are also nuances, complexities, and varied relationships to the center of supremacy. The in-between consciousness becomes twofold through conceptually inhabiting the border, but I would argue that consciousness is trained multi-fold and interdimensional when the individual’s body has the actual experience of crossing physical borders, and especially when this happens repeatedly, over and over again in the coming of age and development of consciousness.

The examples of border thinking provided by Franz Fanon's (1967) black experience, Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) *conciencia de la mestiza*, and W. E. B. Du Bois's (1989) double consciousness do not come from inhabiting the border and not crossing it. They come from individuals whose biographies tell us they crossed physical borders multiple times, back and forth between Martinique, France, Algeria, between South Texas and Mexico, and between states of the US North and South, respectively. They all came from middle class families. They were empowered enough to write out their experiences, even when they were being misunderstood and reduced. The agency and empowerment to conceptualize not just the border, but the transborder experience, was an action which came from an excess of frontier. Transborder thinking complexifies the multiplicity and diversity of experiences for the dwellers and includes the possibility of experiences that are within an exponential effect of that realm.

The differentiation between dwelling in the border and being on the frontiers is not mutually exclusive, these experiences stack up as they also compose part of specific intersectional human experiences or identities. To think in terms of the transborder experience provides a complexified and contextualized sensibility to notice the borders that appear to limit and oversimplify conceptualizations found in quotidian discourses of decoloniality. Transborder thinking leads toward “‘trans’-modernity, a ‘beyond’ that transcends Western modernity (since the West has never adopted it but, rather, has scorned it and valued it as ‘nothing’)” (Dussel 2002, 221). Thus, in its cyclical logic of inclusivity it represents the beginning of the end for the colonial matrix of power and the myth of modernity—the one-size-fits-all forced set of ideals, knowledge and goals (ways, formats, logic) imposed by western Europe on the world (Dussel 1993).

I am an Indigenous Kumeyaay descendant/mestiza, because ultimately *mestizaje* is also a myth, *transfronteriza*, Chicana, and one of the *nepantleras*, “boundary-crossers, thresholders who initiate others in rites of passage, activists who, from a listening, receptive, spiritual stance, rise to their own visions and shift into acting them out, haciendo mundo Nuevo (introducing change)” (Anzaldúa 2002, 571). *Transfronteriza* or *transborderite* refers to a people who “have lived, studied, and worked on both sides of the Mexico–US border, are bilingual and bicultural (some tricultural or more) and which have a very intense, personal and emotive relationship with both sides of the border” (Iglesias-Prieto 2004, 147;

trans. Conlisk Gallegos). This is one of many border experiences that are overlooked when touching upon border thinking.

Some people on the border never cross. Some are migrants whose experience of crossing borders is like that of a gladiator entering a coliseum, a life or death experience, where you either cross, you die or kill. *Transfronterizos* are more like *luchadores libres* (Mexican wrestlers), and the border is like the gym or like the ropes around the arena from which we propel ourselves with even more force. We do not cross the border in search of “The American Dream,” instead we cross to and from the United States daily, even multiple times a day, looking for toothpaste, toilet paper, cheaper clothes, and education (on the US side), for better food, happier life experiences, being with family, cheap medicine, and effective doctors (on the Mexican side). Day to day, we cross into the other side, transforming into our more assimilated avatars, to face the struggle and well-rehearsed battle between dominant cultures and those who, even in their Indigeneity, are minoritized and forced into foreigner status on both sides. The transgression is an every-day experience that occurs multiple times a day and becomes like a traumatic exercise, a sort of black-ops anticolonial training which prepares you and eventually compels you to the point of being unable to not take action. The transborder training occurs not only because we inhabit the border, it happens in the act of crossing back and forth through not binary, but a multiplicity of ideologies and cultures.

I grew up in Tijuana and San Ysidro (San Diego County). In “Ay Tijuana mi Tijuana: una iconografía de ciudad, desde las formas breves literarias y extraliterarias” (Oh Tijuana, My Little Tijuana: The Iconography of a City, from Its Literary and Extraliterary Short Forms) I explain how the border area there is composed of what appears to be fragments, snippets, giving the effect of a kaleidoscope in constant movement (Gallegos 2013). I trace how from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 21st century, this effect gave Tijuana its reputation as a party city of debauchery, a place where gringos escaped to let their darkest desires roam free. Hyper misrepresentations of Tijuana and the borderlands are and have been mostly produced and distributed through outsider produced media which misappropriated and hijacked our city’s symbols and iconography to further perpetuate the influx of pleasure tourism from the US. In turn, this perpetuated the image of Tijuana as “the devil’s playground, a town of vice and sin” (Vanderwood 2007, 210). The phenomena surrounding the

maneuver of coloniality that is hijacking, appropriation and misrepresentation are something that Tijuana is familiar with.

At the end of the 19th century after US settlers with anti-Spanish, anti-Mexican and anti-Indigenous sentiments settled into and stole the northwestern Mexican territories, an act sealed by the Mexican American War (1846–1848), and after the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey (1848–1855) came the US production and distribution of Tijuana themed postcards, posters, and dime novels. This continued into the early 20th century with cowboy films, ads, and articles published in California newspapers owned by US border barons with economic interests in Tijuana during the prohibition era (1920–1933). With new forms of media we see this continuation of Tijuana’s ill-representations in popular TV shows like *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy*, and even children’s movies like *Toy Story 3*, with scatological, hypersexual, and other abject representations of the place where all outlaws are welcome, “south of the border down Mexico way” (Sinatra 1958). This idea of the Mexican border was produced and reproduced transmedia and the ideas about the border were passed on trans generationally. These border representations came to represent all Mexicans, all Latin Americans, as well as the entire so-called Third World. The ill representations, some of which are actually the result of neoliberal and gringo presence in the region, designed an effect of hyperrealism, which resulted in a matrix-like existence for *borderites and transborderites* of the frontier, a neoliberal extension of settler Disneyland. Forced to deal with the marginality of modernity and coloniality, a phenomenon that exists around the so-called Third World is what inspired Jeff Gillette’s “Dismayland” series of paintings who in turn inspired Banksy by bringing it back to the aspect of territory in his/her/their art installation, *Dismaland Bemusement Park* (2015).

With Tijuana being dependent on tourism, to survive, the locals were forced to perform as avatars that fulfilled gringo racist stereotypes of the Mexican hyperreal, for example through the exaggeration of a Speedy Gonzalez accent when speaking English in order to lure the gringo tourist into spending money:

The burro zebra is the Pegasus of the border. Pegasus was the son of Medusa and Poseidon (God of the ocean). Medusa was beheaded, from her blood mixed with sea foam, Pegasus was born. Tijuana, horribly beautiful beautifully horrible, a region in eternal conflict, Border Medusa, because Anglo tourists demand prostitution, alcohol, and drugs. Tijuana’s streets resisted, not the stereotype, but the poverty, we used dehumanization to our

advantage, “cam in, biutiful siñoritas, too dallars bier!” and you would never know he is playing you, taking your money, exaggerating his accent for your fantasy. It is the black and white painted over a donkey available to anybody for a Mexican curios picture memento, in the Main Streets of Tijuana, Avenida Revolución, only 5 dollars! (Conlisk Gallegos 2017, 02:46–3:37)



**Fig. 1–1.** Still image from *Technocultura & Resistencia* by Liliana Conlisk Gallegos, 2017.

Growing up *transfronteriza*, I personally witnessed “new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*” (Mbembe 2003, 40). Perpetually crossing borders demystified them to me. From the daily crossings they materialized in front of me as what they really are: violent tools of dehumanization and monuments to binary and hierarchical thinking which continue upholding the logic of coloniality (Quijano 2010) and where the ways of the coloniality of the quotidian are fully exposed. As an ardent decolonialist *transfronteriza*, transborder knowledge production is a form of survival within Eurocentric institutions. I do not engage in knowledge production unless I see an opportunity to engage in fierce ideological, philosophical, and theoretical battles against the coloniality of the quotidian because to me this is personal and important for my survival in the academic and other institutional spaces I navigate but not because I believe this makes me superior. In fact, I stay up at night worrying about the effect all this has had on my humanity and the effect I could perhaps have on others of which sometimes we have no control.