

FEMINISM IN TRANSLATION

# Ethnocentrism and Coloniality in Latin American Feminisms: The Complicity and Consolidation of Hegemonic Feminists in Transnational Spaces<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article applies the theses of Chandra Mohanty and Gayatri Spivak to Latin America in order to advance criticisms of discursive colonization by Western feminisms. It also provides an analysis “from within” to observe the coloniality of feminism in Latin America, denouncing its white-bourgeois origin and its collaboration with hegemonic Northern feminisms. It seeks to show how, since the 1990s, hegemonic feminism in Latin America has been complicit in projects of recolonization of the subcontinent by the central countries in the production of a subaltern subject, “the female other of the female other.”

For several decades, Latin American feminism<sup>2</sup> has been developing a critical framework and a politics that attempts to consider racial and class inequalities affecting a significant percentage of women in the region. The approach from an inclusive perspective has been made visible since the Third Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encuentro [Encounter] that took place in Brazil in 1985, which brought to the fore the necessity of a feminism that included the problematic of the “Black woman” and “her representatives.”<sup>3</sup>

It should be said that despite this early appearance—relatively speaking, if we consider the multi-ethnic and Afro-descendant population of the continent—of conflicts over class and race/ethnic privilege, little has been published about the “issue” among the discourses of Latin American feminism.

In general, the tensions that emerged over the multiplicity of women’s origins and social conditions in the region have remained dormant, reappearing from time to time in the form of unresolved conflict, or occasionally brought on by the United Nations agenda. These conflicts or engagements did not at any point significantly affect or modify the perspectives or the dominant practices of regional feminism. Usually, the

“question” is still laid out as “the problem of Black and Indigenous women,” and it is only thus that it is included in the planning processes of panels and gatherings,<sup>4</sup> or in some interventionist projects or programs usually designed and managed by professional, middle-class, and white-supremacist feminists from throughout the continent.

Nevertheless, we cannot deny that, at this moment, some of the most central concerns of global feminism include debates about multiculturalism, the explosion of identities, and a preoccupation regarding the subject of our politics. This is most evident in the opportune and repeated mention of “class, race, gender, and sexuality” as required language for any academic text or speech that lays claim to advanced or politically correct thought. And no one would say today, much less within feminist circles, that race exists as a natural condition that marks expected behavior or a specific personal quality. Thus, within a context that seems to favor attention to the problem, I am encouraged and interested in unveiling the approach to the issue of race and class within Latin American feminism, identifying those conditions that have historically prevented an adequate discussion of these systems of oppression within the analysis and politics of regional feminism.

Throughout this essay, I move forward with a series of hypotheses about the particular historical constitution of Latin American feminism within a wider postcolonial context: the form in which unequal geopolitical conditions have produced Latin American feminism’s ideological dependence on the processes and production of discourses developed in the first world, which thus defines the political-theoretical focus of this movement; and the difficulties and challenges for the production of local thought and praxis that, while acknowledging this constitutive postcolonial mark, can observe how this condition inevitably determines the subject of regional feminism, as well as the immediate objectives of its politics.

In a moment in which reflections on the feminist subject and on feminist bodies is present as never before, I ask myself: Who has occupied the material space of these postponed reflections? Why has this current preoccupation limited itself to the gendered, sexualized body in ways that fail to articulate or ask questions about how the policies of racialization and impoverishment also define bodies and beings in a region like Latin America? How has it come to be that Latin American feminism has not taken advantage of this burst of theoretical production on the abject body to articulate a necessary argument about the expropriated bodies of women within the history of the continent’s geopolitical and discursive colonization? When space has been opened up within social movements, and in particular within feminism, for the visibility and recovery of previously unrecognized subjects, which bodies have become the representative objects of this oblivion and which have once again been blurred, and why?

In this essay, I draw attention to the analytical strategy proposed by Chandra Mohanty in “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” (Mohanty 2003a)<sup>5</sup> and in “Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles” (Mohanty 2003b). I am interested in focusing on at least three hypotheses she sustains and develops in these texts:

1. That, within the academic practice of Western feminism, there is a *discursive colonization* of third-world women and their struggles, which we must both deconstruct and dismantle.
2. That to move from criticism to “reconstruction,” Western feminism must be able to identify the pressing problems of the women most marginalized by the neoliberal context. To do so, Mohanty proposes adopting a methodology based on the notion of *epistemic privilege*, in which we assume a view from the bottom up that

starts in the poorest and most marginalized communities in the world in order to “access and make the workings of power visible—to read up the ladder of privilege” (Mohanty 2003b, 511).

3. In the present context is the need for and the possibility of a transnational, anti-capitalist, decolonized feminist community, sustained by the idea of “common differences,” which attends to the fight against the nefarious effects of globalization, and which establishes a horizon of universal solidarity and justice.

To examine these hypotheses from a Latin American point of view, I contrast two of Gayatri Spivak’s theories that I find highly effective for the purposes of my argument: (1) the impossibility of the subaltern speaking (Spivak 1988) and (2) the denunciation of how postcolonial reason—sustained by the nation-building and citizenship projects of dominant postcolonial elites and intellectuals—*encrypts* the subaltern, simultaneously requiring her and foreclosing her (Spivak 1999).

I am concerned with the possibility that a transnational feminism, enacted in the name of “feminist solidarity”—such as that suggested by Mohanty—assumes the location of *epistemic privilege*, and posits that it may help the Latin American subaltern<sup>6</sup> overcome her mute and underrepresented state. From my critical perspective, which emerges from the conjunction between activism and academia, this is not only naïve, but also signals the great distance between feminists in the North—including women native to the South but geopolitically located in the North—from the problems and vicissitudes of women’s lives within the region, and from the historical paths of Latin American feminism.

### On Discursive Colonization

When speaking of discursive colonization, Mohanty is speaking to the academic practices of Western feminism; these practices have repercussions on the lives and struggles of third-world women (Mohanty 2003b, 499). Mohanty proposed the concept in 1986, in her essay “Under Western Eyes,” which sets out to critically address and revise the theoretical underpinnings of Western feminism and its Eurocentric methodologies that falsely universalize a discourse in the service of its own interests. As she points out, the seeming intention of this critique was to denounce the nexus between power and knowledge, while simultaneously rendering visible the political and material implications of these forms of knowledge-production and discourses about women (monolithically constructed) in the third world (Mohanty 2003a, 17). For Mohanty,

Any discussion of the intellectual and political construction of “third world feminisms” must address itself to two simultaneous projects: the internal critique of hegemonic “Western” feminisms, and the formulation of autonomous, geographically, historically, and culturally grounded feminist concerns and strategies. (17)

As it has been for Mohanty, for many years my fundamental project has aimed to think through the many discourses and proposals, as well as central and marginal practices, of Latin American feminism. Like Mohanty, I attempt to critically engage the movement from my particular geopolitical location—outside hegemonic, Western feminisms—and, at the same time, I establish an articulation with my personal historical and political interests for the production of internal criticism of the most-exercised forms of feminism extant in my region. In particular, I am interested in reflecting on the

modes by which this *discursive colonization* of third-world women by feminists in the North is fed by the complicity of hegemonic feminists in the South. I also want to ascertain not only the forms of colonization, but also the coloniality of the discourses produced by hegemonic feminists from the South.

Although Mohanty acknowledges this possible continuity between hegemonic feminists from the North and South,<sup>7</sup> this is not her primary focus, as she is more concerned about thinking about her own feminist community. This leaves the door wide open for further work in this area. In general, the exercise of (self-)criticism is less welcome in the restricted, disadvantaged, and narrow contexts of third-world production and its feminist political praxis.<sup>8</sup> In this article, I choose to focus on only some of the challenges related to this question.

First, I note the obvious: as we are reminded by Ochy Curiel and Breny Mendoza (Mendoza 2008; Curiel 2009), Latin American feminism has bourgeois, white/*mestizo*, urban, and heteronormative origins. To point out this origin is not a minor detail. There is extensive documentation of the ways in which the ruling and intellectual classes, among which we can place [the majority of] feminists, were directly influenced by North American/European political and ideological agendas. If indeed feminism in the South was fed by the ideas of emancipation and equality so present within feminist struggles in Europe and the United States, then surely, we also have to admit the ethnocentric inheritances of that endorsement. Alongside this acknowledgment, we can also agree with Spivak and Mohanty about their theses regarding the Eurocentrism and colonialism inherent in the theoretical production of hegemonic Western feminisms.

Following this line of analysis, I would like to echo Mendoza's criticism that asserts the complicity of local hegemonic feminism with the perpetuation of Eurocentric/Northern ideologies, and by extension the continuance of the colonialist project in Latin America (Mendoza 2008). To Francesca Gargallo's question, "Why, during the 90s, did Latin American feminism stop looking at the theoretical basis of its politics present in its own praxis, experimentation, and history of reflections?" (Gargallo 2004, 11), Mendoza demonstrates how this was always the case. She states, "Latin American feminists [attached themselves] to Western feminism<sup>9</sup> (in its liberal, radical, and Marxist forms) to construct their organizations and alternative approaches to social and cultural change" (Mendoza 2008, 171). But not only this. This attachment to Western emancipation ideologies and projects has not only served Latin American feminist projects. It has also had dire consequences in that it contributed to the positioning of a gaze and political objectives that are exclusively fruitful to women from specific origins, socio-economic classes, and sexuality—across the continent.

Using this line of argument as an example, Mendoza explores the contemporary connections between 1980s democratization projects—to which many feminists in the region subscribed—and new forms of neoliberal imperialist policies that emerged for Latin America at the end of the Cold War. She reminds us, "the implementation of the ideology of democracy within Latin American postcolonial realities" by the Allied countries occurred primarily through the mechanisms of [international] cooperation, and the emerging transnational spaces in which the discourses and recipes for development aid were produced, through and around United Nations mega conferences. Mendoza identifies how this scenario extends strategies aimed at restoring and reconfiguring the colonial relationship between centers and peripheries, but also within the global poles. Launching this critique within academic discourse—just as it had been launched before within spaces of autonomous activism—she again points out how we

must not ignore the role and political complicity of hegemonic feminism in these policies and projects in the region. As an example, she recounts the now-celebrated negotiations for equality carried out in the 1990s between the Latin American feminist movement and corrupt, neoliberal governments. In doing so, she asks:

How did it come to be that [feminists] transformed themselves into appendages, and even into accomplices of the neocolonial plan? How is it that Latin American feminism continues, within the space of democracy, to cultivate a socioeconomic and political-cultural structure in which many of the ideas about gender and race, alongside other legacies of colonialism, and the same patriarchal power structures, and the same cruelty and corruption of the military and rulers of the past, are maintained? (Mendoza 2008, 171–74)

Mendoza answers her own question, lamenting:

Latin American feminists were not able to develop a conceptual and political strategy that would support them in better understanding and negotiating the neocolonial relations that structure life in the subcontinent. . . . [Remembering that the] Latin American feminist episteme has been constructed. . . . through the displacement of knowledge from its geo-cultural localization through theorems emerging from distant realities. . . . [she concludes that] paradoxically, this dysfunction of the feminists' conceptual apparatus leads to a misrecognition of what is specific to Latin American realities, and it impedes political practice with major consequences. (174–75)

Thus, the coloniality of the discursive practices of hegemonic feminisms in the third world, or at least in Latin America, leads to the reproduction of an Other within feminism, across the continent. This Other includes Afro-descended and Indigenous women, lesbians, laborers, sex workers, peasants, and poor women. The effects of discursive colonization produced by Western feminisms imply an intrinsic coloniality within those discourses produced by Latin American feminisms, so much so it is no longer just an attribute of first-world feminisms. Across our homelands, coloniality has at least two consequences: 1) the definition, in collusion with, and with frank dependence on, hegemonic feminisms of the imperial North, of the guidelines and focal issues that concern the thought and action of local feminism; 2) the absorption (phagocytosis) of the subaltern people of these lands through a (proper) representation by women from national elites and hegemonic feminist groups.

The best example of this first consequence can be traced in the evolution of the fundamental debates within the academy and the feminist movement, as well as in the problems addressed by research and academic programs on gender and sexuality offered in Latin American universities in the past few years.

It is no secret that the focus on the study of identities has increased within regional feminist scholarship. Gioconda Herrera, in her review of the research carried out in the field of gender studies, demonstrates an explosion of research focused on questions of identity (Herrera 1999). She shows how these programs, on the one hand, limit themselves to mere description without detailing how these identities are produced within specific contexts of power. On the other hand, these types of studies have not allowed an exploration of how the different categories of identity articulate one another.

Unfortunately, these studies, following the interests, strategies, and concepts legitimized in countries in the North, have focused primarily on dissident sexualities and gender identity without being able to account for the irreversible crosslinking of these categories (production of desire, sexuality, and gender) with those of race and class. Nor have they addressed how the constitution of sexual and gender identity would be produced within a particular configuration of Latin American nation-states, their colonial inheritances and discursive colonization.

In this vein Herrera concludes:

Under the influence of some feminisms and identity politics, any recognition of heterogeneity, diversity, and the particular has gained increasing ground. [Notwithstanding], in academic, political, and developmental practice, this recognition tends to remain both formal and descriptive. This raises some questions: How to analytically—beyond a mere description—articulate gender, race, ethnicity, and social class in order to explain the ways in which social inequality constitutes and hinders development processes in our countries? (Herrera 1999, 6)

Similar to Mendoza's hypothesis, Herrera's study demonstrates how, in a context like Latin America, knowledge-production about identity and the feminist body has been developed based on imported conceptual frameworks. This has occurred without the kind of mediation that would allow for the reappropriation of that body (many times, an abstracted body by the sole use of a gender analysis) by the racialized, impoverished, *folkloricized*, colonized bodies of Latin American women.<sup>10</sup> The reification of the absence of Indigenous, Afro, and poor bodies within this body of work demonstrates the limits of the feminist subject, and the need to amplify those limits. It is disturbing and, at the same time, symptomatic of how knowledge-production—even in this phase of the “decentralization of the universal feminist subject—still contains the Eurocentric and universalist center and does not manage to loosen itself from this historical mode of colonization, no matter the level of critique” (Curiel 2009, 9).

Taking this paradigmatic example, I propose to think through how the underlying debates, themes, and agendas of regional feminist scholarship are not only trapped (colonized) by the conceptual and analytic frameworks of Northern feminisms, but also how they play a critical role in the universalization of these interpretive frameworks and the production of a contemporary colonial subject. What I am attempting to denounce here is that, if there is a discursive colonization of women and their struggles within the Third world, this has not only resulted from the hegemonic feminisms of the North, but also because these have invariably counted on the complicity and the compromises of hegemonic feminisms in the South and their particular interests regarding class, racial, normative sexuality and gender politics as well as their social standing and status quo.

Many feminists from the periphery, thanks to their class and race privileges (although still at a disadvantage in relation to their peers in the North), have benefited in their own countries from Western and ethnocentric conceptual frameworks that produce—as their constitutive other—a Black, Indian, poor, lesbian, ignorant “woman of the third world” (Mohanty 2003b, 501). They actively participate in the project that makes impossible both the subaltern's voice and agency.

It is because of this that I must confess that I am skeptical of Mohanty's proposed methodology suggesting that a transnational feminism should adopt the notion of *epistemic privilege*. Similar to Spivak's critique of postcolonial intellectuals within the

school of Subaltern Studies, I fear that hegemonic feminisms on both sides of the Atlantic have contributed to the colonial project of inscribing the “third-world woman” in a place between her historical expulsion from the formation of the white, Western nation ideal, and nations’ reliance on her existence as the (true) Other. If feminists in the North have needed the figure of the “third-world woman,” at the same time, feminists (white/*mestiza*, bourgeois) in the South have needed and have actively worked to construct their local Other, in order to integrate themselves into the nationalist, Eurocentric production of discourses within and throughout Latin American nation-states. The epistemic violence<sup>11</sup> is such that “the third-world woman” is doubly trapped by a) the discursive colonization of Western feminism that constructs the monolithic Latin American “Other,” and by b) the discursive practices of feminists in the South, who, establishing a certain distance while simultaneously maintaining continuity with the matrix of colonial privilege, construct her [the poor, Black, Indigenous, peasant, working woman] as “the female other of the female Other.”

Within this double construction of the “most deprived women in the world,” there is no possible access to the revelatory truth of subordinate experiences. As Spivak states, the subaltern cannot speak. Her voice remains eclipsed by all the discourses about her, her experience colonized by them. The hope of accessing that privileged point of view is self-deception. Mohanty’s intention to avail herself of the notion of epistemic privilege seems to suggest the possibility of adopting “a point of view from which to access an adequate, true and objective representation” of the lives and problems of the most dispossessed women in the world, but we know this effort is unsuccessful (Tozzi 2005, 149), in part because:

Epistemic privilege . . . identifies a political formulation (oppressors should listen to the voices and give credit to marginalized voices) with an epistemological formulation (marginalized people have an unassailable and special knowledge regarding oppression). This is what Bat-Ami Bar On . . . argues in observing that “the claims for epistemological privilege made by a socially marginalized group are ultimately normative, and pandering to those who are already theoretically convinced, generally groups of those members of the marginalized group who are empowered by those claims.” It seems advisable not to emphasize epistemological privilege, but rather how to displace epistemological authority, given that this authority is what really matters in efforts to make it possible to listen to insurgent knowledge. (Angeleri 2011, 64)

Perhaps, what Chandra Mohanty, following Sathya Mohanty—recognized for his defense and careful development of the concept—is trying to reveal is “the urgency and need to be concerned about the situation of the oppressed, and consequently how this finding makes us revise our beliefs simply because we discover that others think differently. In one case, it is about privilege or political recognition and in the other, there is a heuristic motivation” (Tozzi 2005, 150).

Thus, if epistemic privilege does not allow unrestricted access to any of the truths of this “third-world woman,” we must start once again: there is no spoken illusion to guide us or save us from the overarching ethical question: How can privileged feminists in the North and South assume historical responsibility in the transformation of women’s lives around the world? How do we ensure that our form of feminism is not complicit with the neocolonial interests focused on the material and symbolic production of subjects for its exploitation and domination?



The question is not outside of, but within us. Therefore, I would like to address one more proposal brought on by Chandra Mohanty's essay.

### The Possibility of a "Transnational Community" as a Model for an Improved Feminist Praxis

While doing a revision of "Under Western Eyes . . .," Mohanty confessed that she was moved to take back that text after sixteen years with the aim not only to clarify some implicit ideas, but to move the analysis of the "critique to reconstruction" further, which had been proposed in a very different context. She was willing to demonstrate what, from her point of view, was not clear enough in her first text: the possibility of a scholarly praxis politically engaged with social justice beyond the borders of first-world feminism. In this sense, she declares she does not see the impossibility of "egalitarian and non-colonizing cross-cultural scholarship," and explains that there is no such antagonism blocking solidarity between Western and third-world feminisms.

Enthusiastic about the hope excited by transnational movements against capital globalization and the fact that the first-world feminist movement is in a period of stagnation, Mohanty recommends that feminism should pay attention to these movements in order to organize anticapitalist, antipatriarchal, and antiracist struggle (Mohanty 2003b).

This hope is shared among a group of academic feminists and activists from Mohanty's generation, such as Nancy Fraser,<sup>12</sup> but younger ones—from both sides of the Atlantic, from the northern and southern hemispheres—also believe in continuing their political action outside national borders. The UN Fourth World Conference on Women gathered women from all around the world on an unprecedented scale. From that point on, it was settled and diversified a flow of a big, unterritorialized market<sup>13</sup> of movements under the sponsorship of the United Nations, bilateral and multilateral funding organizations, as well as organizations for "development cooperation." Conferences, meetings and gatherings, part of a diversified agenda, have multiplied; the launch of organizations and global networks for human rights struggles (on gender and reproduction, abortion legalization, solidarity economy, education, LGBTQ rights) are interconnecting transcontinental feminisms. As a consequence, following Mendoza, there has been a displacement from a focus on local activism to an international agenda (Mendoza 2008, 172).

Thereby, this mobilization to Beijing in 1995 marks a new phase of a unipolar political reconfiguration of the world, right after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War (172). Contrary to the excitement of some academics from south of the US, Mendoza shows the connection between the stagnation of a local feminism—the same one Mohanty criticizes within her context (Mohanty 2003b)—and increasing stimulus for a transnational agenda highly funded by international organizations.

By the beginning of the 1990s, there was a tension caused by the rupture between autonomous and institutionalized feminists within the Latin American movement. Although there was great enthusiasm for the upcoming Fourth World Conference on Women among the majority of feminist leadership (anchored and strengthened by private NGOs) and movements, a small yet strong group of feminists named *Las Cómplices* was offering a deliberate analysis of the contextual situation and emerging political changes in the region. They made a declaration during the Sixth Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encuentro held in El Salvador in 1993.<sup>14</sup> This episode determined an irreconcilable polarization of the Latin American feminist movement.



What is celebrated in the North with approving eyes (Western eyes) has had terrible consequences for the feminist movement in Latin America. Feminist solidarity without borders has opened up the possibility of a few privileged—in terms of class, origin, color, and funding access—feminists from the South to gain prestige and to upgrade their individual status. This emerging field of unterritorialized activism has brought a process of feminist specialization, professionalization, and technocratization, thus causing an aftermath of fragmentation and sectorization of the feminist struggle and movement. This process has resulted in a consolidation of a Southern feminist elite that, in partnership with first-world feminists, determines—within limited spaces accessible to a few—the urgent matters of the movement. Thus, the focus and movement guidelines are disputed in endless negotiating processes with the world's economic and transnational decision-making entities represented through different organizations. At the same time, these topics are “agreed on” with the interests and the perspectives of Northern feminists foremost. In this scenario, it is challenging to find in that composition a representation of the “voices and experiences of third-world women.” Once again, these voices are trapped between hegemonic discourses from neocolonial imperialist policies introduced to the South, and the discourses of hegemonic feminist representatives located in both the northern and southern hemispheres. Even when the Afro-descendant, the Indigenous, the *mestiza*, the mother or lesbian, the laborer, the peasant or the formal market outsider, the student or the illiterate, the monolingual, the bilingual, the one expelled by poverty or war and a migrant to First World countries . . . is named, she is a mere object of discourses and politics. She is “represented by” the “compromised” feminist from the South and the North . . . but she is definitely not there.

Belief in the plausibility of global alliance politics is prevalent among women of the dominant social groups interested in “international feminism” in the comprador countries. At the other end of the scale, those most separated from any possibility of an alliance among ‘women, prisoners, conscript soldiers, hospital patients and homosexuals’ (FD: 216) are the females of the urban subproletariat. In their case, the denial and withholding of consumerism and the structure of exploitation is compounded by patriarchal social relations. On the other side of the international division of labor, the subject of exploitation cannot know and speak the text of female exploitation even if the absurdity of the nonrepresenting intellectual making space for her to speak is achieved. (Spivak 1988, 84)

Unlike the illusion and the enthusiastic politics of feminists in and from the North concerned about the real issue of feminism, though disconnected from the most urgent problems of the third-world women (whether within Europe, the US, or third-world countries), this transnational space has shown since the beginning its limits and trickeries to those in both the South and North, who have carefully observed. Although there is indeed a need to strengthen the bond among feminists on an international level, this particular globalized movement will not be the most fruitful one for our region.

Nevertheless, we shall not forget that feminists, as well as left-wing parties, have always been internationalists. The Latin American and Caribbean feminist encounters that have taken place since the beginning of the 1980s have shown this. And there are many more examples within political movements. However, I believe that today the ultimate purpose, without excluding these connections, should be restoring the small community space (in its multiple meanings). I believe it is urgent to focus on

local processes taking place inside the communities. A few examples are to be found, such as within the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil, the Mapuche land struggle in Chile, the dreams and the hustle for the reconfiguration of a state that is part of "a big Community of the communities" in Bolivia,<sup>15</sup> and the Amazonian radical rising of communities against the FTA in Peru.

As politically compromised feminists, we know that we owe large debts to the dispossessed women of the world, but the hope is not that these women will gain an audible voice that mirrors our discourse, because that requirement only gives way to the staging that has historically trapped and condemned them.

## Notes

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2 In this article I use identity categories and terms that are inherently problematic, such as "Latin American feminism," "third-world feminism," "from the North," "from the South," and "Western," assuming the critical approach proposed by postcolonial authors such as Chandra Mohanty. Explicitly, my use of these terms does not imply an attempt at homogenization. These terms must be geopolitically and historically contextualized, and here I use them in order to locate and denounce the consolidation of determined "subject positions." In any case, my use of these terms does not foreclose the need to maintain critical engagement with the complexity and agency that they imply, something that, I will attempt to demonstrate in this essay, could happen to authors even as critical as Mohanty. As I will demonstrate, the idea of "third-world feminism" represented in the space of the transnational is a result of the consolidation of determined hegemonies within local contexts. As always, the business of representation implies power plays and battles developed within the same group over the definition of that representation. This power structure has to be uncovered, as it permeates a subject's standpoint in postcolonial contexts.

3 We should remember that in this meeting, the debate was made possible thanks to the free access to a group of Black, impoverished women from the *fabelas* in Rio de Janeiro. Although the organizing committee pointed out that a large number of scholarships had been given to these women and denounced the political maneuver from political parties to discredit the feminist struggle, the incident caused "many participants—especially activists from the back-then emerging Black women's movement—to insist that the problematics of race and class were not at the center of the meeting's program, and that the Black, impoverished women had not had participated significantly in the elaboration of it" (Alvarez et al. 2003, 548; translated from Portuguese).

4 Naturally, we must recognize that this "sectorial" or "homogeneous fragmentation of the categories of oppression," as stated by María Lugones (Lugones 2005, 66–68), has been a "typical" strategy by which feminism has been able to respond to the demands of representation that have emerged from the collapse of the universal female subject: the white, heterosexist, universal, female woman. This has been so because "for the Western civilizing project it is much easier to add, aggregate, as though the difference is a mathematical issue, a sum of identities, of categories" as Amalia Fischer reminds us (Fischer 2002). Attempts to disengage from the essentialist quagmire to which this type of approach leads us have emerged primarily from women of color and lesbian theorists of the feminist movement in the United States. For an interesting look at the attempts to overcome this identity fragmentation, with proposals such as Kimberlé Crenshaw's "intersectionality," see Lugones 2005.

5 "Under Western Eyes" was published originally in 1984; for this article, I used Mohanty's version from her 2003 volume (Mohanty 2003a).

6 I extrapolate from the subject as theorized by Mohanty as "the most marginalized communities of women in the world—poor women of all colors in affluent and neocolonial nations; women from the Third World/South or Two-Thirds World" (Mohanty 2003b, 510) in conjunction with Spivak's subaltern subject and postcolonial studies. "The term subaltern is drawn from Gramsci's political theory. . . . The Subaltern Studies groups which emerged in the 1980s. . . gave new political economic meaning to the word. . . to refer to an inferior or dominated status, a social conflict, to signify in a general way those who are excluded by the social order and in order to analyze their agentive possibilities" (Vega 2009, 2).

We must remember that for Spivak, the subaltern—in its most agitated form—would be expressed in the figure of a poor Black third-world woman (Spivak 1988).

7 “Similar arguments can be made in terms of middle-class urban African or Asian scholars producing scholarship on or about their rural or working-class sisters which assumes their own middle-class cultures as the norm, and codifies working-class histories and cultures as Other. Thus, while this essay focuses specifically on what I refer to as “Western feminist” discourse on women in the third world, the critiques I offer also pertain to third world scholars writing about their own cultures, which employ identical analytic strategies” (Mohanty 2003a, 18).

8 I cannot fail to mention that regional hegemonic feminisms and their accomplices, including those in gender studies within the academy, have continuously delegitimized attempts to produce a forceful critique about Latin American feminism and its complicity with projects antithetical to the radical transformation of patriarchy. The most relevant example, because of how it has been systematized and sustained over time, concerns the critical knowledge produced by grassroots, autonomous, feminist intellectuals. Even though the content of their production is little known or legitimated within most Latin American spaces of knowledge-production and accumulation, there is a great deal of documentation. For more information, see Gargallo 2004.

9 Translator’s note: From the original “feminismo anglosajón,” the author refers to white Western feminism with European and North-American origins.

10 In support of this idea, Herrera demonstrates in her preliminary study (restricted to Andean countries) the influence of the transnational agenda of the UN, and its development-aid bodies (the Beijing Platform, the Campaign for Women’s Human Rights, the general orientation of international organizations, among others) over the ways in which the investigative emphasis is defined, which is very similar in the five countries featured in the study (Herrera 1999, 3).

11 In using *epistemic violence* I am speaking of a form of it that makes the other invisible, expropriating from her/him the possibility of self-representation: “it relates to the amendment, the editing, the erasure and even the annulment of not only symbolic systems, subjectification, and representation that the other has of herself/himself, but also the concrete modes of representation, registration, and memories of her/his experience. . . .” (Belasteguigoitia 2001, 236–37).

12 Fraser sees with approving eyes the coexistence of feminist struggles at a global level, and sees hope for a stronger feminist activism: “For my purposes, the history of second-wave feminism divides into three phases. . . . In a third phase, finally, feminism is increasingly practiced as a transnational politics, in emerging trans-national spaces. . . . In Europe, and elsewhere, . . . feminists have discovered, and are skillfully exploiting, new political opportunities in the transnational political spaces of our globalizing world. Thus, they are reinventing feminism yet again—this time as a project and process of transnational politics. Although this third phase is still very young, it portends a change in the scale of feminist politics that could make it possible to integrate the best aspects of the previous two phases in a new and more adequate synthesis” (Fraser 2005, 296–297).

13 Translator’s note: in the original text, the author uses the term “mercado desterritorializado,” which could also be translated as “deterritorialized market.”

14 See “Manifiesto de las Cómplices a sus compañeras de ruta” by Margarita Pisano, Ximena Bedregal, Francesca Gargallo, Amalia Fischer, Edda Gaviola, Sandra Lidid, and Rosa Rojas in Gargallo, 2004, 185–213.

15 Julieta Paredes from *Mujeres Creando Comunidad*, and *Asamblea Feminista* proposed this concept. As an example of feminist intervention in processes of material and symbolic restructuring of the Bolivian “nation,” she proposes the development of processes of “epistemological rupture with Western feminism,” and the production of a communitarian feminism (Paredes 2008).

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