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Editorial
Thinking Other-wise:
Decoloniality and the Global
Racial Order

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Thinking Other-wise: Decoloniality and the Global Racial Order

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Introduction: Cultivating Other-wise and Colonial Racial Capitalism

This issue is a dialogue between different speakers, each with an engagement with colonial racial capitalism and its exercise of power. Instead of the working backwards of Eurocentric research and cultural consumption/production, with an assumption of a god-eye-view of that closes/forecloses thought,² in this issue, there is an authentic generative journey of grappling with social, political, and economic forms of domination which operate on a global scale and manifest in local structuring of access. The project of Thinking Other-wise, that is both a process and a destination constantly reimagined, occurs through the generation of knowledge that challenges the racial order without being tethered to it, consumed and constituted by it. It is a process of cultivation that unmask domination, and roots in embodied and communal knowledges. Unmasking requires unlearning the dependency on colonial knowledges and authority, and the capitalist structuring of the economic. It is a way of reclaiming authority over the narratives and histories so that there can be self-determination and imagination which resists the infiltration of coloniality and brings about futurity for people subjected to colonial and racial domination. This authority and self-determination are part and parcel of decolonial subjectivation that is relational, that cultivates collectivities not as a grouping of autonomous individuals, but as a collectivity of subjects all in a state of responsive relationality. Locating out of racial colonial capitalism,

¹ I am a doctoral candidate at Marquette University in Milwaukee in the United States. I am "a Muslim and Palestinian Falahi woman academic who is committed to decoloniality in thought and praxis/practice. In my work, I engage Muslim Critical Studies as a liberatory project, and I examine the intersections of race, gender, class, and religion in Muslim cultural works and global social, political, and economic practices. I inhabit the United States as a migrant, living on Native American lands thieved by settler-colonialism, but I am located transnationally spatially and temporally as a descendent of Falahi Indigenous Palestinian peasants with a deep connection to the cultivation of both land and structures of rhizomatic care. I am a direct descendant of displaced refugees dispossessed of their land due to persistent settler colonialism and a migrant woman whose Muslim communities are racialized in the United States. I recognize that as a "Middle Eastern" woman and as someone invested in Muslim ways of being, it is imperative that I resist coloniality by recognizing and challenging racial hierarchies within my community, existing in solidarity with those impacted by structures of oppression at the intersections of their identity positions.

² See Ramón Grosfoguel's discussion of the "god-eye-view" of hegemonic Eurocentrism. Grosfoguel, Ramón. "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn." *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2/3 (March 2007): 211–23. doi:10.1080/09502380601162514.

therefore, is a process of unlearning dependency and the reclamation of authority, subjectivation, and self-determination which cultivates decolonial sovereignty.

When I discuss cultivation instead of culture, I resist the capitalist conception of culture as property and production and the racializing notion of culture as civilization. Culture as thing, reified as property and not as process, creates divides between a modern, knowing peoples and an Other who is traditional, backward, and savage. Culture has historically been the realm of the unnatural, used in manipulation/ domination of nature to the will of “man,” with colonized peoples being constructed as aligned with nature and Europe constructing itself as the locus of culture. Culture is a gendering concept as well, with the colonizer historically masculinized and the colonized depicted as effeminate, and the former dominating the latter. Maria Tlostanova and Walter Mignolo argue that culture as a “concept was an epistemic construct built by agents and institutions that defined culture by the experience of European history. Once created, it legitimized the type of knowledge in which it was embedded. The concept of non-European cultures was a European invention.”³ Culture, in other words, was exclusive and produced a hierarchy of supremacy/ degradation or superiority/ inferiority. “European culture or civilization (depending on whether you prefer German or French legacies) was not just a particular culture among others, but the [only, superior] culture.”⁴

To undo these hierarchies of difference, decolonial culture is, instead, cultivation. Differing from culture, cultivation roots the work of actualization in an eco-solidarity, a horizontal collaborative generation, a tilling of land that turns the earth to invigorate growth not in domination of it. In this, there are more expressive of ways of knowing and being in resistance to hierarchy, those ways that are facilitative of a growth not predicated on extraction, but mutuality in which each part contributes, builds upon, and shares in the process of generating the whole. It is a way to facilitate horizontal interconnectedness collectively fortified and ever-changing, not in ways that are linear but in ways that are nourishing, adaptive, and expansive. Being expansive as a globality is a multilocal/ multivocal, co-existing in many different locations in the world simultaneously, but also being connected through a network of care; to make this more concrete, these are the ways in which coalescing results from a deep belief that peoples’ lives are truly intertwined, that structures of domination to which Palestinian people are subjected, for example, impacts people in the United States. This means not only are these forms of domination interrelated and interdependent, with the United States funding genocide and being a settler colonial state itself, but that action in one part of the world can cause ripples that carry in other places. This means that there is a circulation of ideas, people, and power that exists beyond the fictitious border of the state and beyond its control.

³ Maria Tlostanova and Walter Mignolo, “On Pluritopic Hermeneutics, Trans-modern Thinking, and Decolonial Philosophy,” *Encounters* 1, no. 1 (2009): 13.

⁴ Tlostanova and Mignolo, “On Pluritopic Hermeneutics, Trans-modern Thinking, and Decolonial Philosophy,” 13.

Works in this issue cultivate thinking Other-wise that is not divorced from the social, political, and economic conditions of survival, but also not in submission to mere surviving. Coloniality makes it so that racialized communities exist in a cycle of constantly searching for ways to sustain themselves; the search for sustenance shackles them to the system of domination. They seek aid from those states that have placed them in this cycle of dependency in the first place. They seek citizenship and belonging in states that have thieved their lands, and they seek legitimization in institutions that built from the appropriation of their knowledges and the exploitation of their labor. It is a cycle of impoverishment that is economic as well as psychic and cultural. Thinking Other-wise involves a political consciousness that is action-oriented, argues Catherine Walsh. Its

roots derive from the lived experience of colonial histories and millenary struggles to confront the social, political, epistemic, racialized, and existential effects of these histories. It is what the Afro-Ecuadorian intellectual Juan Garcí'a refers to as the building of a collective sense of belonging, an unlearning of what the dominant society has inculcated and a relearning of past and present ancestral knowledge, a focus on the social, political, and epistemic work that needs to be done within (Walsh and Leo'n forthcoming)."⁵

If colonization functions by dispossessing people of their lands and resources for the purpose of extracting and accumulating, subjugating people to exploit their labor, eradicating to erase and rewrite histories in validation of its project, and degrading and civilizing in a racializing manner to maintain control over the ways in which people coalesce and access, then it is the role of the decolonial thinker and cultural producer to locate the intellectual, affective, communal, traditional, and political spaces that have been thieved and to communicate them into being in critical ways that do not perpetuate the subjugation or cooption into the colonial project.

What this means is that thinking Other-wise begins with the act of unmasking--uncovering how colonial logics become classificatory and ordering. This involves discussing race and its shifting markers beyond the Black-white duality and including it. In his discussion of the possessive investment in whiteness in the United States, George Lipsitz argues that an investment in whiteness as a colonial structure of racial superiority "is not a simple matter of [B]lack and white; all racialized minorities have suffered from it, albeit to different degrees and in different ways."⁶ Race manifests differentially: scholars discuss that Indigenous peoples face erasure and eradication; the labor of Black and Latino communities is exploited; migrants face cultural forms of erasure and eradication; and Muslim communities become existential threats that both construct them/us as villains and enlist us to do the work of surveilling and dominating our communities. Though race as structure functions differentially, racialization and its relationship to gender, class, and other forms of

⁵ Catherine Walsh, "Shifting the Geopolitics of Critical Knowledge: Decolonial Thought and Cultural Studies 'Others' in the Andes," *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2-3 (2007): 231.

⁶ George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Temple University Press, 2006), 2.

regulation and punishment are all race-ing. You can therefore find rhetoric that discusses Gazans as human-animals in Palestine,⁷ and then later hear of Mexican migrants on the U.S.-Mexico border oppressively labelled as “not people”⁸—both by those in positions of governmental power. Resisting the two simultaneously is necessary because they are both forms of racialization that feed a system of negation-domination. Recognizing how global colonial logics are felt, experienced, and internalized demystifies race as both “out there” of communities and as something that is not concrete in the lived experiences of people.⁹

Race is also learned as essence, and when the mask is removed, it is also removed from those of us who have been subjected to coloniality and in “whose soul [is] an inferiority complex,”¹⁰ which means that there occurs all at once unlearning dependency, rootedness in one’s knowledges, and a rejection of participating in dominating others to appeal to the power of the dominant authority. In resistance to this, the works in this issue, in existing alongside one another, move thought into action through critique and then reimagining, and in doing so, they enact thinking Other-wise of racial logics. In this introduction to the issue, I would like to discuss how they, in their collectivity, help us see what thinking Other-wise is and what it does in relation to racial capitalism that functions according to colonial logics.

Unlearning Dependency and Subjectivation

The authors in this issue speak alongside one another as knowing subjects and they root this knowledge in lived experiences with structural forms of domination. The work by Nora Lester Murad, a Jewish scholar with lived experiences as mother of Palestinian children, uncovers the parallels between the policing within the United States and the economic regulatory mechanisms that act under the guise of development. Murad’s border identity helps her see the connection between the global racial order and local racial hierarchies—between race as an economic structure in the United States and the flow of capital around the globe. Historically, race has been engrained in the cultural imaginary through the repetition of images, but race-making also occurs “through systematic efforts from colonial times to the present to create economic advantages through the possessive investment in whiteness for European Americans.”¹¹ Murad asserts that aid creates the conditions that provide these economic advantages under the name of development.

⁷ Sanjana Karanth, “Israeli Defence Minister Announces Siege On Gaza To Fight ‘Human Animals,’” *Huffington Post*, September 10, 2023, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/israel-defence-minister-human-animals-gaza-palestine_uk_65245ebae4b0a32c15bfe6b6

⁸ The Associated Press, “Trump says some migrants are ‘not people’ and warns of ‘bloodbath’ if he loses,” *National Public Radio*, March 17, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/03/17/1239019225/trump-says-some-migrants-are-not-people-and-warns-of-blood-bath-if-he-loses>

⁹ Nadine Naber uses the “there” and “here” to discuss the transnational. See Nadine Suleiman Naber, “Imperial Whiteness and the Diasporas of Empire,” *American Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (2014): 1114.

¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 18.

¹¹ Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 2.

To illustrate this, she paints a picture of a finger that caresses the face in an act that reads as generosity, but when looking closer and more expansively, this image tells a whole other story. The other hand is out of view, and so is the simultaneous violent choking of life from the body. Aid, in this imagining, disguises intervention as altruistic generosity. Just like in policing, when funds are funnelled into the maintenance of order, they are diverted away from social services for communities experiencing hypersurveillance and carceral punishment. This structure disguises that these policies of syphoning of life-sustaining resources, from education for example, actively produce what they seek to remedy. Race maintains whiteness as a structure of inherited economic wealth by diverting it away from racialized communities and by exploiting the labor of racialized people. The global north similarly syphons to maintain the global racial order. For aid to intervene economically, it is necessary that the global north, the United States and Europe, establish authority and maintain superiority. Governments- and intragovernmental organizations—allocate and deny funding so they act to regulate the flow of wealth. They also establish the political right of dominant states to intervene often at the expense to people in the global south. An example is the manufacture and justification of invasion in Iraq by the United States in which it syphoned natural gas and oil and subsequently destabilized communities and remained militaristically and economically under the ruse of aiding. Currently, it exists in the establishing of a sea route by the United States to provide Gazans with “humanitarian aid,” while directly funding their genocidal eradication.

Sylvia Wynter’s discussion of race as an us/them opposition helps explain how the contradiction can exist as justification for intervention.¹² Racial superiority is constructed through differentiation, but it is not a simple opposition between people each possessing an equal amount of power. There is the construction of an “us” and a “them,” and the superiority of the “us” is dependent on the negation of an inferior “them.” Wynter also tells us that this “us”-- everything that is Euro-America-centric, including religion (conflation of Europeanness and Christianity) , language (English), whiteness as a visible marker-- becomes an ideal/idealized as something to attain, and even becomes universal, invisible, and equated to humanness itself. This means that when race is discussed, only those marked as different from the constructed universal and invisible ideal are raced, and therefore less human, or not deserving of being treated as humans. The dominant “us” accesses social, symbolic, economic, and political capital by denying it from racialized peoples and through thievery/extraction. Wealth is accumulated through the very act of intervention that enables the appropriation of knowledges, displacement of peoples, dispossession of lands and resources, and dissolution of social structures.

A narrative of difference is at the heart of political and economic domination. Murad describes that reformist movements do not employ terms like anti-Blackness and that is because governments construct racialized people, in their difference, as the problem, and not the oppressive structures themselves. Colonial racialization depends on this. This is why

¹² Sylvia Wynter, “The Ceremony Must be Found: After humanism,” *Boundary 2* (1984): 19-70.

unlearning requires untethering and unmasking. In settler-colonial states like the United States and its proxy in the Middle East, Israel, teaching about the historical realities of racial oppression, segregation, and extracted resources in schools is increasingly intensely policed and silenced. An example is the banning of counter-historical narratives, like the 1619 project, which discusses the centrality of slavery in the founding of the United States as a global colonial enterprise and one that is settler colonial. In Israel, for example, the discussion of the nakba as settler-colonial origin story, is banned in schools. Naser-Najjab calls this the “logic of elimination” where agency is denied through barriers to learning. This eliminated knowledge of the “[nakba] is one of the essential resources that Palestinians must draw upon in order to resist occupation.”¹³ Similarly, Palestinian and Muslim faculty and students in the global north, with lived experiences with structural oppression, are being intimidated into inaction, coerced into being silent about the genocide in Palestine and anti-Muslim racism. They are placed in a position where they risk economic forms of punishment like the loss of life-sustaining employment and the terrorizing/racializing mechanism of being publicly vilified as the terrorist Muslim threatening Other. Racialization becomes, therefore, institutionalized in temporal and spatial ways, with “them” becoming perpetually foreign, non-modern, out of place and erased out of time, to borrow from Edward Said. They exist as a problem that requires fixing through elimination from spaces of learning, their voices, identities, and ways of being an obstacle.

This is why scholars and practitioners concerned with race and higher education, like Kevin Brazant, whose work I will discuss below, center lived experiences and the voices of those racialized peoples. To establish superiority, master narratives/histories act as origin stories in which colonized peoples are narrativized externally, such that they are objects without subjectivity, or that they are erased completely and non-existent, disappearing, or frozen in the past. Ariella Aisha Azoulay calls this the “imperial epistemological framework” in which “imperialism’s victims” are treated as “‘primary sources’ rather than actors posing an epistemological, ontological, and political challenge to its premises.”¹⁴ Indigenous Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith details that one of the strategies that colonized peoples use to decolonize research is to reclaim histories. She begins her book on Indigenous research methodologies with an expression of outrage at the sanitization of historical narratives in which “the West can desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations.”¹⁵

Layachi El Habbouch challenges this in his poem by making actor and agent the girl storyteller who explores and tells a history counter to Orientalist histories of the Middle East

¹³ See Nadia Naser-Najjab, “Palestinian education and the ‘logic of elimination’,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 10, no. 3 (2020): 311-330, DOI: 10.1080/2201473X.2020.1760433.

¹⁴ Ariella Aisha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (New York: Verso, 2019), 337. Also see Julia Roth’s discussion of Sylvia Wynter’s concept of “theory-givers/theory-takers.”

¹⁵ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books Ltd. 1999), 1.

and North Africa. In learning through looking and telling, she challenges the intensified violence (nahsh or devouring). Looking back at colonial invasion is an oppositional gaze to the colonial gaze that looks from a position of power at submissive victims. Here, counter-narratives are oppositional gazes capable of challenging the decontextualization of colonization and the erasure of its violences from historical narratives. Even though she is un-homed in her migration, the girl's marginality grants her a vantage point, and she liberates herself with this knowledge and with an affective transformation that is openness. This affective openness signals her power, in that it is the opposite of fear that is confining and stifling. El Habbouch writes,

She climbed the pyramid and watched the invaders' barriers
She sneaked and set herself free... and travelled forward
And she explored the world with an open heart¹⁶

She learns from the movements toward liberation in South Asia and this fuels her as a storyteller, also actualizing her as subject and not as the representation of the Orientalist submissive feminine. She tells of "Moroccan bones and Indian meat/The coming fall of Spanish, French and English legends."¹⁷ The legends of the colonizer construct them as powerful. The French and the English initiated the violence of constructing borders in the region in the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916, and Spain is responsible for the Muslim expulsion from Spain in 1492 (also coinciding with the "discovery" of the Americas). Iskander Abbasi also asserts that notions about blood purity (raza) in Spain that were used to racialize Muslims as monstrous religious Others during the Spanish Inquisition and the conquest of al-Andalus originated modern secular conceptions of race (the color-line and skin color, for example).¹⁸ Therefore, in situating herself alongside her Sheikh Al-Ahmad and Musa, the girl calls upon her affiliation with the religious, and with ancestral knowledge and communal affiliations to actualize herself in her rootedness to her Muslim ways of being. In telling of the past, she locates her futurity.

Azoulay discusses the complex temporal relationship between the past and the present in the narration of history. She states,

as Nick Estes writes in the long tradition of [I]ndigenous resistance, [it] is not part of a lost past, and that Palestine is not part of a lost past. The resistance at Standing Rock in the United States, as well as in Palestine, is here, now, in the same place that imperial sovereign powers and brigades of historians narrate the past."¹⁹

Histories for colonized peoples are not in the past, as Nick Estes makes clear. The structures of colonial domination persist, so the girl tells of a past that has not passed but exists as something that she must continue to grapple with. It is significant that the storyteller is gendered as a girl. Oftentimes, women and girls are tasked with the labor of maintaining

¹⁶ Layachi El Habbouch, "The Circus Princess: De Orientalisa," line 19-21.

¹⁷ Layachi El Habbouch, "The Circus Princess: De Orientalisa," line 89-90.

¹⁸ Iskander Abbasi, "Islam, Muslims, and the Coloniality of Being: Reframing the Debate on Race and Religion in Modernity," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 33, no. 2 (January 1, 2020): 6-7.

¹⁹ Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History*, 287.

traditions and passing them from one generation to another, and they also maintain the domestic or the national. However, here, the girl exists spatially in the transnational, moving between different locales in the deconstruction of the border and in fugitivity to the nation and its narrative. Similarly, the journey of the girl is not a white feminist savior narrative, in that the girl does not find freedom in rejecting communality or in an opposition to a colonized man. Liberation here is sourced through social affiliation, which resists the structural oppression that the girl experiences.²⁰

Reclaiming Authority

Like El Habbouch, Kevin Brazant's digital toolkit locates authority in lived experiences. The anti-racist pedagogy in his digital toolkit is a dialogue among a community of BIPOC thinkers, teachers, and practitioners who discuss how an-other to racism and a rootedness in silenced knowledges within classrooms and in spaces of learning has the potential to shift political and economic landscapes that define access and equity. The digital toolkit begins from the recognition that there is a Eurocentric privileging of disembodied intellectualism, where racialized peoples are not thinkers, but dispossessed of their histories, traditions, and communities. Muna Abdi, in Brazant's toolkit makes it clear that, within the educational system, "the experience of racism is [structural and affective] trauma," imprinted as an unwritten code of conduct necessitating conformity linguistically and politically. This is because institutions reinforce coloniality beyond even the Eurocentrism and Orientalism that is central to learning in Europe and North America. Institutions of higher education, especially universities, continue to be hubs for the expansion of militarism and the militaristic policing of cities and especially racialized communities.²¹ In its focus on professionalization, the university establishes a dominant class superior to and apart from these communities, all while occupying Indigenous lands and exploiting the labor of racialized peoples. Elsewhere, I discuss that critical languages, including Arabic, have been funded by the United States government's Department of Defense to enhance the surveillance and monitoring capabilities of the war on terror, thereby supporting American exceptionalism (and the various forms of psychic, physical, and sexual violence enacted by the United States onto the bodies of racialized women and men).²²

The university has historically been directly involved in the project of settler colonialism and racial domination. Sharon Stein describes the colonial history of a significant number of universities in the United States as involving expropriation of Indigenous land, the destruction of the environment, implication in the genocide of Native Americans,

²⁰ I would like to thank Monika Hirmer for entering into a dialogue with me about white feminism and how it maintains racial hierarchies even while purporting to subvert gender hierarchies.

²¹ It is important that I emphasize that there are many people at the university who continue to actively disrupt and challenge its racializing coloniality through the very forms of thinking and imagining Other-wise that I discuss.

²² See Sharon Stein, *Unsettling the University: Confronting the Colonial Foundations of US Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022), 73-74.

supporting civilizing missions, complicity in slavery by being funded by the slave trade and exploiting slave labor, and the reinforcement of scientific racism that justifies the racial order.²³ Higher education has, therefore, served in its institutionalization as colonial administration, oftentimes propping up the power of the state, both in being subsidized and thus influenced by the state and by corporations, and in assuming the position of distribution of power and wealth that we assume not to be associated with the altruism inherent in education. Social betterment is not always synonymous with social justice when we ask: betterment for whom, and at what cost?

In its distribution of wealth and power differentially along the lines of race, institutions of higher education can prop up hegemonic whiteness. Divestment from structural whiteness requires an inclusion that is not exploitative but authentically inclusive, with those performing the job of representation and knowledge production about racialized communities and their concerns actually benefiting economically from their labor. This, if we are to take Murad's analogy as an example, would constitute reparations. For Muna Abdi, Brazant, and the co-creators in the digital toolkit, these reparative forms of justice also include the epistemic shift that the project of unlearning as anti-racist education can accomplish—in its resistance to anti-Blackness, and the colonial exploitation of Indigenous people and people from/in the global south, and people subjugated because of the conflation of Europeanness, whiteness, and Christianity. In the interview, Abdi asserts that “decolonial thinking is about changing my thinking before I changed my practice.”²⁴ Changing one's thinking means examining the preconceived notions and internalized ideals that reinforce structures of power, but Abdi also discusses how she needed to recognize that she would always be impacted by the “in-betweenness” of assimilative racialization, that she would not always belong. However, with this nomadic thinking, she would also root herself in the modes of expression integral to her Somali Muslim American way of being—orality, poetry, and storytelling that communicate embodied and lived experiences. Therefore, to examine a pedagogy that decenters whiteness and engages the lived experiences of people who are out of place/dominated within the structural and epistemic whiteness of institutions of learning in the global north, Kevin Brazant offers mediation as a site for co-creation.

Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejias, however, warn that mediation can be used as a technology of colonization. Just as “historical colonialism created the fuel for industrial capitalism's eventual rise, so too is data colonialism paving the way for a capitalism based on the exploitation of data . . . data colonialism appropriates not only physical resources but also our very resources for knowing the world.”²⁵ In other words, structural access does not necessary rectify the omission of colonized peoples from the spaces of learning. There is also

²³ Stein, *Unsettling the University: Confronting the Colonial Foundations of US Higher Education*.

²⁴ Kevin J. Brazant, “Black Identities: Negotiating white spaces with Dr. Muna Abdi,” *Disrupt the Discourse: An eLearning Course and Digital Toolkit to Aid the Development of an Anti-Racist Pedagogy*, 2023, https://rise.articulate.com/share/Mm0hPwi1vi20cmftgFkJeb_W9oODM2XM

²⁵ Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019), xi-xii.

a looming risk that media will enable surveillance or violent eliminationism that I discuss as being a tool used by the colonial state to govern, regulate, assimilate, and punish.²⁶ Similarly, democratization, itself is a Western concept, risks reinvesting in the commodification of colonized knowledges as artifacts. Knowledges as data become the natural resource extracted from colonized and Indigenous peoples and sold on markets for the benefit of further reinforcing a global structural whiteness.

Brazant toolkit exists in ways other than in service of capitalist coloniality, since it centers the voices of BIPOC people themselves. If race is both a cultural hierarchy of supremacy, an economic structure, and a political structure with borders and boundaries that exclude and subsume, co-creation and the centering of voices historically excluded is capable of challenging barriers to access. This also has the potential for challenging the delegitimization of experiential knowledges which have historically also been perceived as feminized knowledges, used by racialized and colonized communities to maintain connectivity.

Giordana Poggioli-Kaftan, in her literary analysis and critique, discusses the alienation from embodied traditional knowledge resultant from biologizing and pathologizing of bodies as part of scientific modernity. She analyzes the story of Mimma, a midwife from the south of Italy who is required by the state to abandon the methods passed down through generations and abandon traditions that have sustained her and her community. When she is required to certify her experiential knowledge by learning anew at an institution, “her expert hands lost their empirical touch, needed in her previous natural system of knowledge, becoming . . . ineffective.”²⁷ Those hands become “tangled up by the two systems”²⁸—embodied and experiential knowledge and modern scientific knowledge. The midwife finds herself contorting herself in alignment with capitalist labor exploitation, and this modernity even inhabits how she performs her identity on her body to gain authority in this new system of valuation. In her alignment with the requirements of the capitalist economy which seeks to regulate and monitor through the imposition of a whole new system of methods, the midwife can no longer be for herself and for the other women during childbirth.

It is significant here that the colonial trauma is represented as a social and generational trauma between women. When structures of care are no longer socially responsive, Kaftan shows that they impact the well-being of all members of the collective body. Muhammed F.

²⁶ Data analysis tools are sold by global companies to states that analyze sentiment in written and oral knowledges of Indigenous peoples to enable surveillance and racial profiling. “Google is providing the Israeli government with the full suite of machine-learning and AI tools available through Google Cloud Platform. While they provide no specifics as to how Nimbus will be used, the documents indicate that the new cloud would give Israel capabilities for facial detection, automated image categorization, object tracking, and even sentiment analysis that claims to assess the emotional content of pictures, speech, and writing. See Sam Biddle, “Documents Reveal Advanced AI Tools Google is Selling to Israel,” *The Intercept*, July 24, 2022. <https://theintercept.com/2022/07/24/google-israel-artificial-intelligence-project-nimbus/>

²⁷ Giordana Poggioli-Kaftan, “The Creation of the Subaltern Subject in Luigi Pirandello’s ‘Madam Mimma,’” *Decolonial Subversions* 4 (2023): 9.

²⁸ Giordana Poggioli-Kaftan, “The Creation of the Subaltern Subject in Luigi Pirandello’s ‘Madam Mimma,’” 9.

Salem similarly complicates this possibility for care “between women” within the colonial condition, asserting the importance of considering intersecting axes of racial, gendered, and religious oppression. Salem argues that one of the primary ways in which Christophine as a Black servant can subvert racial and gender domination and coerced labor post-emancipation is through practicing a religion that does not conform to European Christianity. In doing so, instead of conforming and performing loyalty, Christophine assumes the character of the threatening, dangerous Other to resist the authority of a white patriarch. Salem’s discussion of religion is an important one because it builds from and expands intersectionality in productive ways, also illustrating the relationship between authority and ways of being. Jakeet Singh argues that the reason that “intersectionality research has not focused on religion is an important one, and though there could be a number of explanations for this—including the generally secular character and constraints of academic research and researchers.”²⁹ This secularity of academic research is not coincidental or functional; it is an assumed absence of religion when in fact, scholars such as Saba Mahmood argue, secularism privileges Euro-American religions and suppresses Othered religious expression or relegates them to the realm of the private. However, even when Christophine practices religion that is considered dangerous to the civilizing mission in order to both topple patriarchy as a structure and to subvert the power of the state through her fugitive outlawed practice, then we can see that resistance is incomplete because of the control of labor that is a central axis of oppression in the literary work. Mimma’s reaction to imposed modernity is mimicry and Christophine’s reaction is subversion, but they each remain bound in their relationship to dominant institutional power. Mimma attempts to adapt herself in service of modernity in order to access its authority, but in doing this she loses a relationship with her community, and Christophine maintains her rootedness in her way of being to maintain her authority, but by virtue of the exploitation and control of her labor in a capitalist system, she cannot fully actualize or provide support for Antoinette/Bertha who experiences disablement due to her experiences under patriarchal domination. It therefore becomes clear that for there to be a reclamation of authority, it is necessary that there are economic, political, and social structures that ensure sovereignty as self-determination and self-governance. This requires that there be community, collectivity, and coalitions that actualize this.

Self-Determination and Sovereignty

Sovereignty is cultural in addition to being political and economic, and creative works can imagine a decolonial sovereignty that resists colonial capitalist racialization.³⁰ In imagining invasion in her work *Maelstrom* and in discussing her Hmong identity and the exploitation of Hmong communities in her interview, Jenny Lee claims sovereignty as the right to narrate for herself. Lee describes how material culture by Hmong women challenged epistemic and cultural eradication, with the symbols as a language without words:

²⁹ Jakeet Singh, “Religious Agency and the Limits of Intersectionality,” *Hypatia* 30, no. 4 (Fall 2015): 658.

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I explore using iconography as a powerful storytelling tool. Some icons I focus on are coyotes symbolizing the trickster or cunning, and a weeping willow tree representing grieving or mourning over the horrendous events occurring throughout history in correlation to colonization. Some positive icons are the full moon and a daffodil symbolizing new beginnings with the overarching theme of displacement. The coyotes are a symbolic reflection of colonizers taking what rightfully belongs to others.³¹

The trickster, for Lee, is not the submissive Indigenous character of the shapeshifter; she discussed that it is a representation of deception. This exemplifies the histories of deception by the United States in the subjugation of Hmong people, who were exploited by the U.S. military to participate in the Vietnam war and subsequently subjected to racialization as the terrorist refugee.

Deepa Kumar argues that the figure of the terrorist is race-crafting. The terrorist is constructed in the imaginary through repeated essentialist tropes, and then subjected to exclusion and intensified surveillance and punishment. This narrative formation of the threatening Other has historically hinged on the civilizing narratives that I have previously discussed, but it is more so, in that the terrorist is constructed as a moral threat to the identity of those in positions of authority. In the global north and proxy states around the globe, Euro-Americanness has political and cultural authority. Governments in the global south therefore need to invest in a war on terror to gain social capital or economic benefit from adjacency to whiteness. The war on terror is then used to surveil and punish people whose ways of being challenge hegemonic Euro-American white supremacy, even within those very states in the global south.

Junaid Rana details race's shifting markers that include the terrorist trope, with cultural racism in the vilification of Jews and Muslims, the depiction of the threatening war-like Indigenous person in the "discovery" of the Americas,³² the anti-Black phobogenic cultural depictions that justified the slave trade, and current iterations in the anti-migrant and anti-Muslim racist construction of the terrorist.³³ The representations of communities in the colonial cultural imaginary has always shifted according to the interest of states in the global north. Alex Hopp argues that the representation of the Hmong people evolved from war-like and therefore usefully exploitable by the U.S. military during the Vietnam war to terrorists that are threatening due to the very perceived quality that made them exploitable. This contradiction lies in the fact that the terrorist as a figure is imbued with a fictive quality; terrorists in the imaginary represent multiple categories of racial difference that makes them a contradictory caricature of personhood able to reinforce the notion that states in the global north and global south, prompted by the U.S. war on terror, need to police racialized and

³¹ Jenny Lee, "'Trying to Find a Place to Call Home' in the *Maelstrom*: An Interview with Artist Jenny Lee," interview by Ibtisam M. Abujad, *Decolonial Subversions* 4 (2023): 2.

³² Consider Joanne Barker's discussion of the Indigenous Terrorist in *Red Scare*. See Joanne Barker, *Red Scare: The State's Indigenous Terrorist* (University of California Press, 2021).

³³ Junaid Rana, "The Story of Islamophobia," *Souls* 9, No. 2 (2007): 151, DOI: 10.1080/10999940701382607

marginalized communities and their ways of being to maintain order. They are at once here and perpetually foreign, mainly in the Middle East. They are imagined as both primitive and cunning, possessing capabilities to infiltrate advanced technology. The terrorist exists as a visual symbol that prompts visceral responses; the figure summons aversion, intensified fear, or disgust that become associations with groups of people exploited by states. This is why the figure of the terrorist is so salient, used to mark many communities. It is not just communicative- that these communities are villainous or threatening so that there is a need by governments to control them; it moves people to invest in this idea, to believe it actively because of an imagined association with subhuman monstrosity.

The sub-human is established as real in the cultural imaginary by representing colonized peoples as empty of power and in need of domination, or that domination is rational. In her discussion of racial supremacist domination of the Palestinian people, Honaida Ghanim offers a way to think about this, a way to connect the colonial imaginary to settler colonialism. She argues that terra nullius, an apartheid emptiness of land is also a “political emptiness” of people constructed in the cultural imaginary by the colonizer. “Political emptiness” is “merely non-existing, a non-existence, a non-being . . . not necessarily in the physical meaning but in the political and the national collective meaning. This conceptualization facilitates the colonization and later” racial white supremacy that Ghanim argues is central to a “deep racism.”³⁴ She details that this exists in cultural texts that depict coloniality as rational and supremacy as necessary, or a fact of human progress. This racial supremacy occurs in two ways, which I call “domination over” and “domination apart.” In “domination over,” states dominate through a monopoly on resources—people, land, and thought. “Domination apart” is ideological supremacy that involves narration of those in a dominant position as the only valid, available, valuable, legitimate, ideal source--of people and ways of being, land, and thought.³⁵ In a sense, racial supremacy is actualized through representing people as unable to self-determine because they are non-existent in their “ontological lack,” unformed or de-formed, unideal, and un-able to speak and be, with ableist structures reinforcing racial supremacy.³⁶

Self-determination is capable of countering supremacy, with Linda Tuhiwai Smith arguing that “part of self-determination has to be that you have to act like yourself and figure it all out because learning is a really important part of being self-determining. We can’t wait for permission. All that does is just reinforce colonialism and reinforce the fact that

³⁴ Honaida Ghanim discusses this in relation to the Palestinian people and Jewish supremacy that is white supremacy predicated on the racial purity of the state. See Honaida Ghanim, “Post-justice, exceptionalism, and the normalization of Apartheid,” Bisan Center for Research and Development, July 16, 2022. <https://www.bisan.org/2022/07/dr-honaida-ghanim/>

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³⁶ Joel Michael Reynolds, “Disability and White Supremacy,” *Critical Philosophy of Race* 10, no.1 (2022): 50.

you're not free."³⁷ Rajendra Chetty, Hannah Gibson, David Opanga, and Colin Reilly, in their paper under review for publication in this issue, assert that language is used to communicate identity and that the imposition of imperial languages can enact epistemic violence within the spaces of learning. Language is a central epistemic location for historically colonized people, a way that they know themselves. Therefore, the imposition of imperial languages in schools is integral to what I discuss above as "domination over" and "domination apart." When the English language is the standard within schools in the global south, the global racial hierarchy is reinforced, and Euro-American Englishness as identity becomes an ideal to be attained. The identities of people in the locations discussed by the authors, Tanzania and South Africa, become inferior. As a result, the expressive patterns of people who are not white are perceived as backward, and students are required to frame their knowledges and their understanding of selfhoods in translation in a language in which they exist as inferior. It is a way of silencing and a form of cultural eradication which scholars of Indigeneity and scholars working with linguistic justice and vernacular culture often critique. This is why two of the works in the issue are in languages that are not English, to assert that language is empowering in its expression of selfhood and communal affiliation; with each utterance, community is re-rooted in knowledges from previous generations. Language has spatial dimensions that are fabrics which hold communities together, and it is a way to continue to make worlds. The imposition of imperial language deteriorates this communal fabric and acts as a barrier to access, which is a mechanism of racialization itself.

Willy Ramos Delvalle's article, a work in revision as I write this, also uncovers the violences of linguistic imperialism, but it thinks about how discourse as rhetorical language patterns justify state sovereignty. Delvalle argues that state leaders in Europe and America manipulate terms to expand territorial influence of imperial states and diminish that of states in the global south. Delvalle suggests that the Amazon is "made global" as a function of making the state imperial or expanding its hegemony. Rhetorically, in political speeches, Delvalle argues, the pronoun "we" representing the state becomes expansionist to incorporate natural environments outside its borders, the Amazon, as part of its dominion. The imperial state, therefore, invades by "self attribution of a right" to control, oversee, and undo the sovereignty of others. Delvalle's discusses the imperial power of America as an example. The United States attributes to itself the right to attain sovereignty over Indigenous lands through the civilizing mission and then, like in Murad's discussion of development, makes it so that this act is benevolent and necessary. Of course, in their rhetorical function, pronouns that establish an us/ them opposition can be manipulated in different ways; I recall a speech by Barack Obama to the "Muslim World" in which his use of "fought in *our* wars," "served *our* government," "and taught in *our* university" establishes a relationship of ownership/oversight between the state and institutions and then simultaneously denies

³⁷ Bhakti Shringarpure, "Decolonizing Education: A Conversation with Linda Tuhiwai Smith," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, May 18, 2021. <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/decolonizing-knowledge-a-conversation-with-linda-tuhiwai-smith/>

Muslims who live in the United States existence in temporal and spatial ways while making Muslims exploitable.³⁸ It is, therefore, important to consider the role that language plays in making or expanding borders, and denying or granting sovereignty and control.

Therefore, sovereignty is epistemic and cultural in addition to being political and economic, and creative works can imagine a sovereignty that is not defined by or confined to the colonial or imperial state. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, whom the article by Rajendra Chetty, Hannah Gibson, David Opanga, and Colin Reilly cites, discusses how language and imagining can locate agency out of colonial hierarchies. He discusses that "writing in English, or making sure that literature is only available in English, you are starving the imagination of a majority of people."³⁹ It is a mechanism of control in colonial structures of racial capitalism to limit the ability to think Other-wise because of the very economic and political power of creative self-determination and self-governance.

Anibal Quijano, in telling the story of coloniality as modernity, describes how there is a cultural trajectory to the contemporary colonial condition which facilitates global capitalism. Empire imagines itself into dominance through narratives, political rhetoric, and in cultural depictions. This is then imposed onto people as justification for policies and within institutions (and Kaftan discusses the impact that this had on Mimma's embodied identity and psyche).⁴⁰ I would call this process the "making-belief" of coloniality, or the manufacture of a cultural landscape through hegemonic structuring of the world using images and ideas that become a language through which the world is realized. It is so pervasive, due to imposition of this on the world by those who possess economic and political power and control the means of production, that it becomes a reality in its fictiveness; it becomes belief itself. The belonging in communities, in states, and in institutions is then measured by the degree of loyalty to this narrative, or the extent of belief in the narratives of power that are race/racializing, gendered, and classed. When proxy states in the global south, such as those I discuss in the Middle East want to attain participation in the colonial order to benefit economically and politically, they perform belief by participating in the cultural globalization of the United States, and they ally themselves with the secularist anti-migrant governments in Europe.

If the political dimensions of state coloniality can be perpetuated culturally, then cultural sovereignty can be cultivated to imbue peoples marked and subjugated within global colonial structures with economic and political means. A decolonial understanding of sovereignty disidentifies state borders as given and illuminates their fictive nature, uncovering they are a part of the "making-belief" of coloniality. Borders are so engrained as

³⁸ See Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at Cairo University," *The White House*, June 4, 2009. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>

³⁹ Rohit Inani, "Language Is a 'War Zone': A Conversation with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o," *The Nation*, March 9, 2018. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/language-is-a-war-zone-a-conversation-with-ngugi-wa-thiongo/>

⁴⁰ Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/ Rationality," in *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, ed. Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (London: Routledge, 2010), 22-32.

natural that, due to the pervasiveness of coloniality and its internalization, deconstructing them seems unnatural.⁴¹ Decolonial sovereignty is actualized through the recognition that the imperial state is imagined in subjugation of racialized people not only through the delineation of belonging—citizenship and exploitation of labor-- but through eradication as a function of borders. Decolonial sovereignty, therefore, is developed in the coalition between peoples that simultaneously facilitates the transgression of borders and the maintenance of peoples' relationship with the ideas, expressive practices, and languages that *hold them together*. In other words, the creation of self-sustaining coalition structures that enable inclusive political practices and non-capitalistic economic practices, produces the space for racialized and marginalized peoples to imagine within their communities in ways that are integral to maintaining their sovereignty over their knowledge to build, create, and share it with others.⁴² There is then divestment from globalization that maintains the cultural and economic hold of empire, and this counters dispossession and displacement that also have cultural dimensions. This occurs transnationally, from multiple loci, but it maintains the sovereign integrity of peoples' ways of being as they continue to be accessed and imagined by them. Creative imagining from within communities is then capable of awakening people from the slumber that is belief in the constructed narratives of empire, which are assumed as real, self-evident, and already always having been. This resembles the possibility in Brazant's toolkit.

Conclusion

To think-Otherwise is not only a process of uncovering structures of colonial racial capitalist domination. Thinking Other-wise also requires imagining and co-creating, through dialogical methods, worlds in which there is the cultivation of horizontal power in the sharing of space, not in ways that overlook the already existent hierarchies of power, but in ways that are aimed at establishing self-determination. This can occur through sovereignty over ways of knowing, being, and doing. This sovereignty means that women, and marginalized and colonized peoples are the sources of knowledge and not the object of research. They root their ways of being in a relationship with the land, in traditions and religious sources of embodied political and cultural practice, and this preserves social structures that are empowering for them. Sovereignty becomes a source of generational empowerment that resists the structures of violent physical and symbolic domination and cultivates ways to sustain communities beyond extraction and exploitation. Thinking

⁴¹ Not too long ago, in the early and mid-twentieth century, Falahi Palestinian refugees would travel by bus from central Jordan and pray in Al-Aqsa in Palestine, returning the next day without the current intensified policing of border patrols following the construction of the Palestinian as terrorist. Palestinian ancestors' stories undo the border as a priori, or that the justification for borders is self-evident.

⁴² Examples from within Muslim ways of being are the economic and social kafala and zakah systems, and even the cultivation of non-hierarchical self-other relations based upon mutuality that undoes the us/them opposition, such as in iffa (considered more expansively than its moralist definitions).

Other-wise realizes that persistent coloniality depends on the ongoing epistemicide that justifies genocides and extermination. In coalition and economic, social, and political networks beyond the official methods of the state, there can be the creative cultivation of an ethical futurity.

The organic shaping of this issue has influenced the ways in which I had imagined that this would occur. This process required constant revisitation in recursive and cyclical fashion, once and again, engaging in uncomfortable dialogue, in which reconsideration and reimagining were embedded as central, in assertion of the right to perceive differently, communicate Other-wise, to nourish from tensions at times in fragmentation, in pieces, in bursts, like the act of breathing, in moments and days, disconnection and then intensified connectivity, in recognition of shared struggles and incompleteness of expressions, the fragmentation of temporality and spatiality that is not of lack, but that are imposed by structures which erase parts of oneself or hide the process in order to assume objectivity and deny subjectivity, precluding the possibility for shared horizontal authority. Organic structures grow incrementally, rooted but expansive.

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