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>> [A Lexicon for Bridging Decolonial Queer Feminisms and Materialist Feminisms
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Bridgings, Plurilogues, Synergies: Decolonial Queer Feminisms and Materialist Feminisms

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Context, Conditions, Process

This special issue does not occur in a vacuum. It is part of a particular temporality: that of the rise of global fascism, of generalized war and of the phase of accelerated genocide in Gaza that has unfolded relentlessly for more than a year and that has spread across West Asia, specifically to Lebanon, but also to many other countries across the globe where solidarity actions with Palestine are being violently oppressed. At the time of our writing, according to official figures the genocide in Gaza has claimed more than 40,000 martyrs, a number that many academics consider a vast underestimation, as they estimate more than 186,000 direct and indirect martyrs (Khatib et al. 2024). These conditions bring home to us the absolute urgency of rethinking power, resistance, and liberation for all, thus from a perspective that is simultaneously anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and that uncompromisingly opposes all forms of sexism and queerphobia.

Faced with the enormous scale of ongoing horror, and the descent into globalized fascism, we chose to create this lexicon of concepts as a possible toolkit in the struggle for the liberation of all oppressed peoples. Together with a group of eighteen scholars from different parts of the world, we developed twenty-three feminist concepts that can offer key insights and strategies on how to build and nurture solidarities between worldwide struggles against exploitation and oppression. While these concepts were first the fruit of collective reflection, they all have their genealogies in the experiences of the contributors both in the field as researchers, and as organizers and activists. Throughout, we have consciously refused to submit to the dominant academic vs. activist binary. Instead, for us, a conceptual understanding of power, resistance, and social transformation cannot be thought outside of an explicit commitment to peoples' liberation against all forms of oppression. We have felt this imperative even more acutely since October 7, 2023. This special issue's construction and account of new conceptual tools is therefore of particular importance today, in light of the extent of Zionist propaganda, the reiteration of colonial-orientalist tropes across the dominant global media scape, the complicity of governments across the world, and that of many sectors of their societies, in silencing the crimes against humanity committed in Palestine and Lebanon. Considering these conditions, we offer this special issue in solidarity with feminists, queers, and all people in the anti-colonial and decolonial liberation struggles unfolding there.

Moreover, we desired to publish this lexicon in collaboration with *Kohl*, in the hope that the bridging, polylogues, and synergies may directly or indirectly contribute to Palestinian and Lebanese life and liberation. We are also delighted to work with our dear colleague and comrade, the artist Aude Abou Nasr. During a time of instant, fast, and slow death, along with ongoing premature death, through her art Aude has brought the written words in this special issue to life, reinserted them into scenes of life, and re-asserted the human where there are campaigns backed by a devastating military machine aiming to selectively erase humans altogether. May this gesture bring strength to the struggle and light to our threatened common humanity.

An important point of departure for this special issue was and remains the genuine desire to learn from each other and to create bonds of solidarity. To begin with, scholars coming from each of the two feminist traditions share much. Central to our commonalities is a commitment against all forms of hegemonic oppression and exploitation and an active engagement in resistance against colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, racism, sexism, and all forms of queerphobia. We share a broader horizon about how these relations of power are interconnected and inseparable. We are all committed to historicizing the global nature of these structures, systems, and assemblages of power, whether through attention to pasts, genealogies of the present, or the *longue durée*. We reject the reproduction of the status quo and instead are engaged in actively imagining and reconstructing a liberatory present and future. We felt from the beginning that our dialogues can be fruitful because each perspective elaborates different dimensions of relations of power, and of resistance and liberation. Bringing our reflections together, cross-fertilizing our forms of thought, could only enhance each perspective on how power functions and about what liberation means and entails.

While Palestine was centrally on our minds, the special issue is also more broadly transnational, multiply situated, and plurally translational in scope. It is comprised of a series of (more or less) 1000-word long entries, and brings together multiple geographies but moreover many differently situated genealogies and present moments of decolonial and materialist theorizations and perhaps beyond. Its examples point us to Palestine in relation to other sites across the world.

In many ways the present lexicon is unique. First, prior collections of keywords, glossaries, dictionaries, or encyclopedias, which have mainly been produced in book form and not as special issues of journals, do not entail

bringing separate, distinct, well-developed perspectives into conversation with each other. The earlier related projects are more atomized, individualized, and monologic. In this special issue of *Kohl* we come together in polylogue and do so in multiple ways. For example, as editors we asked each author to explain their keyword not only from within the theoretical perspective in which they are more comfortably grounded, but also to do so with consciousness specifically of speaking with the other theoretical tendency here. As editors we ourselves are differently situated in and outside decolonial and materialist feminisms and yet we three reviewed and provided our often-differential feedback to every entry, remaining in conversation together throughout.

Second, this special issue moves against the grain of many other feminist and queer canonical collections of keywords, which are – with few exceptions – primarily focused on theory produced in and for the global north. This official, broadly universalized corpus tends to reiterate the most dominant, often cited works, a process that in turn rather systematically erases a whole world of theoretical production in the global south(s), sometimes including the south(s) in the north. In contrast, for decolonial feminist and queer theory, for example, such a politics of citation constitutes a form of colonial epistemic violence in which the dominant in the global north is continually universalized as the exclusive point of both empirical and theoretical reference.

In this special issue we consciously push against the eternal reiteration of dominant theoretical citations because they block our thought, analyses, and imagination. As a whole, the special issue resists the easy imperial travels of dominant critical concepts from the global north(s) to the south(s), and deeply questions the presupposition of their unadulterated and consistent universality. Instead, this special issue aims to bring to the fore some new materials that open up yet other ways of thinking, being, and doing, and acknowledge the potential of different counterhegemonic iterations of some of these concepts from and between the global south(s). It foregrounds theoretical contributions that epistemically, empirically, theoretically emerge from and for the global south(s), including the south(s) in the north. This changes everything. What happens when *cuerpo-territorio*, a perspective that was introduced by communitarian feminists in Abya Yala, travels to Palestine? What could *ungendering* – a concept developed by Hortense Spillers and other Black feminists in the context of transatlantic slavery, as discussed in this special issue by Alys Weinbaum – look like in Sudan?

Some shifts are obvious, such as the lexical. For example, the authors insist upon Indigenous and subaltern perspectives and vocabularies. A case in point is the refusal of colonial designations for places that have been named by Indigenous inhabitants and instead the use of the latter, i.e. Turtle Island, Abya Yala, Palestine, etc. Other shifts may not be as evident at first glance, such as how our shared uncompromising concern with inseparably combating relations of colonialism and colonality, capitalism, racism, and sexism and queerphobia, underlies and animates the process of constructing each key term. In sum, our work of bridging two disparate theoretical tendencies and creating effective solidarities entails forms of epistemic transformation, and thus the terms of articulation itself.

Decolonial Feminist and Queer Theory and Materialist Feminist Theory

The process of creating this special issue has helped to bring into relief an array of contributions from, but also limitations of, both decolonial feminist and queer theory and materialist feminist theory in their current state of development. Instead of paralysis, disappointment, or even dismissal about our limitations and frictions, we offer this special issue as a generative opportunity for and an invitation to deepen each feminist tendency and to incite ever more polylogues and synergies between them.

First, a few words about some of the productive strengths of each feminist perspective. One of the extremely salient qualities of decolonial feminist and queer theory is that it makes a whole range of relations of power inseparable and central to their analytics: gender and sexuality, but also colonialism, slavery, imperialism, racial capitalism, racism, sexism, and the many varieties of queerphobia. Decolonial feminist and queer theory has multiple genealogical and present strands of theorizations that remain an integral part of it. Very centrally these include Indigenous and Black feminisms and queer theories that engage with gendering, ungendering, and colonial and racialized conditions, subjectivities and economies that have emerged from 500 years of colonialisms, transatlantic slavery, "slave breeding," and plantation economies under racial capitalism. As Bacchetta's entry on *decolonizing sexuality*, PJ DiPietro's entry on the *coloniality of gender*, and Omi Salas-SantaCruz' on *decolonial trans feminism* indicate, decolonial feminist and queer theory provides an intricate understanding of the colonial imposition of all relations, structures, systems, and assemblages of power, and especially highlights dominant, binary, heterosexist colonial-racialized Eurocentric ideals of gender and sexuality. Decolonial feminist and queer

theory reveals epistemic violence – in the realm of categories, logics, presuppositions, conclusions – and its material effects. In this special issue, Omi Salas-SantaCruz grapples directly with such effects in their entry on *colonial dysphoria*. Decolonial feminist and queer theory takes an uncompromisingly sharp critical stance towards the colonial-racist mobilization of dominant models for gender and sexuality, and their reproduction in dominant feminist and queer theory and practice. We find this reflected quite explicitly in the entries by Kerby Lynch on *de-othering*, by Aïcha Bounaga on Islamophobic backlash, and in Bacchetta's entries on *reductive evidence* and *misogynarchies*.

Decolonial feminist and queer theory also proposes to re-valorize and look towards subalternized and erased epistemologies for possible openings and points of departure. All the decolonial feminist and queer theorists in this special issue contribute to this effort. Some do so directly, such as Angela Figueiredo with her concept of *Black unsubmissive epistemologies* or Paola Bacchetta with her notion of *situated planetarity*. Decolonial feminist and queer theory is also centrally concerned with materiality. This often takes the form of analyzing land in its multiple aspects. It happens in the recognition of land as central to Indigenous peoples' lives and relationalities, and thus as a pivotal point for feminist and queer anti-colonial and anti-imperialist liberation struggles, as Shayma Nader's entry on *insurgent agriculture* in Palestine beautifully illustrates. It also shows up in concerns around borders, as Omi Salas-SantaCruz and Sergio A. Gonzalez's entry on *frontier, frontera, borderlands*, demonstrates. Nearly all decolonial feminist and queer theorists agree that colonized and subalternized women and queers cannot ever be free until all the inseparable multiplicities of relations of power in which they are caught are transformed. For example, Palestinian queer activists have long insisted that Palestinian women's and queer liberation is first and foremost about ending the occupation, apartheid, and genocide. Another strength of decolonial feminist and queer theory is to make the body a central focus, as the entries on the *coloniality of gender* by PJ DiPietro and *ungendering flesh* by Alys Weinbaum demonstrate herein. Finally, the kinds of transnational conversations that have been unfolding among decolonial feminist and queer theorists over the past decade or more have rather consistently made both material and epistemic concerns always already inseparable in their analytics. To invoke just one site of such theorizations and their transnational plurilogue: the presentations by Haneen Maikey, Walaa Alqaisiya, Jin Haritaworn, Huma Dar, Sarena Dankwa, Sabreen Al Rassace, Joao Gabriell, Milad Cheikh, Massinissa Garaoun, Santa Khurai, and many

others, at the conference on Decolonizing Sexualities organized by Decolonizing Sexualities Network in March 2021, bring to the fore murderous material conditions of power, epistemic violence, and epistemicide, along with forceful practices of struggle, activism and artivism, energetic solidarities, subaltern epistemic survival and expansion, and common dreams and desires for an equitable, transformative, liberatory, meaningful, futurity for all.

Decolonial feminist and queer theory is of course extremely heterogeneous. It is more a fluid set of perspectives, approaches, concepts, and discussions that are continually in process than a fixed set of pre-established terms. In that vein, many parts of the whole have been critiqued in ways that might seem continuous to yet a different realm of theory, postcolonial theory that is, for overemphasizing matters of discourse, representation, the epistemic, while losing sight of materialities and the political economies of land, bodies, flesh, and soil. These are some elements among others that make a conversation among decolonial feminist and queer theorists, and with materialist feminisms, particularly exciting.

Materialist feminism is a rich feminist tradition that draws on diverse Marxist, socialist, autonomist, and anarchist lineages from across the globe. These disparate feminist lineages align in emphasizing the materialist and socio-economic foundations that shape the lives, labors, and bodies of women and other feminized people, and the forms of oppression and exploitation that they face in capitalist societies and economies.

Unlike liberal and radical feminists, materialist feminists insist that women are not simply oppressed by patriarchy and "the universally privileged man," but that this patriarchal oppression is socio-historically situated in and through capitalism with its destructive structures of labor exploitation and appropriation. Unlike orthodox Marxists, materialist feminists argue that capitalism is not merely an economic system rooted in class-based inequalities between proletarian workers and bourgeois bosses, but that these labor divisions are also highly gendered, racialized, and sexualized. Understanding the historical emergence of capitalism as a gendered process that is rooted in the violent separation of what is considered "value-producing" and "life-reproducing," materialist feminists analyze how women and other feminized people are relegated to domestic spheres of unpaid reproductive labor and underpaid productive labor. This structural

devaluation of women's work, a process which Maria Mies (1998) termed *housewifization*, is also discussed in this special issue by Sigrid Vertommen in both its historic and contemporary manifestations.

Insisting on the manifold gendered and racialized dimensions of capital accumulative processes, materialist feminists emphasize, for example, that workplaces are not only factories and offices, but also maternity wards, school cafeterias, home kitchens, and bedrooms. They rightfully posit that the capitalist labor force does not only consist of miners, engineers, and dock or factory workers, but also of nurses, childcare workers, housewives, teachers, farmworkers, midwives, mothers, nannies, or small-scale cross border traders, as Lana Salman describes in her entry on social reproductive contraband. These feminized workers are not only (in)directly producing value, but they are also reproducing what Marx called that most *peculiar commodity*, i.e. labor power, as mapped herein by Fayrouz Yousfi in her entry on *social reproduction*. Considering women's crucial role in the labor force as unpaid housewives and mothers, and badly paid nurses and cleaners and farmworkers, materialist feminists have also underlined their revolutionary potential in opposing and dismantling capitalist structures of exploitation and oppression. As illustrated by Luci Cavallero and Verónica Gago's entry on *debt* and Soraya El Kahlaoui's work on *uncertain property* and *the right to possess*, materialist feminists pushed and keep on pushing for a broader analytical and political understanding of "malestream" economic terms like debt, property, value, and capital that acknowledge the invisibilized labors, body-territories, and lives of women and feminized folks. Also, Camille Barbagallo and Nicolas Beuret's entry herein on the *strike*, and Fayrouz Yousfi's entry on *al-'Ucha* poignantly demonstrate how a materialist feminist lens can radically expand or "transversalize" our notion of resistance strategies such as strikes, encampments, contraband trade, and occupations by re-connecting the bifurcated spheres of production and reproduction, workplace and home, market and family, labor and love, etc.

While materialist feminists have offered crucial insights on the workings of global capitalism at the intersection of gender and class dynamics, they have been critiqued for downplaying or even ignoring its inherently colonial and racialized configurations. Similarly, some materialist feminist strands reiterate a Eurocentric take on capitalism's gendered and sexual divisions of labor that insufficiently considers the older and present histories of colonialism, empire, and slavery. It is through the bridging work of thinkers such as Rosa Luxemburg, Maria Mies, Silvia Federici, Selma James, Claudia Jones, Angela Davis, Tithi Bhattacharya, Alessandra Mezzadri, Sue Ferguson, Shirin Rai,

Jennifer Morgan, Alys Weinbaum, Sara Salem, Camille Barbagallo, Verónica Gago, and many others that we have come to understand how not all women have been subjected to the same capitalist forces of oppression and exploitation. In dialogue with Indigenous, Black, and anti/decolonial feminisms and queer theory, they insist on unpacking the stories of capitalism's gendered articulations from the epistemic and political perspective of enslaved, Indigenous, colonized, and other racialized women. It is in the footsteps of this powerful genealogy of feminist theory that we develop this special issue to bridge decolonial and materialist feminisms.

Synergies, Commonalities, Convergences, Solidarities

What we take from both decolonial and materialist feminisms in this special issue is our insistence on firmly grounding this set of concepts in praxis. This means that we aimed to conceptually situate the genealogy or multiple genealogies of each term, while at the same time describing how the term emerged from, came to life in, or was put to work in our research, fieldwork, and/or activism. Grounding theoretical concepts in real life and in socio-historically situated struggles is never a clean process, but always a muddy one as no one lives a life or a struggle in theoretical purity. Yet, it is by embedding the key terms in their messy material and embodied life worlds that we can better discern and value their political potential in transforming the lives of the people for whom the concepts were introduced. This also enables us to refine, reshape, or even refute concepts and theories when they do not correspond to the lived realities and contradictions on the ground.

Indeed, this special issue – which is organized entirely around concepts – is deeply interested in providing food for thought and an incitement to more extensive and efficacious theorization, praxis, plurilogues, and solidarities that are relevant specifically across the global south(s), including the south(s) in the north(s). Many of the concepts herein were created in deep contextuality by the authors of the entries themselves. An example is Soraya El Kahlaoui's *uncertain properties*. Other concepts pre-existed and the authors took them up as points of departure, radically reoriented them into other directions, developed in them new dimensions, elaborating each aspect of them in relation to situated contextual necessities and exigencies.

We hope that readers will find the key terms in the special issue helpful in whatever way you deem best: directly, indirectly, as points of departure for further or differential conceptualizations and praxes, or simply as incitements to create new theorizations that are useful for transformation and liberation in our times. Onward!

November 29, 2024

*The names of the authors are ordered alphabetically. All the authors have contributed equally to the development and realisation of this chapter and of the special issue at large.

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