

Decolonizing Our Feminist/ized Revolutions

Enfleshed Praxis from Southwest Colombia

by
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An initial mapping of the decolonial feminisms emergent in Buenaventura and Cali, Southwest Colombia, in the Afro-Colombian and indigenous political Escuela de Mariposas de Alas Nuevas and Círculo de Hombres, Cali, shows that they move within and beyond a politics and epistemology of representation in a return to the enfleshed as territories of transformatory wisdoms and the embrace of ancestrality and feminist spirituality.

Un mapeo inicial de los feminismos decoloniales surgidos en Buenaventura y Cali, en el suroeste de Colombia, dentro de las agrupaciones políticas afrocolombianas e indígenas Escuela de Mariposas de Alas Nuevas y Círculo de Hombres, Cali, muestra que se mueven dentro y fuera de una política y epistemología de representación y ejercen un retorno a lo encarnado como territorios de sabidurías transformadoras a la vez que abrazan la ancestrality and la espiritualidad feminista.

Keywords: *Popular feminisms, Decolonial feminisms, Territories of transformation, Enfleshed, Healing liberations, Postrepresentation*

In this I article I offer an initial conceptualization of the decolonizing feminist practices emergent in the Valle del Cauca, Colombia. I focus on two experiences—the Escuela de Mariposas de Alas Nuevas (New Butterflies’ Wings School), an autonomous Afro-Colombian and indigenous women’s political school, and the Círculo de Hombres, Cali (Cali Men’s Circle), an Afro-Colombian and indigenous men’s feminist political collective—and demonstrate how their feminisms move within and beyond popular feminisms to express a decolonizing feminist praxis. This is a feminist politics that begins from an experience of feminized and racialized nonbeing, develops political projects that are deeply epistemological, and nurtures pedagogies and knowledges that move beyond a representational politics (of knowledge) and center the struggle for enfleshed sovereignty over the territories¹ of the body and the body of the land as a praxis of healing liberation.

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COLOMBIAN FEMINIST RESISTANCES

Colombia and the region of the Valle del Cauca have been the site of ongoing patriarchal capitalist-colonial violence in which a logic of “politics as war” and “war as politics” has been dominant in both the conflict between armed guerillas and the Colombian state (in its formal and paramilitary forms) and the everyday interstices of community life. A long-standing coalition involving the United States, Colombian political and economic elites, and paramilitary forces has shaped a political-economic terrain characterized by dispossession in which indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and poor mestiza communities are rendered disposable (Bermúdez, 2013; Hernández Reyes, 2019) and in which attempts at popular resistance have been criminalized and associated with incivility and the absence of democracy and development. Yet, in this context in the Valle del Cauca in particular, rich traditions of feminist praxis with multiple feminist political schools and movements have emerged (Bermúdez, 2013; Bermúdez and Tamayo, 2017; Motta, 2017b; Motta and Bermudez, 2019). This praxis often remains invisible in political discussion and theoretical production. However, the decolonizing feminisms emergent from racialized and feminized popular subjects who experience intersecting oppressions, exclusions, and violences arguably provide a site of epistemic privilege from which to expand and deepen the politics (of knowledge) of both (popular) feminisms and emancipatory struggles more broadly.

The development of a decolonial feminist lens in my scholarship has emerged out of a two-decade-long political engagement and dialogue with racialized women in movement in Latin America, Europe, and Australia and in particular collaborations and shared struggles with feminists in Cali, Colombia. These have involved exploration of different lineages of feminist praxis to develop transformative strategies as activist-scholars and community organizers/educators. During the time in Cali (six months in 2017–2018) out of which this particular research emerged, we explored core themes in their (our) own praxis through a series of eight *diálogos de saberes*, a number of workshops, and 10 interviews with participants in feminist organizations, including the two organizations that are the focus of this article. We dialogued with and through traditions of decolonial, black, nonviolent, and indigenous feminisms emergent from our shared and multiple experiences and histories to bring to thought, name, and develop our struggles for and theorizations of decolonizing postpatriarchal worlds. Below I bring together some of these theorizations.

WITHIN AND BEYOND POPULAR FEMINISMS

Popular feminisms emerged parallel to and often in contestation with middle-class feminist praxis from the 1970s on in Latin America. They were the result of the political practice of poor women who brought to the center of feminist struggle questions of class, gender, and in some cases race (Espinosa, 2012; Lebon, 2014; Safa, 1990). Their struggles centered around two main axes: in contestation of the brutalization of their families via disappearance, torture, and strategies of eradication by authoritarian regimes (Caldeira, 1998; Feijoo,

1998: 31–35; Valenzuela, 1998) and as a result of the undercutting of public rights to and subsidies for housing, health, water, food, and education as part of neoliberal restructuring (Chant, 2008; Feijoo, 1998: 37–40; Olivera, 2006).

These feminists/isms politicized the gendered roles of mother, daughter, and wife as working-class women entered the collective public sphere as claims-making political subjects. Their politics was often suspicious of established channels for political claims making such as unions and political parties because of those channels' histories of elitism, electoralism, and patriarchy (Feijoo, 1998; Safa, 1990; Valenzuela, 1998). However, there are also herstories of middle-class feminists working in working-class communities on educational and other forms of feminist politicization within these struggles (Safa, 1990: 357–358). The claims themselves revolved around justice, recognition, and the return of disappeared and murdered loved ones and/or struggles for public services and recognition as feminized political subjects. The politicization of the private sphere and questions of social reproduction were often theorized within popular-feminist conceptual-theoretical frameworks based on the work of Nancy Fraser (Lebon, 2014: 149–150; Maier, 2010; Safa, 1990) and Maxine Molyneux (1985; Lebon, 2014: 152–154; Safa, 1990: 363–365). These two frameworks posited four axes within which demands were made by feminist movements and through which it was possible to conceptualize and evaluate the nature and reach of popular feminisms. The first two, advanced and conceptualized in the work of Fraser, were recognition (identity claims in relation to gendered oppression and involving political and civil rights and cultural changes) and redistribution (material and social rights in response to questions of class inequality) (Lebon, 2014: 154–157). The second two, advanced and conceptualized in the work of Molyneux, were practical and strategic demands, the first understood as emerging from the place-based concrete struggles for survival of (poor) women and the second posited as emergent from a higher level of theoretical abstraction as strategic struggles to shift the cultures, discourses, and structures of (capitalist) patriarchy (Feijoo, 1998; Lebon, 2014: 152–154).

Popular feminisms were often framed as advancing redistributive class claims. This, scholars argued, suggested the urgency of centering multiple feminist lenses and traditions to ensure that questions of class and gender were made visible and honored across the feminist political and theoretical spectrum. Scholarly debates ensued around the extent to which popular feminisms developed practical and/or strategic feminist demands. Some scholars viewed these struggles as merely reinforcing the dominant gendered division of labor and power through the reification of the domestic roles of mother, daughter, and wife and as pushing for practical demands that were incapable of challenging the underlying structures and institutions of patriarchal power. Others acknowledged the practical nature of the demands but viewed the struggles themselves as sites of feminist learning that politicized motherhood in ways that challenged liberal patriarchal practices of citizenship and norms of political subjectivity (Feijoo, 1998; Safa, 1990: 355–356). Others went farther and claimed that the reading of these struggles as merely practical was itself a manifestation of middle-class feminisms' inability to see how and why questions of redistribution and social rights emergent from the private and the place of the

community offered a systematic challenge to the capitalist-patriarchal gendered division of labor and power (Caldeira, 1990; 1998; Lebon, 2014).

Arguably, what the two frameworks for popular feminisms share is a conceptualization of the political that remains within the representational logic of coloniality.² In this representational ontology of the political embedded within the contours of modern state sovereignty, movements ultimately make demands upon the state (either through established political institutions or through the creation of new political/social institutions). Their struggles are thus redistributive and/or identitarian, bound by the onto-epistemological contours of modern sovereignty and political subjectivity. My critical interrogation does not seek to deny that many feminist popular struggles are indeed redistributive or concern recognition and seek to make demands upon the state. Rather, it suggests that these conceptualizations and framings are problematic in relation to the feminized and feminist praxis emergent from (non)subjects of modern sovereignty—racialized and feminized popular-class communities and subjects. This problematization emerges out of experiences such as those of the Escuela and the Círculo that contest the limits of modern sovereignty in terms of its erasure of their sovereignty, political being, and capacity to be bearers of reason and from the perspective of decolonial (feminist) activist-scholars.

DECOLONIZING FEMINISMS

In Colombia and globally, indigenous people, people of color, and other marginalized racialized peoples live under a state of siege and dispossession (Dillard, 2016). The police and military on the streets and in communities kill many young people from these communities and humiliate far more through searches, raids, and arrests, employ deeply racialized, gendered, and classed practices of child removal that negate black and indigenous motherhood, and violently dispossess people of their lands and livelihoods (Motta, 2016a). At school, children from these “marked” communities are more likely to be labeled problematic and violently excluded and to be subjected to everyday forms of abusive intervention. At the welfare office and in all interactions with officialdom, racialized communities are met with suspicion, marked as undeserving and deviant (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Motta, 2016a; Simpson, 2007).

As Maldonado-Torres (2007) explains, within these logics of racialized and gendered nonbeing the experience of the *damné*³ is characterized by invisibility, suspicion, and denial of the capacity of gift. Invisibility results from the denial of knowledges; suspicion is reflected in the question “Are you like us?” or “Are you truly human?,” and the denial of the capacity of gift legitimizes the idea that there is nothing to be learned from them/us, undercutting the conditions for dialogue, reciprocity, and humanization. In this the state as sovereign legitimizes the removal of rights, denial of humanness, and logic of elimination with regard to indigenous and other racialized and feminized peoples (Surin, 2001: 205–211; Morgensen, 2011: 69–73; Motta, 2016a), an experience shared by the indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and popular-class mestiza women and feminists in Cali and the Valle del Cauca.

As Frantz Fanon (2002 [1961]: 200) shows, such systemic negation “forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: ‘In reality, who am I?’” These communities—our communities—are treated as incapable of reason and self-government and therefore of political freedom. Mendoza (2013: 13) argues that there is inhumanity at the heart of liberalism in that its

egalitarian claims were made—and continue to be made today—within a closed circuit of communication, i.e., a discourse carried on exclusively among a polity of speakers that exemplified the prescribed form of subjectivity (White, European, Christian, bourgeois, and male). Outside of that exclusionary “we” (as in “we, the people”) are all the purportedly defective, underdeveloped human beings and 3/5ths of citizens who must either be forcibly brought up to full maturity, or otherwise exterminated as obstacles to human progress.

The denial of speech in this sense is the denial of (political) being. Such systematic and systemic negation necessitates theoretical consideration of a third conceptual category beyond the feminized private sphere and the masculinized public sphere that is centered in traditions of popular feminism. This third category is (non)being (Motta, 2014: 1–15)—containment and dehumanization outside of the popular-feminist theorizations of the public/private divide upon which the liberal modern state-market and gendered subjects and relationships of power are constituted. Inclusion of this category makes visible the logic through which racialized and feminized subjects are denied humanness and thus sovereignty, autonomy, and self-determination with regard to lands, bodies, and souls as the constitutive underside of liberal sovereignty (Cruz, 2001; Dillard, 2016: 203–205; Motta, 2017a). This denial of being is also a denial of knowing, since ways of inhabiting and creating the world/subject are also ways of knowing the world/subject. Eradicating the former therefore amounts to onto-epistemological denial of being-knowing otherwise. According to Lugones (2010: 745),

The civilizing transformation justified the colonization of memory and thus of people’s sense of self, of intersubjective relation, of their relation to the spirit world, to land, to the very fabric of their conception of reality, identity and social, ecological and cosmological organization. . . . The normativity that connected gender and civilization became intent on erasing community ecological practices, knowledge of planting, of weaving, of the cosmos.

This has implications for popular feminisms, which often separate (in theory and practice) the ontological from the epistemological and the sphere of the market from that of the political and the state, thus assuming that the latter could be the vehicle of feminist proletarian liberation and that questions/struggles of political recognition are not also epistemological questions of knowing otherwise.

Black, indigenous, migrant, mestiza/Chicana, and other excluded communities struggle against these destructive and traumatizing logics of dehumanization. As I have shown in previous participatory research, women are often at the heart of these struggles, which feminize resistance (Mason-Deese, 2016; Motta, 2013; 2019; 2020; Motta and Seppälä, 2016). They embody practices of

love in order to survive and flourish. They support their children to believe in themselves and recognize the legitimacy of their fear and to experience hope, love, and innocence (Dillard, 2016). They hold each other through the consequences of trauma that pass through communities like hurricanes, leaving death and destruction in their path (hooks, 1990). They tenderly and compassionately learn to caress and transform internalized self-hatred and self-negation. As I will demonstrate, these practices, which center a politics of internal sovereignty and self-determination over the feminized and racialized territories of the body, are also centered in the experiences of the Escuela and the Círculo.

This (un)learning together is practiced through sharing stories, histories, losses, and victories that contest the stories of power and modern sovereignty told about such communities. Collective and individual sense are cocreated through telling the untold stories of systemic violence and coming to recognize that they are the premise of, not a deviation from, liberal respectability (Motta, 2018). A place is reached where communities can begin to speak with the dignified voices of rebellion, courageously emerge as subjects of history and reason, and “usher in the new, in the form of a revived mystery bringing with it allegorizing propensities that cannot be contained by the state-machine” (Surin, 2001: 208)

These practices foster the conditions of possibility for political visibility as subjects and much more. They are the space and place of an “other” politics (of knowledge) that makes it possible for racialized and feminized subaltern subjects to see themselves and one another as whole (Motta, 2016b; 2017a; 2018). This is so important because racialized and feminized subjects and communities can come to believe in parts of our being—as Frantz Fanon and bell hooks so forcefully demonstrated—that we/they have nothing to offer, that our/their lives and experiences lack value, and that we/they are unlovable. It thus becomes essential for survival not only to resist power but to decolonize the internal territories of knowledge and social life and create other decolonized and feminized ways of knowing-being.

At the heart of this is a return to the territories of being that have been rendered abject, irrational, and dangerous as the grounds of possibility for decolonizing reason and/as defense of the territories of land and life with which to reproduce the conditions for community liberation and healing. It involves recognition that our experiences can be kneaded into the metaphorical and material bread that nurtures existence, survival, and flourishing, often through the embrace of radical traditions of education and pedagogy embedded in herstories of community organizing (Bermúdez, 2013; Motta, 2017b). It involves grounding in the herstories of our grandmothers, reconnecting with their wisdoms and centering ancestry and spiritual knowledges/knowings. As Patricia Hill Collins (1990: 208) argues,

[We] cannot afford to be fools of any type, for our objectification as the Other denies us . . . protection. This distinction between knowledge and wisdom and the use of experience as the cutting edge dividing them has been key to [our] survival. In the context of race, gender and class oppression, the distinction is essential. Knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate.

By re-rooting themselves in lived and ancestral wisdoms, individuals and communities become subjects through which a politics of wholeness and homecoming may be envisioned—in which the homeplace cannot be rendered merely as a place of the reproduction of gendered containments, roles, and categories of secondary being. As hooks (1990), Anzaldúa (1987), Motta (2018), Simpson (2017), and others argue, such a (mis)representation can result in the (mis)reading of black and indigenous women's historic role as leaders and thinkers of resistance as signs of domesticity, sexist oppression, and gendered tradition. Rather, the homeplace becomes a key place of survival, culture, and resistance and a space of political organization and solidarity. According to hooks (1990: 47), "Its structure [is] defined less by whether or not black women and men [are] conforming to sexist behaviour norms and more by our struggle to uplift ourselves as a people, our struggle to resist racist domination and oppression." Homeplace, family, motherhood, and the private thus take on another meaning as a historical and contemporary place of renewal and self-recovery, where wounds can be healed and where a politics of homecoming might be nurtured. Here is a coming to power that is "neither white nor surface; it is dark, it is ancient, and it is deep" (Lorde, 1985: 37).

These feminist traditions of thought, practice, and struggle thus foreground a series of categories within and beyond the categories of recognition and redistribution emergent from popular feminisms with which to engage with the contemporary feminisms of the Valle del Cauca. These categories revolve around the (non)being of the feminized and racialized subject as a starting point of political projects that are deeply epistemological and develop pedagogies and knowledges that move beyond representation (of knowledge): the struggle for sovereignty over the inner and outer territories of the body and the land and the role of home and homecoming in it.

In what follows, I offer an initial mapping of the movement praxis of the Escuela and the Círculo, two political experiences/collectives that identify themselves as black, indigenous, and decolonizing feminisms, in terms of the concepts of nonbeing, a politics (of knowledge) beyond representation, struggles for sovereignty over inner and outer territories, and the role of home and homecoming. I reflect on the extent to which these feminisms move within and beyond the redistribution and recognition of popular feminisms.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The methodological ethics and epistemology that foreground this conceptualization build upon my nearly two decades of militant scholarship in Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, the UK, and Australia with racialized women and communities in movement. From birth I have been a borderland subject, being of Colombian indigenous, Polish Jewish, and Celtic descent. It was a political and epistemological choice to embrace the possibilities of this mestizaje and bridge between communities on the margins of modernity to disrupt and defy borders. My scholarship as an embodiment of this has involved making the political the subject of pedagogy (Bermúdez, 2013; Motta, 2014), decolonizing forms of participatory action research and critique (Motta, 2016a; 2017b; 2018), and

cocreating prefigurative epistemologies (Motta, 2011). This methodological commitment seeks to transcend the violent dualisms knower/ known, mind/ body, word/world, nature/society, spirit/flesh, human/more than human, and education/life upon which the geopolitics of knowledge of patriarchal capitalist coloniality rests. It also seeks to transcend the inner and outer separations and borders that patriarchal capitalist coloniality (re)produces and find ways in which we might come to learn each other's stories and histories of loss, exile, and homecoming so as to nurture a decolonizing politics of transindigeneity and blackness without erasure. My use of "we" to discuss the experiences of nonbeing and the forms through which we come to political being is an embodiment of this politics.

This is a methodological practice that recognizes and resists the occupation and dispossession that constitute the epistemological logics of containment, accounting, and codification of the racialized and feminized proletarian body-subject. Such logics "are more than representation, as this [is] a governmental and disciplinary possessions of bodies and territories, and in this [are] included existent forms of philosophy, history and social life that Empire sought to speak of and speak for" (Simpson, 2007: 67). In resistance to this I/we move to cocreate shared struggles for epistemological sovereignty and self-determination. Research, then, becomes an enmeshment of processes of mutual healing as emancipation, woven through tears, touch, laughter, grief, pain, dignity, and collective sense making (Anzaldúa, 1987; Motta, 2016b; 2017a; 2018). Here, both the process and the outcomes are collaboratively envisioned and realized. Knowledge(s) are cocreated that foster critical reflexivity and reoccupations of ourselves and open possibilities for our collective being-knowing and becoming otherwise. I concur here with Audra Simpson (2007: 68), for whom the question of voice becomes intimately tied to questions of sovereignty "at the level of interlocution, at the level of methods, and at the level of textualisation."

THE ESCUELA DE MARIPOSAS CON ALAS NUEVAS

The feminist political schools⁴ in the Valle del Cauca, in particular in Cali and Buenaventura, offer a window on emergent decolonizing feminist/ized decolonial/indigenizing feminisms (Motta, 2017b). The Escuela based in Buenaventura is a feminist autonomous political school of popular-class Afro-Colombian and indigenous Colombian women who live in conditions of socio-economic and political precarity. Its organizers made the decision to be neither accredited by the formal university institutions nor funded by international and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) because of the limits it would have imposed on their curriculum and pedagogical praxis. The organizers, facilitators, and participants come from Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities and movements that are at the center of the struggle against violence and for sovereignty and self-determination. They have built their praxis through engagement with multiple feminist traditions and center the traditions of black and indigenous nonviolent feminisms.

The Escuela emerged out of the struggle for peace and against the violence of disposability in which women from Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities are systematically denied the right to have rights (Morgensen, 2011). This

was experienced through the state's, the paramilitaries', and (inter)national capital's consistent attempts to dispossess them of their land, culture, and livelihoods and through political and social (mis)presentation that reproduced their invisibility as knowing subjects and treated them as underdeveloped, irrational, and uncivilized. This logic of disposability and dehumanization had a profound impact on their communities, where gendered forms of violence and violence against women and children mirrored the structural violence they faced (Ni Una Menos, 2018; Olivera, 2006). As one of the coordinators, Carmen Ines García Hernández, described the situation (interview, January 18, 2018),

Our organization began about six years ago. We were called to do this. We began barefoot, so to speak, but we decided that we didn't want more of this life for our women, for ourselves, our children and grandchildren. . . . We wanted to leave behind these complex violences and so we decided to begin step by step. We met and formed a group of women and began to plan, to voice what it was we didn't want any more for ourselves, and what we wanted; we wanted to be free like butterflies. . . . We looked at each other and we saw each other and saw our reflections as butterflies. Butterflies are free, true? And that is what we want for ourselves, to be free. We began in the school, training and learning together, first, to then take the butterfly effect to our communities.

Freedom here becomes linked with a recovery of voice, a voice as a subjectivity that had been negated, devaluated, and brutalized, and instead a recovery out of which to appear on the political stage as political subjects. The project is thus deeply epistemological and involves the recovery of the women's own wisdoms in relationship to traditions of black, indigenous, and nonviolent feminisms. It is also deeply pedagogical and develops practices of learning as transformation in process and in outcome.

The complex experience of the intertwining of systemic and intimate violence led to the cocreation of a shared theorization of intimate and state (structural) violence, and this led to a focus on external and internal sovereignty and self-determination with regard to the territories of the body and land (community). Accordingly, attempts to dispossess communities of land are understood as an attempt to dispossess them of culture and identity and impose gendered hierarchies and patterns of gendered power relationships that undercut black and indigenous women's sovereignty, autonomy, and agency.

This focus has led to a pedagogical interweaving of traditions of popular, feminist, black, and indigenous thought. It begins from recognition of the wisdoms that participants bring—what Collins (1990) calls the “dark wisdoms.” These ancestral and lived knowledges are put into dialogue with other knowledges emergent from movements, formal critical theory and analysis, and juridical knowledges for example. This supports a thematization of women's experiences and a collective sense making that moves away from individualizing, blaming, and shaming narratives they also forge processes of learning together and remembering practices of well-being and healing restores intellectual and political authorship and agency. As Feliza Lopez, a participant in the Escuela's programs, explained (interview, January 18, 2018),

We recover this in the school and amongst ourselves, as all of us already have knowledges and wisdoms, and so we share these learnings. We then put these into dialogue with other knowledges about issues such as gender, or rights, or

the experiences of other feminist political schools like the one in Cali [the Escuela Política de Mujeres Pazíficas]. We then take these to our everyday practice, which has worked wonderfully because I've been able to take these to my community, my territory.

This embeds an embrace of multiple literacies in which learning for transformation is understood not only as a cognitive process but as an embodied, deeply spiritual, and multidimensional practice of recovering and remembering. The bedrock of this emancipatory learning is enfolded reconnection to deep time, ancestors, and the body/land (Motta and Bermudez, 2019). Feliza continued:

For our processes of healing or healing action [*“san acción”*] we practice with the form of the mandala to represent the different elements of our selves: our physical, our emotional, our mental, and our spiritual being, with the ancestral and Mother Earth often in the middle. We use lots of different modalities that connect us back to our bodies by bringing them love, filling the woman who has been impacted by all these brutal violences with love. How do we do this? We use plants, we use massage techniques, we use ritual, we use dance and storytelling. . . . This raises the energy and self-worth of the person. . . . It reconnects us back to the energies of the earth and our ancestors. So, when I am able to love myself in this way, when I eventually arrive at the moment of self-love, I feel the necessity and am able to give this love to others.

Building agency, dignity, and inner sovereignty as Feliza described them means reconnecting with the ancestors and centering beliefs and practices that honor the right to be loved and to love. An example of this kind of life- and love-affirming praxis is a workshop in which the women trace their stories through recovering connections to their foremothers through chants and meditation. They retrace their lives with a focus on moments of survival, resilience, and wisdom. They write about these moments on papers in the shape of leaves and footprints and place their writings ritually, moving into the room to the center of the mandala, where candles are placed that represent the flame of life and resilience. One of the sacred shamanic chants is as follows:

<i>Abrete corazón</i>	Open your heart
<i>Abrete sentiment</i>	Open your feelings
<i>Abrete entendimiento</i>	Open understanding
<i>Deja a un lado la razón</i>	Leave reason to one side
<i>Y deja brillar el sol</i>	And let the sun shine
<i>Escondido en tu interior</i>	Hidden inside
<i>Abrete memoria Antigua</i>	Open to ancient memory
<i>Escondida en la Tierra</i>	Hidden in the Earth
<i>En las plantas, en el aire</i>	In the plants and the air
<i>Recuerda lo que aprendiste</i>	Remember what you learned
<i>Bajo agua, bajo fuego</i>	Under water, under fire
<i>Hace ya, ya mucho tiempo</i>	A long, long time ago
<i>Ya es hora sí, ya es hora</i>	Now is the time, now is the time
<i>Abre la mente y recuerda</i>	Open your mind and remember
<i>Como el espíritu cura</i>	How spirit cures
<i>Como el amor sana</i>	How love heals
<i>Como el árbol florece</i>	How the tree flowers
<i>Y la vida perdure</i>	And life persists

Practices such as this enable (re)connection to the ancestors “as an active source of meaning and struggle” (Vázquez, 2012: 248) that nurtures return to self and inner sovereignty. This is a feminist politics of healing liberation, a sister praxis to the rich traditions of indigenous and black feminisms that piece together the fragments of self and other that have been lost and forgotten because of the complex and violent logics of patriarchal capitalist coloniality (Dillard, 2016; Motta, 2018). According to Feliza, “Unless we work to heal ourselves, we cannot create a healed society.” This healing is deeply epistemological in that new knowledges are centered, new/ancient subjects of knowing (re) emerge, and new forms of liberatory politics of decolonizing love are cocreated (Alexander, 2005; Morales, 1998; Motta, 2018; Motta and Bermudez, 2019).

This experience contributes to the reimagining of motherhood and mothering as a collective practice and ethics of care among women. This is referred to by participants as “comothering.” Attributes of emotional, practical, and mental labor are shared in the communities to which participants belong through the formation of women’s groups. Feliza explained: “What is comothering? It is really what we are doing here [in the school]. Comothering is transmitting and sharing our knowledges, developing solidarity and sisterhood. You are my comadre, for example, and with you I have deep connection and trust. I support you because you are my comadre.” Participants pass through a process of empowerment in which they learn to share their knowledges with other women and in this way expand the Escuela’s reach and collaborative feminist praxis. Inner and outer sovereignty are spoken of in relation to healing and the recovery of homeplace, land, and family. As Feliza reflected,

I have processed much pain through the spiritual practices. I have healed psychologically and spiritually. . . . I believe that in order to take action and find our agency we must begin with a healing action. And so from the ancestral, from the spiritual, one begins to heal all the wounds. If we don’t heal these wounds first, we still carry them with us, and obviously we will continue to be sick. I believe the world is sick from the violence, from the hate.

Individual and group healing from the violence—social, physical, psychic, spiritual, cultural, emotional—that the women have experienced is central to the process of enabling more visible social and political agency. This involves defense of their territories from encroachment in which the women literally place their bodies on the line (Sutton, 2007), making demands on the state to protect their right to life and integrity or ensure the life of their communities, and thinking together about the conditions and practices of social reproduction. As Dillard (2016) says in relation to black feminisms, “there is a clear relationship of reciprocity and care that recognizes a common spirit inherent in all of life.”

The Escuela builds within and beyond the conceptual framings of popular feminisms. They do, like these traditions, build from place-based politicization of the experiences of multiple class and gendered forms of oppression. However, it is led and facilitated by popular-class racialized women who center the politicization of the intersections of colonization, capitalism, and patriarchy. They develop a politics of knowledge that disrupts the divisions of labor and power implicit in conceptualizations of strategic and practical knowledges and demands (see Motta, 2011). They do this by developing practices of mass intellectuality⁵ and the cocreation of enfolded theory through

collective reflection upon experiences of intersecting oppression and violence to produce transformatory and multiliteracy knowledges. These practices disrupt the assumptions about strategic and practical knowledges in which levels of place-space are incorrectly conflated with levels of abstraction in such a way that the local can produce only concrete and practical knowledges (needs) and strategic theory (interests) can be produced only at a distance (Motta, 2011). Accordingly, they also often move beyond a politics of demand by pushing for other practices of sovereignty, political subjectivity, collective self-governance, and (social) reproduction.

These women also, similarly to popular feminists, problematize gendered divisions of labor and power as institutionalized in the public/private split of the liberal state, but they do so from an experience of racialized, classed, and gendered nonbeing and the denial of the right to have rights in which homeplace and family have often been denied them through dispossession of their lands and the death of their loved ones. Here, then, motherhood and mothering become politicized but in ways that involve a defense and recovery of inner and outer sovereignty and are not reducible to the reproduction of traditional gendered roles. Instead they are politicized in ways that go beyond the classed, gendered, and racialized logics of patriarchal capitalist coloniality that have denied black and indigenous motherhood. Their praxis therefore extends the frontiers and forms of feminized and feminist praxis toward a decolonizing reconnection with other knowledges, other subjects of knowing, and other languages of the political. This feminist politics of collective liberation centers (inner) sovereignty and collective self-determination beyond the representational logics of coloniality within a politics of healing and decolonizing love.

THE CÍRCULO DE HOMBRES, CALI

Gustavo Adolfo Calle Quintero, an Afro-Colombian, father, partner, popular educator, and feminist nonviolent activist, and I sit in a small room in the local space of the feminist collective *Mujer, Arte y Vida* (Women, Art, and Life—MAVI). In the next room is a meeting of the *Ellas Nos Hacen Falta* (We Miss Them) collective, which brings together feminist nonviolent activists with the families of victims of feminicide. It is raining, and the noise of the women's voices and the rain surrounds us. On the walls are pictures of campaigns, pamphlets, and art that Cali's feminist movements have created in the course of 20 years. Gustavo asks how he should begin the interview, explaining that he has not done this kind of thing before. I ask him to introduce himself and tell us how he came to think politically about masculinity and to cofound the *Círculo*, an autonomous political group of popular-class, mostly Afro-Colombian and some indigenous men. And so he tells the story of the *Círculo*, a collective of men working from an intersectional feminist perspective emergent from black, nonviolent, and decolonial feminisms and opposed to all forms of oppression. They seek to cocreate nonviolent and decolonizing masculinities that challenge the logics of the hegemonic colonial masculinities that have framed their lives and those of the Afro-Colombian, indigenous, and popular communities to which they belong. They center inner sovereignty and homecoming to self as a

practice of disrupting, challenging, and healing from patriarchal and colonial capitalism.⁶

Gustavo explains that all the men who participated in the formation of the collective have come from years of political participation in movements and collectives of the left. His own story is illustrative of this journey:

All my life since I was 15 I have had this vocation to connect to dynamics of political organization and collectivity. This has been a central part of my life, from the end of the 1980s when I was in clandestine organizations to then in the 1990s being part of the collective Desde Abajo that produced a newspaper that we distributed in the barrios, and then to find nonviolence and become a militant of nonviolence. From here we created a collective in which we first approached the theme of masculinities, because we had worries and unease, questions about how our movements were opposed to economic, political, cultural violence and yet often there was gendered violence and machista behaviors among us (which I also reproduced and was complicit in) that were inconsistent with our beliefs. We created from this the Lazo Blanco, the first collective that we organized here specifically to address and engage with the themes of nonviolent masculinities and nonviolence toward women. . . . This and my work in Taller Abierto, whose focus was gender and violence with men and women in popular and displaced communities, were the *sedes* from which the *Círculo de Hombres* emerged.

Gustavo and the *Círculo* do not separate gendered violence from hegemonic masculinity, as reproduced in their everyday lives from the logics of war and violence that the Colombian state and its allies have imposed on their communities. Indeed, as do the participants in the *Escuela*, they consider violence and their understanding of its complexities directly tied to their critique of the colonial patriarchal and capitalist state and market and to the ways in which the subjugation under which men embody hegemonic masculinity weakens the capacity of communities to resist and transform their conditions of oppression. Along with the *Escuela* they have developed their own cocreated theorizations of this complex violence around traditions of popular and radical feminist political education. They too center inner and outer sovereignty in relation to the concept of territory as body, community, and land:

For example, one of the themes that has emerged is that of displacement, and the role of territory is key within this. Our reflections revolve around this, and we ask questions in relation to certain attitudes that we have and how these are inconsistent with the discourses that we/they hold. Many of us come from struggles to recover land from powerful economic and political forces, and within this reality and context we ask how can we strengthen resistance and how can we ensure that relations of coexistence strengthen this capacity within our communities. So we reflect about this and how the violence in the community, against women, against children, ends up affecting the community and don't let us/them consolidate resilience and resistance because many of these dynamics emerge as a result of this context. War is a strategy for disarticulating our communities. Many of these practices and behaviors that are reproduced are themselves a product of the war, and those who are promoting and feeding the war do so because they have an interest in our territories.

The politics of knowledge of the collective actively embraces a prefigurative (Motta, 2011) cocreation of theory in which the process is as significant as its

consequences. The *Círculo* did not begin nor does it operate with a predesigned strategy, program, or set of objectives. It actively distances itself from the academic study of masculinities and from state and institutional logics of performativity that focus on outcomes and metrics. Instead there is commitment to cocreating autonomy from formalized power and institutionalized forms of education. This involves, as in the *Escuela*, an embrace of multiple knowledges and dark wisdoms and a rhythm of political creation that is circular and cyclical and emerges out of the needs and themes of the collective's members (Motta and Bermudez, 2019; Vázquez, 2012). As Gustavo puts it,

We begin from dialogue, and from this we generate the themes explored. A key theme has been how we create affective and emotional as well as sexual and reproductive health and sexuality. . . . We talk a lot about this theme—about how we live our emotions, our personal realities, about our histories, about how we relate emotionally and sexually . . . but we never begin with any plan or anything like this or with a strategy. We always arrive and then decide what we are going to talk about—so, for example, how do we live fatherhood?—but without any intention to create an organization, nor do we worry whether the space will last or not. We meet every two weeks, and since the beginnings in 2015 everyone has eagerly awaited the next meeting. Everyone began to feel this deep connection to what we were cocreating.

These encounters have allowed the emergence of an understanding of a feminist and nonviolent politics that centers the personal and the everyday as sites of both knowledge making and the possibility of a decolonizing politics of collective self-determination:

What we have nurtured is a process that permits the transformation of ourselves, an understanding of our history and our reality and from this a way to begin to think about alternatives. We have distanced ourselves from the concept of new masculinities, because this is not new, and we propose instead to speak of nonviolent, sensitive masculinities and to foreground that men already have this—all of us have this, in some form or other. For example, within the experience with men in our communities, many have other forms of expressing themselves as men and in relation to others. So we prefer to speak of this and consider change as permanent and that is it important to talk about how we feel as part of this process. Fundamental change is in the personal for us, beyond the discourses we speak externally. We are not interested in academic or expert logics that reproduce the separation between the mind and body or between discourses and actions and imagine politics as only an outward-facing act.

The men of the *Círculo* explicitly honor the heritages, lineages, struggles, and philosophies of feminist groups in the city and the region and work closely with many of them. This connection and honoring of their foremothers and sisters has led them to the territory of the body as a site of exploration of the complexities of the violent impacts of colonial hegemonic masculinity on themselves and their relationships with others. They seek to share these consequences and complicities in their dialogues. They see the territory of the body and this kind of en fleshed mapping as a way in which to re-root their politics and enable homecoming to self and other as the basis of transformation and collective self-determination:

Last year [2017] we deepened this theme of the personal and the affective. We worked a lot in relation to this theme with self-care. . . . We began to recognize the pain, because men have been anesthetized from our pain, and we began to be conscious of this only when we began exercises that brought us into contact with our bodies. We began to relate to our bodies in another way and to become conscious of the pains we have. . . . I think we are only just beginning to have this connection with our personal and embodied reality and from there find and create alternatives, return to ourselves. We want to learn from the women and also create our own practice that allows us to continue and do so in a collective manner. We also want to cocreate a pedagogical proposal that works from the experiential and the embodied . . . a proposal that can be of use for us but also for other men that will enable us to find things in common but also maintain diversity.

The *Círculo* has emerged, as have popular feminisms, from popular-class experiences of the violence of gendered and classed relationships of power, but it seeks to move beyond leftist traditions that, in members' experience, reproduce deeply gendered and colonial logics. It is therefore developing a decolonial feminism that moves beyond popular feminism—not only because it emerges from the experience of black and indigenous masculinity and manhood but also because of its clear break from a politics of demands and from the concepts, such as practical and strategic interests (and knowledges/knowing subjects), that characterized many twentieth-century leftist traditions. There is a focus on emergent cocreated and horizontal forms of self-determination, knowledge creation, and political subject formation that break with the ways in which much twentieth-century leftist critique reproduced the coordinates and (dis)embodiment of the knowing subject of patriarchal capitalist coloniality (Motta, 2017a; 2018). Along with the *Escuela*, the *Círculo* pushes beyond a politics of representation. It is planting the seeds of a praxis of homecoming, recovery of self, and rebuilding of social relationships among men and between men and women. Here territory as land, community, and body as en fleshed onto-epistemologies becomes key. The emergence of (self) care as a central element of its practices also relates directly to the articulation of a decolonizing feminist/ized politics that centers a politics of life and decolonizing love to survive and transcend the logics of death and disposability constitutive of patriarchal capitalist coloniality. It rearticulates the languages of the political to the racialized male body and masculinized subjectivities, exploring how hegemonic colonial masculinity wounds men and the masculine and fosters logics of violence and dehumanization against women and children that rob communities of the capacity to resist oppression. Here again, as in the *Escuela*, affect/enfleshment and the body become central places of dark wisdoms and healing liberation.

CONCLUSION: DECOLONIZING OUR POPULAR FEMINISMS

The *Escuela de Mariposas de Alas Nuevas* and the *Círculo de Hombres, Cali*, are developing an emergent praxis of decolonizing feminist/feminized revolutions. Their imminent critique of patriarchy, capitalism, and coloniality weaves the foundations for a plural and pluridiverse politics of collective self-liberation.

This combines and prefiguratively experiments with practices of inner and outer sovereignty, the defense and nurturing of autonomous territories for the reproduction of life and bodies, and a politics of knowledge and pedagogies beyond representation that centers the dark wisdoms of the ancestors, our bodies, and traumas as sources of liberatory knowledge, subject making, and healing.

These experiences move within and beyond popular feminisms in that they emerge from the experience of the intersections of class and gender oppression but significantly shift the terrain of critique to the enfleshed and/as modernity/coloniality. This involves a politics that, while in the case of the Escuela it does indeed make demands on the state for the right to life and security and access to certain social and political rights and services, moves beyond a politics of representation to the reimagining of governance, sovereignty, authority, political subjectivity, (political) reason, and collective liberation. This involves a politics of knowledge in which dialogues are created that honor and give epistemic privilege to the wisdoms emergent from the experience of multiple forms of oppression and exclusion and foster collective sense making as enfleshed critique and transformatory praxis. This necessarily centers the territory of the home, body, and land as central to recovery, healing, and emancipation and embraces and experiments with multiple languages and literacies of the political-epistemological, including the spiritual, the ancestral, and/as the enfleshed. As Dillard (2016: 203) argues, "The lesson here is that we are still here because we have defined ourselves in rich and nuanced and life-affirming ways. We live and love by thinking and being beyond the definitions given to us and about us."

These experiences of decolonizing popular feminisms offer maps with which to critically reflect upon traditions of feminist thought and practice so that we do not reproduce the epistemological coordinates, political subjectivities, and social relations of the system we are attempting to transform. They gift horizons, practices, and imaginaries that can support the nurturing of multiple feminist/ized paths, subjectivities, and strategies out of patriarchal capitalist coloniality.

NOTES

1. Here I can only recognize the development of the category and practice of "territory" in communitarian feminism in Bolivia (Paredes, 2008) and in Ni Una Menos (2018) as it has emerged within autonomous (Marxist) feminism in Argentina. Important current embodied practice puts these bodies of thought into dialogue to unravel the resonances and the dissonances in their usage and definitions. I am careful not to conflate them, since they differ in the conditions of their emergence and the sites of their enunciation.

2. This refers to an onto-epistemological logic premised upon a series of hierarchically placed dualisms—masculinized/feminized, white/racialized, mind/body, reason/emotion, and culture/nature—that (re)produce a politics (of knowledge) premised upon the elision, exclusion, and devaluation of the second of each pair and therefore reify a particular (knowing) subject, the white, masculinized, and bourgeois subject as the subject of reason, history, law, and sovereignty (Lugones, 2010; Motta, 2018).

3. This term emerges from the original title of Frantz Fanon's (2002 [1961]) *The Wretched of the Earth/Les damnés de la terre* and refers to the state of nonbeing and unhumanness of the colonized black within modernity/coloniality and how we might think, from these coordinates of (non) being, a liberatory decolonizing politics.

4. Referred to as the “mother” of feminist political schools in the region, the Escuela Política de Mujeres Pazífica, now 15 years old, is an autonomous feminist political school that many feminist women and, in the past few years, feminist men have journeyed through (Bermúdez, 2013; Motta, 2017a; 2017b). From this, feminist militants, organizers, and educators have gone on to set up numerous other feminist political schools and collectives in the region, including the one that is the focus of this article.

5. “Mass intellectuality,” a term emergent from autonomous Marxist traditions, is used here as a decolonized term that moves within and beyond this somewhat structuralist and Eurocentric framing toward embrace of the capacity of those on the underside of the intellectual capacities of patriarchal capitalist coloniality and the coconstruction of multiple literacies of the political and theoretical (see Motta, 2017b)

6. For details on other men working with popular feminisms, see the important work of the Nicaraguan nongovernmental organization Punto de Encuentro and its documentary *Macho* (see also Hurtado [2015] for discussion of feminist practices of masculinity).

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