

**DISOBEDIENT NOTES: DECOLONIALITY AND THE
CONTRIBUTION TO THE FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF SCIENCE**
*NOTAS DESOBEDIENTES: DECOLONIALIDADE E A CONTRIBUIÇÃO
PARA A CRÍTICA FEMINISTA À CIÊNCIA*
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LA CRÍTICA FEMINISTA A LA CIENCIA*

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Vívian Matias dos Santos¹

¹ *Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife/PE, Brazil*

ABSTRACT

This paper requests to share reflections, tensions and intentions that the decolonial thought can provide in the studies on gender and science, meaning a possible movement of insubmission capable of fortification the feminist critique of science. In this, the ideas are produced by the bibliographical research on decolonial thinking in contrast with a trajectory of previous researches on gender discrimination in the universities and Policy of Science, Technology & Innovation in the Northeast of Brazil. As a principal contribution, it puts epistemic disobedience as necessary to feminist critique - as contraposition to sexism only in an abstract way, but to understand it as an inseparable part of racial, ethnic, economic, and epistemic relations.

Keywords: Decoloniality; Feminist critique of science; Epistemic disobedience.

RESUMO

Este escrito busca compartilhar reflexões, tensionamentos e intenções que o contato com o pensamento decolonial pode provocar nos estudos sobre gênero e ciência, significando um possível movimento de insubmissão capaz de potencializar a crítica feminista à ciência. Os caminhos aqui percorridos pelas ideias são produzidos pela imersão no pensamento decolonial, por meio de pesquisa bibliográfica, em confronto com uma trajetória de pesquisas realizadas sobre as expressões da discriminação de gênero nas universidades e na Política de Ciência, Tecnologia & Inovação no contexto do Nordeste brasileiro. Como maior contribuição, traz para o centro do debate a desobediência epistêmica como necessária à crítica feminista - como contraposição não somente ao sexismo de modo abstrato, mas que o compreenda como parte indissociável das relações raciais, étnicas, econômicas e epistêmicas.

Palavras-chave: decolonialidade; crítica feminista à ciência; desobediência epistêmica.

RESUMEN

Este escrito busca compartir reflexiones, tensiones e intenciones que el contacto con el pensamiento decolonial puede provocar en los estudios sobre género y ciencia, significando un posible movimiento de insubmisión capaz de potenciar la crítica feminista a la ciencia. Los caminos aquí transitados por las ideas son producidos por la inmersión en el pensamiento decolonial, por medio de investigación bibliográfica, en confrontación con una trayectoria de investigaciones realizadas sobre las expresiones de la discriminación de género en las universidades y en la Política de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación en el Nordeste de Brasil. Como mayor contribución, aporta al centro del debate la desobediencia epistémica como necesaria para la crítica feminista, como contraposición no sólo al sexismo de modo abstracto, sino que lo comprenda como parte indisoluble de las relaciones raciales, étnicas, económicas y epistémicas.

Palabras clave: decolonialidad; crítica feminista a la ciencia; desobediencia epistémica.

An act of non-submission

This paper presents itself as restlessness, as an attempt to reconstruct the notions about how discriminatory relations build knowledge recognized as scientific. It is constructed as a possible act of non-submission, capable of enhancing the feminist critique of science.

Before we go into the specificities of the field of reflections proposed here, I find relevant of the talk about “from where am I writing” and, thus, better indicate some of the issues that mobilize the paths that are covered here by words. It is important to state that situating the “place of speech” as a contribution of black feminisms is not limited to the posture of sharing individual experiences, but rather it is about explaining experiences that were historically shared by groups existent in power relations (Ribeiro, 2017). In accordance with the feminist standpoint theory defended by Patricia Hill Collins (1997), to think of the “place of speech” means thinking about the specificities of the social conditions that constitute the relations of power between different groups.

By understanding this, my writing can begin. Thinking about my place of speech means thinking about the conditions of thought and writing. The reflections brought here lie in my recent approach with the decolonial perspective, in a specific place: being privileged - the place of a white, young, cissexual woman; and, at the same time, constructed as peripheral - because I come from the Brazilian semi-arid Northeast, and because I am an active researcher of the global and national scientific periphery context.

In these investigative journeys, first mobilized by the concern with gender inequalities in scientific and technological production, both within universities and in Science, Technology and Innovation Policy¹, I was able to reflect on how the binary logic of “territorial and hierarchical sexual segregation” (Schiebinger, 2001) permeates scientific constructions².

Then the restlessness aroused by this initial concern found a place in the dialogue with the feminist critique: it was no longer a question of merely understanding scientific work and scientific politics from a gender perspective, but of constructing a deeper critique of science, questioning the notion of “scientific authority” in its sexist foundations.

Initially, from the dialogue with the hegemonic feminist epistemologies - those produced by white feminists and located in central countries³ - the idea of a gendered science emerged, as did the understanding of

gender as individual, structural, symbolic and always asymmetric (Harding, 1996). In this immersion, even if almost restricted to the feminist thoughts of the center, it has already been possible to understand that the theoretical-analytical strategies for criticism of sexism could also be useful to the study of the racist, cisheteronormative and bourgeois foundations of hegemonic science in the West.

Nevertheless, despite the immense critical contribution, I realize that, even in feminist critique, canons are built in their inherent movement of “production of absences”, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006) would say - if feminist hegemonic theories already posed as a threat to the (sexist) foundations of science, what matters would be brought by peripheral, subaltern feminist thoughts? How and in what ways would these matters be brought?

In this sense, at this point I begin to deal more directly with what this text proposes: to share reflections, tensions and intentions that the contact with the decolonial movement provided in my trajectory as a feminist and peripheral researcher.

The decolonial perspective, by questioning the modern, eurocentric and westernizing model of science, has become a lens capable of denouncing and questioning in a complex way the discriminatory sophistication of the epistemic foundations in science in general, and it can also draw attention to the discriminatory foundations of the feminist theoretical disputes that end up building not only hegemonies, but also silencing and obliterations.

It was by taking this path that I came into contact with the “decolonialism”: through the necessary movement of non-submission of the feminist critique of science. And my place of thought and writing is also the “non-place” produced by confrontation with the canons in science and feminisms.

The “decolonial turn”: historical, ethical, political and conceptual approaches

I think it is an important effort to initially develop a discussion that allows, at the same time, to locate the construction of the concept of decolonial as a movement in dispute and to present some of its concepts that, in my interpretation, seem fundamental. It is, therefore, with this intention that this section is placed.

As a starting point, it is interesting to consider that decolonial thinking emerged as a movement of contraposition inherent to the founding of modernity/

colonialism itself, as Walter D. Mignolo (2007) argues, initially occurring in the Americas by the resistance of indigenous and Afro-Caribbean thinking, and, in a different form in Asian and African contexts, as a movement opposed to British imperialism and French colonialism.

As a scientific-political production, the “decolonial option” (Mignolo, 2008), as an insurgent epistemic position, is a construction of the *Modernidad/Colonialidad* (M/C), a group of Latin American intellectuals founded in the late 1990s, proposing “the radicalization of the postcolonial argument” (Ballestrin, 2013, p. 89). Having taken a distinct path of emergence and consolidation, this “radicalization” meant as a criticism of the postcolonial theory built in Asia and Africa.

As an example of this criticism, we may think of the criticism made to the Group of Subaltern Studies, formed in the South Asian, in the years of 1970. The central questioning referred to the supposed epistemological incoherence of this group of intellectuals that, although having as base the contraposition to the Eurocentric colonial enterprise, ended up having as main reference a theoretical approach whose epistemic base was European - the fundamental category “subaltern” was taken from the Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci.

Going further, Mignolo (2007) claimed for decolonial thought a more genuine foundation “in the dense history of decolonial planetary thinking” (p. 27). In this way, the author distinguished the decolonial option from the postcolonial theory and the various postcolonial studies, which he identified genealogically as being anchored to French post-structuralism⁴. The point is that while genealogical postcolonial thought is linked to European constructions, “the genealogy of decolonial thought is unknown in the genealogy of European thought” (p. 41).

In this field, the expression “decolonial turn” has been a recurring mode of reference and characterization of the decolonial movement with its specificities, first used by the Puerto Rican philosopher Nelson Maldonado Torres (2006), at the end of the 20th century. To imagine a “decolonial turn”, even if it was coined initially in the field of Latin American social sciences, means to think of the decolonial as a broader insurgency in modern institutions, such as universities, arts, politics (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007). “The decolonial turn is the openness and freedom of thought and of other forms of life (other economies, other political theories), the cleansing of the coloniality of being and of knowledge, the detachment of the

rhetoric of modernity and of its imperial imaginary” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 31).

The “decolonial turn”, thus, should not be understood only as a theoretical proposal, but as “a movement of theoretical, practical, political and epistemological resistance to the logic of modernity/coloniality” (Mignolo, 2008, p. 249). As a movement, the genealogy of decolonial thought is planetary, not to be confused with an approach restricted to individuals: on the contrary, it finds meaning in articulation with social movements, specifically Afro and Indian resistance.

Un-colonial or decolonial? On colonialism and coloniality

In the initial reflections from the first readings on the decolonial field, I noticed that in some writings produced by intellectuals that are part of the M/C group, when they are translated their writings into the Portuguese language, the expression “un-colonial” was used as an apparent synonym for “decolonial”. What I have noticed is that there is no consensus. In the Latin American context, for example, the use of the term “un-colonial” in Argentine productions⁵ is more common. Thus, in the first approximations, the decolonial draws a position of epistemological dispute and, as a movement, is not univocal.

How to differentiate “un-colonial” from “decolonial”? First, it is relevant to point out that the differentiations made by these terms are articulated both as theoretical and political. The decolonial finds substance in the commitment to deepen the understanding that the process of colonization goes beyond the economic and political spheres, deeply penetrating the existence of colonized peoples even after “colonialism” itself has exhausted itself in its territories.

The decolonial would be the contraposition to “coloniality”, while the un-colonial would be a counterpoint to “colonialism”, since the term decolonization is used to refer to the historical process of nation-state emergence after colonial administrations ended, as stated by Castro Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007) and Walsh (2009). What these authors say is that even with un-colonialism, coloniality remains.

What, then, is the difference between colonialism and coloniality?

For Aníbal Quijano (1992), colonialism refers to a “relationship of direct political, social and cultural

domination of Europeans over those conquered on all continents”. He further states that “colonialism, in the sense of a formal political domination of some societies over others, seems to be a matter of the past”⁶ (p. 437).

Coloniality refers to the understanding that the termination of colonial administrations and the emergence of nation-states do not mean the end of colonial domination. There is, as the author affirms, the continuity of the colonial power structure and, therefore, of colonial domination, by means of what he calls coloniality, and the need for a counter-positioning theoretical-political movement: the decolonial movement.

According to Quijano (1992), coloniality, as permanence of the colonial power structure, has as its main foundations the “racialization” and the intrinsic racialized forms of the relations of production; the “Eurocentrism”, as a form of production and control of subjectivities and existences; the hegemony of the “nation-state” which, as an intrinsic process after colonialism, is built as a periphery. Thus, through these foundations, the colonial enterprise remains alive, concretizing itself as coloniality of power, of knowledge and of being.

Thus, the decolonial (called “decolonial” in Spanish) proposal differs from the un-colonial (called “desdecolonial” in Spanish) one by:

Naming it “decolonial” instead of “descolonial”... is to make a distinction with the Spanish meaning of “des” [equivalent to the meaning of “un” in English]. We do not simply want to disarm, undo, or reverse colonialism; that is, we do not want to go from a colonial context to a non-colonial context as if it were possible for their patterns and traces to simply stop existing. The intention, rather, is to point out and provoke a positioning - a posture and continuous attitude - in order to transgress, intervene, intervene, arise and influence. The “decolonial” denotes, then, a path of continuous struggle in which we can identify, visualize and encourage “places” of exteriority and alternative constructions. (Translated from Walsh, 2009, pp. 14-15)

Therefore, the un-colonial in its meaning of undoing the colonial would find more sense as a contrast to colonialism and not to coloniality. For Grosfoguel (2005), the notion of coloniality stems from the fact that un-colonization processes do not result in un-colonized worlds. For the author, the first decolonization, which begun in the 19th century by the Spanish colonies and in the following century by the English and French colonies, has not been completed yet. This first movement implied in the

only legal-political independence of nation-states built as periphery⁷.

By analyzing the aspects explored up to this point, although I perceive as relevant to think about the historical complexity of unequal relations, I could initially observe a greater contribution to the feminist critique when, in contact with the thought of Castro Gómez & Grosfoguel (2007), the category of decoloniality is understood as a second un-colonization, being directed “the heterarchy of the multiple racial, ethnic, sexual, epistemic, economic and gender relations that the first un-colonialization left intact.” (p. 13).

To imagine the inseparability and non-hierarchy between the multiple relations (racial, ethnic, sexual, epistemic, economic and gender) has been, in my perception, potential for a more consistent intention of feminist critique of science and that, up until now, had not been able to be well explored in researches. I realized then that my perspective was (and still is, but presently I am working on deconstructing it) trained by a modern rationality where the understanding was this: “In this research, my concern is related to the gender inequalities in science, I do not have as part of the ‘delimitation’ of my ‘object’ the ethnic or racial issues”.

Today, decoloniality has allowed to realize how my studies were limited by coloniality, in that, in constructing “objects” of inquiry, hierarchizing and dissociating multiple discriminatory relations seemed to be a necessary effort and a guarantee of depth of analysis.

If “coloniality is the dark and necessary side of modernity,” being “its inseparably constituent part” (Mignolo, 2003, p. 30), then decoloniality goes from the denunciation of coloniality to the proposal of building an insurgent movement that breaks with the modern epistemic basis. It is not a bet on postmodernity. It is about going beyond. It means betting on the power of the “non-modern” epistemic basis, which is not synonymous with premodern⁸.

For the decolonial movement, the bet on postmodernism appears as a bet on the critique of modernity without breaking with its epistemic base. Considering that Eurocentrism concerns “the hegemony of a way of thinking based on Greek and Latin and on the six European and imperial languages of modernity, that is, modernity/coloniality” (Mignolo, 2008, p. 301), I question: does postmodernity, through its critique of the modern paradigm, break with the hegemonic Eurocentric epistemic basis? Does the postmodern critique recognize the existence of

coloniality, and does it oppose it? Is there the possibility of a postmodern critique of coloniality?

These are complex questions that I will not be able to explore here one by one in depth, but the way to our reflections would be to understand that there is no opposition to coloniality without epistemic insurgency.

Decoloniality and its contribution to the feminist critique

At this point in the article, I come to understand ideas about decoloniality as a powerful way of contributing to the feminist critique of science. I have, through advances and retreats, strengthened the bet that in studies aimed at understanding the discriminatory foundations in the sciences, the notion of coloniality can be decisive for the insurgency against the European paradigm of rational knowledge.

I consider it important to stress that European rationality was not only elaborated “in the context of, but as part of a power structure that implied European colonial domination over the rest of the world” (Quijano, 1992, p. 444). The rationality of the colonial European enterprise is based on and is also a basis for modern dichotomous logic, whose central dichotomy, according to María Lugones (2014), is ‘Human versus Non-human’. Here, dichotomizing does not mean merely differentiating, but making hierarchical distinctions.

Analogous and inherent to the Human versus Non-human dichotomy, we have the dichotomies of Culture versus Nature, Subject versus Object, very explicit in the modern thought of Francis Bacon, for example, whose empiricism constituted itself as a hegemonic base in the modern paradigm. For this thinker, the primary goal of science would be to make man’s realm of nature possible. In his manuscript called *Novum Organum* he develops aphorisms about the “interpretation of nature and the kingdom of man”. In his arguments, the man of science becomes the ruler of nature. For Bacon, “science and power coincide in man” (Bacon, 1984, p. 6).

Before approaching decolonial thinking, guided by hegemonic feminist epistemologies, it was only possible to perceive that theories such as those formulated by Bacon authorized the construction of scientific knowledge uncompromising with environmental issues and, at the most, could perceive the intrinsic association between the conception of nature and what is understood by “woman” and “feminine” in the modern paradigm.

only an extension and movement; it is passive, eternal and reversible, a mechanism whose elements can be dismantled and then related under the form of laws; it does not have any other quality or dignity that prevents us from unveiling its mysteries, unveiling that is not contemplative, but rather active, since it aims to know nature to dominate and control. (Santos, 2005, p. 25)

This analogy allowed me to understand that in Bacon’s discourse, in order for the scientific community to accept that man’s domination of nature was possible, his association with female stereotypes was strategic (Matias Santos, 2012) - science was the domain of men. However, without considering coloniality, it was not possible to understand the complexity of what it means to say that androcentrism is only one of the discriminatory aspects in scientific endeavors.

The coloniality of knowledge is based on the notion that in the dichotomy Subject versus Object establishes Europe as the Subject (Human) of knowledge, and colonized peoples and their expressions of existence as Object (Non-human), captured as “exotic” and bestial. In this way the exploitation, enslavement and extermination of bestialized peoples was authorized and legitimized.

With the decolonial feminist María Lugones (2014), I could understand that, even today, the dichotomous categorical logic is the central point for “capitalist and modern colonial” thought on race, gender and sexuality. The thinker complicates Quijano’s notion of coloniality by identifying the existence of what she calls the “Modern Colonial System of Gender” as a binary, racially biased, heteronormative and capitalist system.

For Lugones, it is indispensable to understand that, in the Human versus Non-human dichotomy, there was a model of humanity: male/female, white, European, civilized, bourgeois. If the “hierarchical dichotomy as a mark of the human also became a normative tool to condemn the colonized” (Lugones, 2014, p. 936), it is not only a question of establishing “ideal types”, but of standardizing existences. Standardizing presupposes stereotyping, disciplining, controlling, verbs that are combined in the concreteness of life through violence and even annihilation. By understanding these specificities I was able to perceive genre as a colonial invention organically linked to racialization and, therefore, inseparable.

As a reflection of the plurality and the disputes that permeate the feminisms, there are several approaches and dissent that surround the understanding of the coloniality of genre. In line with

María Lugones (2014), Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí (2004, p. 1) argues that “gender and racial categories emerged during that time as two fundamental axes along which people were exploited and societies were stratified”. That is, through this perspective gender would be a construction of colonial modernity.

Based on African epistemologies, Oyěwùmí (2004) defends the coloniality of gender - as a category of analysis and as the axis of political articulation - in stating that “despite the fact that feminism has become global, it is the Western nuclear family⁹ that provides the a ground for much of the feminist theory” (2004, p. 3), and the question that must be posed is that the nuclear family is not universal, but “a specifically Euro-American model” (Oyěwùmí, 2004, p. 4).

In developing studies on Yoruba society, the author identifies and analyzes the non-generalized existence of the Yorubá family, whose base is not conjugal (as it is in the nuclear family): lineage and chronological age are their fundamental base. Moreover, in observing matrifocality in many African family systems, she emphasizes that “the three central concepts that have been the pillars of feminism - woman, gender and sorority - are only intelligible with cautious attention to the nuclear family from which they emerged” (Oyěwùmí, 2004, p. 3). The genre would then be a foreign notion to many African contexts.

In another perspective, but still in the field of criticism to the coloniality, we have theorists like Rita Laura Segato (2012). The feminist anthropologist disagrees with Lugones (2014) and Oyěwùmí (2004), supported “by a great accumulation of historical evidence and ethnographic reports that undoubtedly confirm the existence of gender nomenclatures in tribal and African-American societies” (Segato, 2012, p. 116). Segato argues that in these societies there was already a “patriarchal organization” before the colonial process, “although different from that of the Western genre and describable as a low-intensity patriarchy” (2012, p. 116).

In the face of these different positions, I realize that one cannot avoid theoretical disputes in feminisms as movements and as producers of knowledge, and it is precisely in these differentiations and tensions that their power exists. Moreover, in Lugones (2014), Oyěwùmí (2004) and Segato (2012), although there is no consensus about gender as a construction derived only from colonial intrusion, what is apparently unanimous among these authors is the understanding that the violence of patriarchal relations lived today by the Afro-American people brings the marks of the

colonial legacy¹⁰, being gender an intrinsic aspect to the coloniality. Moreover, with such distinctions in mind, the reflections of the three feminists point out how hegemonic feminisms is not capable of facing cisheterossexism and racism, being neither “effective nor timely the leadership of Eurocentric feminism” (Segato, 2012, p. 116).

In the field of non-hegemonic epistemologies, Lugones’ decolonial feminism meets the intersectional proposal of black feminists¹¹: one cannot understand gender discrimination without perceiving the inseparability between this and race in the capitalist context and, thus, social class. Moreover, without the racially based European colonial enterprise, the capitalist mode of production would not have had the conditions for primitive accumulation, which was its historical condition. Today, colonialism is inherent in capitalism, when “we are witnessing rather a transition from modern colonialism to global coloniality ... In this way, we prefer to speak of the ‘European/Euro-American capitalist/modern patriarchal/colonial global system’ (Grosfoguel, 2005) and not only the ‘capitalist world-system’”(Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 13).

Thus, through the decolonial feminism of Lugones, we perceive that the counter positions to the postcolonial seem to become a necessary political-epistemic coalition between the thoughts produced by the black and indigenous resistances. Located in the non-hegemonic epistemic field, Lugones (although moving from color feminisms to decolonial feminism) dialogues with lines of theoretical-political construction that also pervade black feminisms, such as the work of Patricia Hill Collins (1997), which includes race, class, gender and sexuality as elements of the social structure, as a colonial legacy.

The decolonialism, then, brought me to a process of questioning everything I had produced. How could I reflect on my researches of the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being? In what ways has coloniality been present in my interlocations with central feminist epistemologies produced by white women? With what epistemic basis have I dialogued? What is the contribution of decoloniality to reflection on my place of speech, and how can this place produce and/or deepen absences, erasures, and silencings?

The Decolonial political power: the epistemic disobedience

I do not disregard the fact that there are differentiations between decolonial and postcolonial

thoughts, but I argue that, considering the specificities of both black and decolonial feminist constructs, the bet must be a coalition between the feminisms that drive a counter-colonial epistemological transgression movement.

Please let me remind you what the term epistemology means. The term is composed of the Greek word *episteme*, which means knowledge, and *logos*, which means science. Epistemology is, then, the science of knowledge acquisition, which determines: (A). (the topics) which topics or topics deserve attention and which issues are worthy of being made in order to produce true knowledge; (B). (the paradigms) which narratives and interpretations can be used to explain a phenomenon, that is, from which perspective can true knowledge be produced; (C). (the methods) and which approaches and formats can be used to produce reliable and true knowledge. Epistemology, as I have already said, defines not only as, but also who produces true knowledge and in whom we believe (Kilomba, 2016, pp. 10-11).

What Grada Kilomba arouses with this speech is the need for “epistemic disobedience.” Without disobedience there is no opposition to coloniality. Without opposing coloniality, there is no opposition to the multiple unequal and discriminatory relations derived from the central dichotomy of the modern European paradigm - human versus non-human: who is the subject of knowledge versus who is his object; who deserves to be listened to versus who should be silenced; who deserves to live versus bodies, lives that do not matter.

Without taking this action and initiating this movement, *epistemic unchaining* will not be possible and, therefore, we will remain in the realm of internal opposition to modern and Eurocentric concepts, rooted in the categories of Greek and Latin concepts and in the experiences and subjectivities formed from these bases, both theological how secular. . . . The decolonial option is epistemic, that is, it detaches itself from the genuine foundations of Western concepts and the accumulation of knowledge. By epistemic disengagement I do not mean abandonment or ignorance of what has already been institutionalized all over the planet. . . I intend to replace the geo-and-state politics of knowledge from its foundation in the imperial history of the West over the last five centuries, by geo-politics and State policy of people, languages, religions, political and economic concepts, subjectivities, etc. who were became racially biased (that is, their obvious humanity was denied). In this way, by “West” I do not want to refer to geography itself, but to the geopolitics of knowledge. Consequently, the decolonial option means, among other things, *learning to unlearn*”. (Mignolo, 2008, p. 290)

One of the greatest contributions of decoloniality, as well as of black feminist thought, would be to summon us to think about how hegemonic epistemologies are producers of “epistemicide”:

In addition to the annulment and disqualification of the knowledge of subjugated peoples, epistemicide is a persistent process of producing cultural indigence: denial of access to education, especially quality education; by the construction of intellectual inferiority; by the different mechanisms of delegitimization of blacks [and native peoples] as the bearer and producer of knowledge and lowering of cognitive ability due to material scarcity and/or by compromising self-esteem through current discrimination processes in the educational process. This is because it is not possible to disqualify the forms of knowledge of the dominated peoples without disqualifying them also individually and collectively as cognitive subjects. And, in so doing, it deprives it of reason, the condition for attaining “legitimate” or legitimized knowledge. That is why epistemicide injures to death the rationality of the subjugated or kidnaps it, mutilates the capacity to learn etc. (Carneiro, 2005, p. 97).

Consequently, epistemic disobedience becomes indispensable to the feminist critique of science; it summons us to an approach in our research, capable, at an initial moment, of allowing us to perceive what our theoretical North American and Eurocentric methodological training disregards. What implications would the epistemic disobedience have in our knowledge, in our processes of thinking and interpreting the real, social relations? How can we think of the texts we write, the analytic keys we construct, the discourses we reiterate when imagining epistemic disobedience as a possibility?

Epistemic disobedience is capable of putting us in an effort of redoing paths, deconstructing knowledge and questioning some “findings” in our research, as it has provoked me. So today, some questions emerge in order to demarcate a necessary movement of unsubmission to what was presented to me as a reference in my political and academic education and, consequently, what I have built as a researcher from hegemonic epistemologies.

How, when researching on gender discrimination in science, do I disregard the racialization present in the processes of knowledge construction? Why did I not take as a foundation, in these studies, the attentive look at the intersection between gender, race, class and sexuality? Why, in imagining myself as part of my studies (since I investigated female researchers, I became one), did I not bother to think about my whiteness and the privileges that flowed from it? How could I not perceive that the feminist epistemologies

with which I dialogued were somehow a field of hegemony among the endless disputes and conflicts in feminist theories? How can I disregard feminist thoughts that are not white, Latin American, Caribbean, African, Asian, oceanic? Why were these thoughts always seen as “other glances,” different, alternative, and exotic? Why, until now, does the difficulty of access to these thoughts remain in the university, even in the field of feminist and gender studies?

It seems to me that the answer is not a simple one, but a way to reflect on it would be to think of the following fact: our way of producing knowledge is also constructed through the mediation of our institutional affiliations - the universities, which, based on the Westernizing and Eurocentric process of scientific research, make us believe that, as subjects inserted in a logic of competitive cooperation, we have as a condition for the recognition of our knowledge produced, to take as reference the thoughts of consecrated thinkers.

It is no mere coincidence that we do not know about the thought *Ianomâmi*, *Guarani*, *Aymara* even though they are Brazilian - Latin American - and that our references from other continents are European, while the knowledge based on African epistemologies is not even considered as scientific, even though we are aware of the influence of peoples of this continent in the constitution of Brazilian society, which still rests on the myth of racial democracy.

Disobediently unfinished notes

I've been thinking a lot about how to “learn to unlearn”, how to put epistemic disobedience into practice in my research, my dialogues and militant practices. The decolonial proposal (here I highlight the thought of Maria Lugones) presented me with some category constructions that have populated my ideas for a theoretical, methodological, ethical and political-investigative understanding.

First, there must be the understanding that the decolonial lens, facing the colonial oppression ← → resistance, proposes the commitment of our knowledge with the strengthening of resistance. But how can we contribute to this resistance to coloniality if we cannot even identify it in the realities where we place our research, even when we understand them as political practices? What would be resistance? For Lugones (2014):

Resistance is the tension between subjection (the education/information of the subject) and active subjectivity, that minimal notion of agency necessary

for the relation oppression ← → resistance to be an active relation, without appeal to the maximal sense of agency of the modern subject. The subjectivity that resists often is expressed infrapolitically, rather than in a public policy, which is easily situated in public contestation. Legitimacy, authority, voice, meaning and visibility are denied to oppositional subjectivity. The infrapolitics marks the return to the inside, in a policy of resistance, towards the liberation. It shows the potential that the oppressed communities have among themselves to constitute meanings that refuse meaning and social organization, structured by power. In our colonized, racially gended and oppressed existences, we are also different from what the hegemonic makes us. This is an infrapolitic victory. If we are exhausted, completely taken up by micro and macro mechanisms and by the circulation of power, “liberation” loses much of its meaning or ceases to be an intersubjective issue. (p. 940)

“Following” the processes of resistance to coloniality, inspired by decolonial feminism, is about perceiving and thinking about the concreteness of “historicized and incarnate intersubjectivity”, is to speak of “a relational entity that resists”. What we could, depending on our theoretical-political “alignment”, classify as “primitive”, “ignorant”, “strange”, “rare” or even “unknowable” actions can be expressions of resistance. We need to change the lenses through which we look at a reality that is pluriverse.

Resistance lies in “be-ing” and “be-ing in relation” (Lugones, 2014). Resistance exposes fractures in coloniality. We must look at these “fractured locus” and bet that our research can contribute to a “coalition movement” towards change.

It is by betting on this movement of coalition in the difference between feminist epistemologies constructed as subalterns, that I have begun my quest to reconstruct my perspective, understanding my place of speech: the oppressions that permeate my trajectory as a female researcher from Brazil's Northeastern region, but also the privileges of whiteness and cissexuality, which at the same time favored me in my academic journeys but also made it difficult for me to see intersectionality as essential for the feminist critique of science.

I have been researching women in science in contexts in the Brazilian Northeast for a little over a decade. In these researches, in search of a dialogue with established scientists in their fields, I found white, cissexual, heterosexual women coming from more affluent social classes (Matias Santos, 2016). Faced with this fact, what is set is: could I, after being led by these non-hegemonic feminist epistemic drifts, remain submissive to coloniality? I could. Not only could I,

but staying obedient and not having to go through the effort of unlearning would be to keep myself in a “less uncomfortable” position¹².

I think that the contraposition to coloniality, in its necessary invitation to epistemic disobedience, is a great contribution of decolonial feminism to studies on gender and science in Brazil. That is because such a position means understanding that there is no possibility of constructing an effective feminist critique of sexism or cisheterossexism without understanding these oppressions in their articulation - and inseparability - with racism in capitalism. The feminist critique must not disregard the fact that some subjects, concepts and theories are now recognized and consecrated at the expense of epistemic practices.

Who are the people who devote themselves to the scientific field? In what institutions were they formed? In which institutions do they act? To consecrate themselves, what theories and concepts do they use? The subjects recognized as great scientists have their research based on what epistemic basis? Who is absent in the production of scientific and technological knowledge? How is the process of producing absences of blacks, indigenous people, transsexuals and the poor in academic spaces? Who is present but invisible? Who has access to most of the public resources for research? How to build a scientific center and periphery in Brazil? How is Brazil situated in the global scientific scenario? Faced with an uneven and epistemic scenario, how do you express resistance to coloniality in the daily scientific work?

Finally, many unanswered questions could still be raised in this text, since it was written as a first attempt to organize thought in the process of destabilization provoked by the decolonial proposal. Seeing before me a challenging and uncertain path, epistemic disobedience seems to be what will guide me. And, in the absence of conclusions, I will conclude this writing not with my speech, but that of Grada Kilomba - an inspiration for insubordination:

In order to decolonize knowledge, we must understand that we all speak from specific times and places, from specific realities and stories. There are no neutral speeches. When white academics claim to have a neutral and objective discourse, they are not acknowledging that they also write from a specific place, which, of course, is neither neutral nor objective, nor universal, but dominant. They write from a place of power. There's this anecdote: a black woman says she's a black woman, a white woman says she's a woman, a white man says he's a person. Whiteness, like other identities in power, remains nameless. It is an absent center, an identity that stands at the center of everything, but such centrality is not recognized

as relevant, because it is presented as a synonym for human. In general, white people do not see themselves as white, but as people. Whiteness is felt as the human condition. However, it is precisely this equation that ensures that whiteness remains an identity that marks others, remaining unmarked. And believe me, there is no more privileged position than just being the norm and normalcy. Decolonizing knowledge means creating new configurations of knowledge and power. So if my words seem too preoccupied to narrate positions and subjectivity as part of the discourse, it is worth remembering that theories are not universal or neutral, but always located somewhere and always written by someone, and that this someone has a history. (Kilomba, 2016, p. 17).

Notes

- 1 Matias Santos, V. (2012) *Mulheres e homens na política de ciência e tecnologia*. Fortaleza: Ed. UECE/Edmeta.
- 2 I observed the permanence of disciplinary fields constructed as “masculine niches” or “feminine niches” and more: the areas of knowledge that garner the greatest resources of Brazilian scientific policy are those constructed as “to/for/by men”. Thus, if on the one hand women already represent a majority of enrollments in Brazilian higher education, on the other hand, they still find it more difficult to reach higher hierarchical levels of the research career (Matias Santos, 2010). As an example of this expression of gender discrimination, we have the fact that, among researchers with Research Productivity Grant 1A of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development - CNPq, women have, over the period from 2001 to 2015, an average of 23.3% of participation compared to the high average percentage of male scholars (76.7%) (Programa Mulher & Ciência, 2015). Data retrieved from <http://cnpq.br/estatisticas1/>
- 3 Here I am referring to the thoughts of American feminists such as Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway, Judith Butler, and Londa Schiebinger; and European feminists such as Alicia Puleo, Cynthia Cockburn, Michelle Perrot, Danielle Kergoat, among others.
- 4 In order to understand the differences and theoretical-political disputes between decolonial and postcolonial thoughts, as well as the organization and construction of distinct groups and their specific proposals, see: Ballestrin, L. (2013). América Latina e o giro decolonial. *Revista Brasileira de Ciência Política*, 1, 89-117.
- 5 Statement of Alejandro De Oto, in the article: Pensamiento descolonial/decolonial. CECIES - Proyecto diccionario del pensamiento alternativo II. Retrieved from <http://www.cecies.org/articulo.asp?id=285>
- 6 According to Quijano (1992), colonialism, as an experience of direct domination that has apparently already been overcome, has imperialism as its successor, which is “an association of social interests between the dominant groups (social classes or “ethnicities”) of countries unequally placed in a articulation of power, rather than an imposition from the outside” (p. 447).

- 7 “The new institutions of global capital, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), as well as military organizations such as NATO, the intelligence agencies and the Pentagon, all conformed after the Second World War and of the supposed end of colonialism, keep the periphery in a subordinate position “ (translated from Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 13).
- 8 María Lugones (2014) considers as “non-modern” “forms of organizing the social, the cosmological, the ecological, the economic and the spiritual” (p. 935). The modernity denies this existence by robbing them of the validity and coexistence in the world of modernity, and of denying the challenging existence of other worlds with different ontological presuppositions. The difference between modern and non-modern becomes -in the modern perspective - a colonial difference, a hierarchical relationship in which the non-modern is subordinate to the modern. But the exteriority of modernity is not premodern” (p. 943).
- 9 “What is a nuclear family? The nuclear family is a gender-based family par excellence. As a single-family home, it is centered on a subordinate woman, a patriarchal husband, and daughters and sons. The structure of the family, conceived as having a conjugal unity in the center, lends itself to the promotion of gender as a natural and inevitable category, because within this family there are no transversal categories devoid of it.” (Oyèwùmí, 2004, p. 4).
- 10 “This indicates, on the one hand, that gender exists, but in a different way from that which it assumes in modernity, and on the other hand it indicates that when this colonial/modernity intrudes the community’s genre, it modifies it dangerously” (Segato, 2012, p. 118).
- 11 I would like to emphasize Kimberle Crenshaw’s (2002, p. 177) contribution: “Using an intersecting metaphor, we will initially make an analogy in which the various power axes, ie race, ethnicity, gender, and class constitute the avenues that structure the social, economic and political lands. Through them, the dynamics of disempowerment move. These routes are sometimes defined as distinct and mutually exclusive axes of power; racism, for example, is distinct from patriarchy, which in turn is different from class oppression. In fact, such systems often overlap and cross, creating complex intersections in which two, three or four axes intersect. Racialized women are often positioned in a space where racism or xenophobia, class and gender meet. Consequently, they are bound to be affected by the heavy flow of traffic on all these routes. Racialized women and other groups marked by multiple oppressions, positioned at these intersections by virtue of their specific identities, must negotiate the ‘traffic’ flowing through the crossings. This becomes a very dangerous task when the flow comes simultaneously from several directions. Sometimes damage is caused when the impact coming from one direction casts victims on the way to another opposite direction; in other situations the damages result from simultaneous collisions. These are the contexts in which intersectional damage occurs - the disadvantages interact with preexisting vulnerabilities, producing a different dimension of disempowerment”.
- 12 Here, I chose the expression “less uncomfortable” rather than “more comfortable” because it grasps that, even in dialogue with hegemonic feminist epistemologies, the questioning of “scientific authority” through feminist critique is itself a task whose mark is the discomfort.

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Vivian Matias dos Santos is an assistant professor of the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco - UFPE. She is the coordinator of HYPATIA - Nucleus of Studies and Research on Genres, Sciences and Cultures (UFPE). She has a PhD in Sociology from the Universidade Federal do Ceará - UFC. She holds an undergraduate degree in Social Work and an Academic Master in Public Policy and Society from the Universidade Estadual do Ceará - UECE. She has had experience in scientific research in the area of Sociology, with emphasis on gender and feminist studies, working mainly in the following subjects: science, science and technology, feminist epistemologies, violence and human rights.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2380-1778>

Adress: Av. dos Funcionários, s/n - CCSA, 1o. Andar, Departamento de Serviço Social - Cidade Universitária/PE, Brasil. CEP 50.740-580

E-mail: vivianmsa@yahoo.com.br