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TRANSLATION

Gender and Coloniality: From Low-Intensity Communal Patriarchy to High-Intensity Colonial-Modern Patriarchy

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Abstract

This essay collects four decades of my own reflections, as an anthropologist and feminist, on gender and coloniality across various contexts in Latin America. It also highlights the decolonial methodology and vocabulary that I have had to develop in my various roles as scholar, public intellectual, and expert witness over the years. Briefly, what I present here is a decolonial feminist perspective that argues for the existence of a patriarchal political order in communal societies before colonization. Yet, in my view, precolonial gender has a dual structure that is plural in essence and differs markedly from the binary gender structure of colonial-modern societies, which works in terms of a One and its marginalized others. As I argue, the capturing and transformation of precolonial dual gender structures by the modern gender system exacerbates inequality, increases violence against women, and disempowers them politically. For that reason, I speak of "low-intensity" and "high-intensity" patriarchal systems.

I want to share with you some questions inspired by my reflection on the practices of resistance that flow against the tide of a world totalized by the order of coloniality: Where are cracks being made today that destabilize the matrix of the coloniality of power?[1] How to talk about these cracks? And what role do gender relations play in such processes? To share my answers to these questions, I must first recount two of my experiences participating in feminist struggle as an anthropologist. The first was my involvement in theorizing the notorious issue of femicides in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. The second was my work accompanying Brazil's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) during their workshops on gender violence for indigenous women. These experiences enabled me to perceive how gender relations are historically modified by colonial intrusion, as well as by the matrix of coloniality crystallized and permanently reproduced by the state. Thus, to present to you my current understanding

of the intersection between gender and coloniality, I must take you on a journey that follows the sequence of discoveries that brought me to said understanding. In doing so, I also hope to convey the decolonial underpinnings of my own academic practice.

Anthropology on Demand: Toward an Inversion of the Direction of Questioning

I call my methodology "ethnographic listening."[2] I am an anthropologist by training—an occupation that in some circles and some villages has nearly become a slur because it practices distancing and estrangement like no other discipline. Santiago Castro-Gómez aptly called such distancing and estrangement "zero-point hubris" (Castro-Gómez 2005), and we can say that anthropology's current state of disciplinary retreat verges on fundamentalism. So, how did I reach the decolonial path from within the academy? Well, by being asked, over time, to use my academic toolkit in an inverted form that I ultimately decided to call *anthropology on demand*. Anthropology on demand works by inverting the traditional direction of questioning: it produces knowledge that answers the questions of those who classically stand as the "objects" of observation and research. I engaged in this practice inadvertently at first, and then in a theoretically reflexive way (Segato 2006). More specifically, my commitment to decoloniality, and my particular understanding of it, stem from the difficult work of responding to the demands to theorize gender violence in Mexico and Brazil.

I will introduce my analysis through a brief review of how I responded to those demands, and I will also explain how they led me to a situated understanding of the set of relationships structured by the order of coloniality. Responding to those demands compelled me to construct arguments and formulate concepts that dismantle and substitute some schemes and categories that have been anthropological staples for a long time. As we will see, this task forced me to recognize the inadequacy, even obsolescence, of concepts like culture, cultural relativism, tradition, and premodernity.

Although I do not have the space here to give a detailed account of my progressive loss of vocabulary, I outline some results from this search for a new set of concepts that would enable me to create arguments capable of responding to the requests addressed to me as an anthropologist and human rights thinker and activist. I want to make clear that my search for new concepts was not merely out of voluntariness but, rather, argumentative need. I would also like to forewarn that my contribution here is neither exegetical nor systematizing, and least of all programmatic: it is practical. More specifically, it is a theoretical elaboration intended to give ammunition to a contentious form of anthropological practice that I have been developing over the years. The goal of this contentious practice is to provide data and analyses with which to build arguments in support of a wronged party during litigation, public hearings, and other disputes.

Femicide: A Symptom of the Barbarism of Modern Gender

In 2003, I was summoned to help make intelligible the frequent and extremely cruel murders of women taking place at the northern border of Mexico in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. These are the crimes known as Ciudad Juarez femicides. They represent a novelty, a transformation, of gender-based violence linked to new types of war and *para-state violence*.[3] After working on the Ciudad Juarez femicides, I collaborated with women's organizations in the Northern Triangle of Central America and wrote about these new forms of war that weaponize women's bodies (Segato 2018a; 2018b; 2018c).

Today we are witnessing the frightening development of newfound methods of assault toward female and feminized bodies. This cruelty expands without limits.[4] The clearest examples in our continent are Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico, though there is also the tragic continuation of Rwanda's horrors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the DRC, doctors already use the label "vaginal destruction" for the type of attack that often kills its victim. In El Salvador, between the years 2000 and 2006, a period of supposed peacebuilding, homicides of men increased by 40%, whereas homicides of women surged by 111%, almost three times as much as those of men. In Guatemala, during the restoration of democratic rights between 1995 and 2005, homicides of men increased by 68% whereas those of women rose by 144%, more than doubling the upsurge in homicides of men. In Honduras, the difference is greater still: between 2003 and 2007, the increase in homicides of men was 40% whereas the increase in homicides of women was 166% (Carcedo 2010, 40–42). The violence unleashed on feminized bodies manifests itself in unprecedented forms of bodily destruction, and in the trafficking and commercialization of what these bodies can offer. A predatory occupation of feminized bodies is practiced in our current apocalyptic epoch, plundering everything in its wake.

Through my decade-long involvement in the workshops that Brazil's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) put together for indigenous women across Brazil, I noticed too that cruelty toward women increases as modernity and the market expand, annexing new regions. Thus, despite the growing deployment of legal measures in response to what became known as "women's human rights" after the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, we can undoubtedly speak today of a growing barbarism of modern gender, or what some people already call "gendercide."

The False Contradiction between Indigenous Peoples' Right to Difference and the Rights of Women and Children

In 2006, FUNAI began offering workshops whose aim was to inform indigenous women about the recently sanctioned Maria da Penha Law against domestic violence.[5] I accompanied FUNAI on these workshops, which led me to work on the issue of how to defend indigenous women from the growing violence that they faced from both the white world and the indigenous men within their homes. The dilemma was: how do we make use of rights afforded by the state without fostering an increasing dependence on a permanently colonizing state? After all, the state's historical project cannot coincide with the project of restoring and protecting communal autonomy and social ties. Furthermore, it is contradictory to assert that communities have the right to autonomy, while simultaneously asserting that it is the state that produces the laws upon which vulnerable minorities within those communities must rely when harmed.

I claim, then, that the state offers with one hand what it has already stolen with the other on its way to the colonial-modern regime of individual citizenship. That is, the state provides a law that protects women from violence, but these forms of violence would not have been possible had the traditional institutions and communal ties that protected women not been destroyed in the first place. In other words, modernity tries to develop and administer the antidote for the venom it injects. The institution of the modern state in contemporary Latin American republics, a direct heir to the colonial administrations overseas, has as its permanent goal to colonize and intervene. States weaken autonomy, disrupt institutional life, tear the communal fabric, and create dependency. Again: while with one hand the state may offer a version of modernity

based on a critical egalitarian discourse, with the other it has already introduced a version of modernity based on liberal-capitalist instrumental reason and racism that subjects nonwhite men to emasculation. I will return to these issues and their consequences for women later on.

Contentious Anthropology: The Community before the State and State-Afforded Rights

Defending the village-world entails confronting dilemmas. The debate about the supposedly widespread practice of infanticide among indigenous communities—a sham that has been put on by those who hope to roll back indigenous peoples' aspirations to respect and autonomy—stands as a paradigmatic example of the dilemmas we must face in defending the village-world and its values.[6] Analyzing the dilemmas that arise when protecting and promoting the village-world vis-à-vis the state-world takes us directly to the question of gender prior to colonial-modern intrusion. These forms of gender that predate colonial-modern gender persist at the margins and folds of colonial modernity: they remain in tension with the ever-expanding world of national states, resisting incorporation into the canon of colonial modernity and universal citizenship.

What we learn from the extreme case of indigenous infanticide is that in a juridical environment dominated by the colonial episteme and where the discourse of universal human rights maintains hegemony, there is no possibility of defending autonomy in terms of culture, that is, by appeal to relativism and the right to difference. It is impossible to argue that autonomy be restored to societies that have been colonized and kept under severe control for almost 500 years when some of these societies' norms and practices contradict sensitive human and state-afforded rights such as children's rights. Furthermore, public discourse lacks the complexity, pluralism, or communicational skill necessary to deal fairly with the nation's diversity. This is why colonizers' weapon of choice to affirm their moral superiority and civilizing duty is to launch accusations that the rights of a vulnerable subgroup within a minority—women and children, for example—are being transgressed.

It is thus strategically unfeasible to defend autonomy in terms of cultural relativism within the context of state domination and the discursive hegemony of universal human rights.[7] Instead, to defend autonomy we must substitute relativistic and right-to-difference arguments for arguments based on what I have called *historical pluralism*. The collective subjects amid that plurality of historical journeys are *peoples*, each with internal deliberative autonomy to produce their own historical path, even as they are in contact—as they have always been—with other peoples' experiences and processes.[8]

A people, according to my perspective, is not defined by a cultural patrimony—conceived as substantive, stable, permanent, and fixed, or as a crystallized episteme—but should instead be seen as a historical vector. Each culture and its patrimony is, in turn, perceived as the distillation of a historical process; as sediment from an accumulating historical experience that carries on indefinitely. The cumulative character of that sediment becomes concrete in what we perceive as use, custom, and other notions that seem fixed and repetitive, and which the anthropological notion of culture then captures, stabilizes, and posits as its object of study. Yet, as any ethnographer who returns to their field site ten years later will tell you, the appearance of stability is a mirage, and custom is nothing but history in progress.

Thus, we can perceive that customs can and do change constantly. The permanence of a people does not depend on repeating certain practices or holding certain ideas

fixed. So we can do away with such constraints on the notion of identity and reformulate it in connection to the idea of a people as a historical vector: a people is a collective that sees itself as stemming from a common past and advancing toward a common future. It is a fabric that does not dispense with conflicts of interest, or antagonisms in ethical sensitivities and political positions, but shares a history nonetheless. This perspective leads us to substitute the expression "one culture" for the expression "one people," where the latter is the living subject of a particular history in the midst of confluences and exchanges that design an interhistoricity rather than an interculturality. What characterizes this collective subject, this people, is not a stable cultural heritage with fixed contents but its members' self-perception of sharing a common past and a common future despite internal dissent and conflict.

What is a people, then? A people is the project of sharing a common history. When the history that was being woven collectively—like the weaving of a tapestry in which the threads converge and branch off to create figures—is interrupted by an external force, this collective subject will try to pick up the threads again, make knots, suture its memory, and continue. When a people engage in this process, we can say that history has been restored to them. The restoration of history to a people involves returning to them the capacity to weave their own historical path, so that they may resume tracing the interrupted figures, weaving them to the present and projecting them into the future.

In cases of disruption, what would be the best role for the state to play? Despite its permanently colonial relation to the territories it administers, a good state would restore communal self-jurisdiction, promote the reconstruction of social ties, and guarantee internal deliberation, rather than impose its laws. Below, I explain how these necessary features of a people become suppressed because of state intervention, leading to deleterious changes in gender relations. Creating and sustaining decolonial cracks within the state's matrix is only possible to the extent that communities regain their self-jurisdiction and capacity for deliberation, which is nothing other than the restoration of history to a people so that they can pursue their own historical project.

We have thus departed from the cultural-relativist argument without impairing the methodological procedure that, by relativizing, enables us to understand the point of view of the other. We part ways strategically, even though indigenous peoples themselves have often resorted to relativism (with some perverse consequences, as I discuss below). The relativist argument must give way to the historical pluralism argument, which is simply a nonculturalist variant of relativism, yet one immune to the fundamentalist tendencies inherent in culturalism. Rather than having a fixed cultural horizon, each people weaves its history via debate and internal deliberation, digging into the inconsistencies of its cultural discourses, making the most of their contradictions, and choosing between alternatives that may be dormant but are already present in the "culture" and become live in response to the ideas that circulate in the surrounding world. A people interact with and within the universe of the nation, where the latter is defined as an alliance between peoples (An-Na'im 1995). Given our currently precarious situation, one where state agencies and religious groups threaten to impose strict surveillance on the village, the only viable strategy is to substitute cultural relativism for a more defensible argument based on historical pluralism (a pluralism of historicities that are always open, in flux, and in exchange with one another).

The dilemmas that arose in this complex scenario forced me to put into practice a *contentious anthropology* that led me to suggest the following terms: a people as the *subject of a history* rather than as a *cultural entity*, *historical pluralism* instead of *cultural*

relativism, and *interhistoricity* rather than *interculturality*.[9] These are, I believe, more adequate terms for thought and action within a critical, liberatory project. My goal was not to innovate or to introduce neologisms. I do not think that the earlier conceptions of these terms must be eliminated, nor do I advance such a proposal. Rather, I argue that these earlier terms be used with care so as to avoid culturalism's tendency toward fundamentalism, which has been a problem for anthropology and activism despite their best efforts to the contrary.

The State-World and the Village-World

We must consider a question: after the long process of European colonization, the establishment of the pattern of coloniality, and the deepening of the modern order at the hands of the independent republics—many of them equally or even crueler than the colonial administrations overseas—could the state suddenly withdraw? Although coloniality is a matrix that orders the world hierarchically and in a stable way, this matrix has an internal history. There is a history to how the episteme of the coloniality of power (with race as its classifier) was installed, and there is a history to the idea of race within that episteme. Likewise, there is a history to gender relations within the very matrix of patriarchy. These histories respond to the expansion of the tentacles of the modernizing state within the space of the nation, entering with its institutions in one hand, and the market in the other, tearing the communal fabric, bringing chaos, and introducing profound disarray into the structures that existed there and into the cosmos itself. One of the distortions that accompanies this process is the intensification of the hierarchies that existed in the pre-intrusion communal order. Once such disorder has been introduced, is it possible or desirable to suddenly remove the state?

The village-world is an arrangement that precedes colonial intrusion, a surviving fragment that maintains some of the characteristics of the world prior to colonial intervention. We do not have the words to speak of that world. And we must not describe it as premodern if we hope to avoid suggesting that the village-world is simply a stage that precedes modernity and heads inexorably toward it. These village-worlds kept on walking alongside the world intervened upon by colonial modernity. Yet when they were put under the strain of colonization, the influence of the metropole and the republic exacerbated the hierarchies already within them: those of caste, status, and gender as a type of status. These turned authoritarian and perverse.

Can we live decolonially within the state and make it act in ways that aid the reconstitution of communities? Can we make the state re-institute self-rule and, thereby, communities' own history? This is an open question about our current situation, which can be described as an in-between world because all that really exists are midpoints, interfaces, and transitions between the state-world and the village-world, between the colonial-modern order and the pre-intrusion order. Our in-between world involves exchanges of benign and malign influences between the village-world and the state-world. Both the village-world and the state-world infiltrate each other in deleterious and beneficial ways.

When the village is penetrated by instrumental modernity, the logic of the market, and certain aspects of representative democracy—which inevitably attract and co-opt community leaders or *caciques*—the in-between world thereby created is destructive. But when the modern discourse of equality circulates in the village, the in-between world thus created is beneficial. This is confirmed by the fact that women often turn to these discourses. Likewise, the village's status-based ranking and family-based

solidarity harms the public sphere by making it corporate in structure and creating corporate kinship networks. Conversely, when communal solidarity enters the modern order, it creates positive communal ties and fosters the practice of reciprocity.

A role for the state would then be to restore to the people their self-jurisdiction and the weft of their history that had been expropriated by the process and order of colonial modernity. The state should do this while allowing the egalitarian discourse of modernity to enter communal life. In doing so, the state would contribute to the healing of the community fabric torn by coloniality, and to the re-establishment of collective life with forms of rank and power that are less perverse than those resulting from hybridization with the colonial and republican orders.

Let us also remember that there are in-between worlds of blood relative to *mestizaje*, and that these pull in disparate directions. There is an in-between world of mestizaje as *whitening* that has been ideologically constructed as the kidnapping of nonwhite blood into "whiteness," a co-opting process that progressively dilutes the blackness and indigeneity in the continent's whitened *criollo* world. Conversely, there is an in-between world of *darkening* constructed as the hosting of white blood by nonwhite blood in the process of rebuilding the indigenous and Afro-descendant worlds, aiding in their demographic reconstitution. Both constructions are clearly ideological, since their biology is the same. However, they correspond to two opposing historical projects. The second project reformulates *mestizaje* as the resurfacing of nonwhite blood after centuries of underground flux, cutting through white blood to re-emerge in the broad processes of indigenous and black resurgence currently underway in our continent. *Mestizos* thus come to learn that they carry the history of black and indigenous people within them (Segato 2010a).

Duality and Binarism: Verisimilitude and the Infiltration of Precolonial Gender by "Egalitarian" Colonial-Modern Gender

I want to speak now of how colonial-modern gender relations infiltrated the world of the village. Something similar has been pointed out by Julieta Paredes with her formulation of the "junction of patriarchies" (Paredes 2010, 71). When we compare the process of colonial and state intrusion with the purported ideal order of colonial modernity, we illuminate the village-world while at the same time revealing aspects of the state-world that are usually opaque to us. Such blind spots are due to our own immersion in the civic religion of our world. I also want to highlight that analyzing each world's gender system reveals contrasts between their respective patterns of life in every arena. This is because gender relations are ubiquitous and omnipresent in social life, despite their classification as a "particular" or "special" topic in sociological and anthropological discourse.

I propose that we read the interaction between the pre-intrusion world and colonial modernity in light of the transformations in the former's gender system. In other words, the point is not merely to introduce gender as a "special" topic within decolonial critique, or as one aspect of the colonial pattern of domination. Rather, the point is to give gender full status as a theoretical and epistemic category—one capable of illuminating every other transformation imposed on community life by the new colonial-modern order.

The above discussion brings us to the core of a recent debate in feminism. I will situate my view in contrast to two other feminist currents. The first is Eurocentric feminism, which asserts that the problem of patriarchal domination is universal and does not differ much across contexts. Thus, from this point of view, it would be possible

to pass on the advances of modernity in the field of Western women's rights to non-white, indigenous, and black women from colonized continents. Eurocentric feminism upholds European and Europeanized women's self-avowed moral superiority, authorizing them to intervene with their civilizing, modernizing, colonial "moral" mission—the so-called and well-known *mission civilisatrice* of the West. This view is inevitably ahistorical and antihistorical. By denying difference, it represents a *foreclosure* of history that traps it within the very slow, almost stagnant time of Patriarchy, and, above all, this view obstructs recognition of the radical effects of colonial-modern time in the history of gender relations.[10] In other words, Eurocentric Westernizing feminism fails to see that patriarchy is a historical development, even though it flows extremely slowly within historical time. Although race and gender were installed by epistemic ruptures in different epochs—for race, it was conquest and colonization, for gender, it was the history of the human species—both go through historical transformations within their nevertheless stable epistemes of origin.

The second feminist view, which lies on the other extreme, is that of authors like María Lugones and Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí who claim that gender did not exist in the precolonial world (Oyèwùmí 1997; Lugones 2007). In 2003, I published a critical analysis of Oyèwùmí (1997) where I revisit a text I wrote in 1986. I had expressed there a similar perplexity over gender in Yoruba civilization, in the form I encountered it in my anthropological work in Brazil, but reached different conclusions from Oyèwùmí's (Segato 1986/1997; 2003).

There is a third feminist view, the one I endorse here, which is backed by substantial historical and ethnographic evidence proving the existence of gender nomenclatures in tribal societies from Africa and the Americas. This view recognizes the existence of a patriarchal structure in those societies; however, because the structure is different from Western gender, I describe it as a low-intensity patriarchy. Additionally, this view also denies that Eurocentric feminism could be efficacious or appropriate to deal with the problems of low-intensity patriarchy. This is the position of feminist thinkers connected to the Chiapas process, who stand as a paradigmatic example of how to resolve the tensions that occur when fighting for indigenous autonomy while engaged in an internal struggle demanding better living conditions for women. Indigenous women frequently denounce the blackmail threats they receive from indigenous authorities who pressure them to put off their demands as women because of the risk of fragmenting the community in the fight for resources and rights (Gutiérrez and Palomo 1999; Cal y Mayor 2002; Hernández Castillo 2003; and Hernández and Sierra 2005).

Historical and ethnographic data on tribal worlds show that these had recognizable structures of difference and hierarchy similar to what we would call gender relations. These societies allot differential prestige to masculinity and femininity, and the positions are occupied by people we might call men and women. Despite the recognizable character of these gender positions, the tribal world allows for more transit and circulation between positions than modern Western gender permits. Indigenous peoples like Venezuela's Warao, Panama's Guna, Paraguay's Aché, Suriname's Trio, Brazil's Javaés, the pre-Columbian Incas, and many Native American peoples, Canadian First Nations, as well as all Afrodiasporic religions, have vocabularies and stable practices for what we may call transgender life or experience. These societies allowed what Westerners call same-sex marriages, and they had other forms of gender transitivity that the rigid, colonial-modern gender system disallowed. Two classic ethnographies about this aspect of indigenous societies in Latin America are Pierre Clastres's "The Bow and the Basket"

on gender among the Aché of Paraguay, and Peter Rivière's *Marriage among the Trio* (Clastres 1969; Rivière 1969).[11] Both of these works significantly precede the decolonial literature.

We can recognize in the pre-intrusion world elements of a construction of masculinity that has accompanied humanity for as long as the species has existed, something I call "the patriarchal pre-history of humanity" (Segato 2003). This prehistory is characterized by a very slow temporality, a *longue durée* that overlaps with evolutionary time. Such masculinity is constructed by subjects who must acquire it through initiation. The subject who hopes to acquire masculinity must face trials and even risk death, just like in the Hegelian master–slave allegory. This masculine subject must constantly orient himself toward masculinity, for he is always under the evaluative gaze of his peers. He must confirm and reconfirm his endurance and aggressiveness, as well as his capacity to dominate women and demand what I call "feminine tribute" (Segato 2003) from them, in order to demonstrate that he possesses the full assortment of powers—physical, martial, sexual, political, intellectual, economic, and moral—that would allow him to be recognized as a masculine subject.

What this shows is that gender exists in these worlds, although it is different from what we find in colonial modernity. Furthermore, when colonial modernity comes into contact with village gender, it brings about dangerous changes. Colonial modernity infiltrates the structure of relations in the village and reorganizes them from within, creating the illusion of continuity while transforming their meaning by introducing a new order ruled by different norms. This is why I mentioned verisimilitude in the section title: the nomenclatures persist, but they are reinterpreted according to a new modern order. This hybrid is truly fatal because previous hierarchical languages become hyperhierarchical after coming into contact with the modern discourse of equality. Let me explain why. First, there is an overinflation of men's importance within the community given their role as intermediaries with the external world—traditionally, the men of other houses and villages—because they must now mediate relations with the white administration. Second, men face emasculation and a loss of status when they venture outside of their community and confront the power of white administrators. Third, there is an overexpansion of the public sphere occupied ancestrally by men in the community, as well as a dismantling and privatization of the domestic sphere. As a consequence of all these, duality turns into binarism because men's sphere gets defined as the epitome of what is public and political, and it is set in opposition to women's sphere, which is depoliticized by being defined as private.

The village has always been organized according to status. It is divided into distinct spaces, each with its own rules, prestige differentials, and a hierarchical order inhabited by creatures whom we can call—generically and from the vantage point of modernity—men and women, given their assigned roles, labor, spaces, and ritual obligations. As several feminist authors have already pointed out, the discourse of colonial modernity, though egalitarian, hides within it an abyssal hierarchy created by a process that we might tentatively call the progressive totalization of the public sphere, or the progressive "totalitarianism" of the public sphere.[12] It is even possible to suggest that the public sphere is what continues and deepens the process of colonization today. Carole Pateman's category of the sexual contract is useful here: in the village-world the sexual contract is visibly exposed, whereas in colonial modernity the sexual contract is disguised by the language of the citizen contract (Pateman 1988).

Let me illustrate my point by narrating what happened when we tried to run the FUNAI Women's Office workshops at the villages. We were hoping to speak with

indigenous women about the growing violence against them, a problem that started making the news in Brasilia. Yet something typically happened, especially in those areas where "traditional" life is said to be better preserved and autonomy from the state is a deeply ingrained value (for example, the Xingu Indigenous Park in Mato Grosso): *caciques* and men made sure to show up and express that the state had nothing to discuss with their women. To support their argument, they invoked the seemingly plausible claim that "our world has always been this way" and that "the control we have over our women is the same we have always had." They support this statement, as I anticipated in the previous pages, with a culturalist—and therefore fundamentalist—argument in which it is assumed that culture has no history. Arlette Gautier calls this historical shortsightedness "the invention of customary law" (Gautier 2005, 697).

Our reply, a complex and delicate one, was: "yes and no." Although gender hierarchy has always existed in the village-world—or, at least, a prestige differential between men and women—the hierarchical arrangement also contained *difference*, and this difference is now threatened by the colonization and interference produced by the liberal notion of public space. The liberal notion of public space, though proclaiming the discourse of equality, turns difference into a problem. It speaks of "the problem of the other," and turns difference into something marginal and problematic. It banishes the other by turning them into a problem. This inflection on village gender, which was introduced by colonial modernity, results in the co-optation of men, the class ancestrally devoted to the tasks and roles of the public space.

Men's tasks have ancestrally included deliberating in the village's common spaces, going on hunting expeditions, contacting nearby or remote villages and peoples, and both waging war on and making peace with them. From the perspective of the village, the succeeding colonial administrations, both overseas and within national territory, are entities with which men negotiate, make agreements, wage war, and, more recently, obtain resources and rights that serve as assets in our times of identity politics. Thus, the ancestral masculine tribal position gets transformed through the task of relating to the powerful agencies that produce and reproduce coloniality. It is with men that colonizers waged war and made pacts, and it is with men that the colonial modern state does so too. According to Gautier, the choice to turn men into privileged interlocutors was deliberate and in the interest of colonization: "colonization involved a radical loss of political power for women, there where it existed, while at the same time colonizers negotiated with certain masculine structures, or invented them, in order to make allies" (718). Colonizers also promoted the "domestication" of women: a distancing and subjection that facilitated the colonial enterprise (690ff.; Assis Clímaco 2009).

The masculine position is thereby surreptitiously dislocated. Although the old nomenclature remains, the position has been transmuted, promoted to a higher rank, and strengthened by privileged access to resources and knowledge about the world of power. These changes in gender are disguised by the continuation of earlier nomenclatures. In other words, a rupture and reconstitution of the gender order takes place that bestows new content to each position while retaining the old names, signs, and rituals. Men return to the village claiming that they are what they have always been, but they are in fact operating in accordance with a new code. We could talk in terms of the ever-fertile metaphor of "body-snatching" from the Hollywood classic *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, or of Baudrillard's "perfect crime," for the change I mention is effectively hidden by a false resemblance to what was before or "verisimilitude."

We stand before the cast of genders acting out a drama not their own. The village-world's gender vocabulary has been captured by a different grammar. Women and the

village itself become externalized objects for the male gaze that has become infected, through contact and mimesis, with the maladies of distance and exteriority that characterize the exercise of power in the colonial modern world. Thus, men's position becomes simultaneously interior and exterior, having acquired the exteriority and objectifying capacity of the colonial gaze, which is simultaneously managerial and pornographic. I cannot discuss the issue at length here, but I want to suggest that sexuality is also transformed when a new morality—one that turns women's bodies into objects and includes notions of sin, sodomy, and so on—is introduced. So, colonial-modern exteriority—which includes the exteriority of scientific rationality: a managerial, cleansing exteriority that endeavors to purge difference as well as the "other," as Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo have discussed (Quijano 1992/2007; Mignolo 2000)—already has the pornographic character that I assign to the colonial gaze.

Alongside the overinflation of men's role in the village, these men are also emasculated before the white world, which puts them under stress and relativizes their masculine position by subjecting them to the dominion of the colonizer. These changes trigger violence because men are oppressed in the colonial scene and overempowered in the village, forcing them to exhibit their capacity for control in the village so as to restore the masculinity that was slighted outside. This holds for the entire universe of racialized masculinity, banished to the subordinate condition of racialized nonwhiteness by the colonial order.

In sum, it is not possible to uphold the view that patriarchy did not exist in precolonial society, since we see that precolonial men are divided between two loyalties: the loyalty to the patriarchal code, that compels them to bow down to the winner and abide by his rules, and the loyalty to his people: family, community, and culture. For that reason, it is possible to assert that the presence of patriarchal precolonial rule made men vulnerable to colonial intrusion and opened the doors to colonization. As anthropologist Ruth Landes has advanced in an old and forgotten text: in the war of conquest, men are the losers (Landes 1953).

The seizure of politics, that is, of all deliberation on the common good, by the installed and expansive public sphere, and the consequent privatization and marginalization of the domestic sphere, are also part of the colonization of pre-intrusion gender by modern gender. The exclusive ties between women that guided their solidarity and collaboration in rituals and in productive and reproductive labor are dismantled when domesticity gets encapsulated as "private life." For the domestic sphere and its inhabitants, these changes entail a complete collapse of their political value and ammunition, that is, of their capacity to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes that affect the entire community.

The rupturing of the ties uniting women, and the ending of their political alliances, had literally fatal consequences for them. Women became progressively more vulnerable to male violence, which was enhanced by the stress caused by the outside world. The compulsive confinement of the domestic space and the women who inhabit it led to increasing violence against them. It is essential to understand that these violent consequences are fully modern, that they are a product of modernity. And we must remember that the ever-expanding process of modernization is also an ongoing process of colonization.

In the same way that genocide, because of its rationality and systematicity, originates in modern times, femicide, understood as the quasi-mechanical practices that exterminate women, is only possible in the colonial-modern order, hence why I earlier spoke of the barbarism of modern gender. Femicides go unpunished because of the privatization

of domestic space, which has been relegated to a residual space outside the sphere of "major problems" and public interest (Segato 2010b). With the emergence of the grid constituted by the universal modern episteme and its institutions (the state, politics, rights, and science), the domestic sphere and the women who inhabit it become mere leftovers, marginal to the issues of general interest and universal importance.

Although it is true that several Amazonian and Chaqueño peoples restrict women's participation and speech in their village's public space—deliberation being the prerogative of men due to their strict division of sex roles—it is also well known that these men, as a rule, and often in a ritualized manner, suspend their parliamentary activities without having reached a conclusion in order to consult the women at home. On the next day, the assembly will continue only after having consulted the women's world, which speaks exclusively from the home. If this consultation does not take place, men will be harshly penalized. These are habitual occurrences in a visibly compartmentalized world where, despite the distinction between public and domestic space, politics cuts across both spaces. In the Andean world, the authority of the *mallku* is always dual: it involves a male and a female head, even though these two are ranked hierarchically. All community deliberations are attended by women, who either sit next to their male companions (not necessarily spouses) or form a group outside the room and send audible signals of approval or disapproval throughout the course of the debate. So, the public space and its actors do not have a monopoly on politics as in the colonial-modern world. On the contrary, domestic space is endowed with its own politicity because of the mandatory rule of informal consultation with this space where women's group interests are articulated.

Gender in the village-world constitutes a ranked duality where each term is endowed with full political and ontological existence, despite being unequal. There is no duality in the modern world, only binarism. Whereas the relationship within duality is complementary, the relationship within binarism is supplementary: one term supplements—rather than complements—the other. The supplement stands as a mere accessory to the main term. When one term becomes "universal" because it comes to represent the general interest, the initial hierarchy turns into an abyss where the "other" has no place. Thus, the binary structure is clearly different from the dual one. The dual structure is a structure of two, whereas the binary structure is a matrix of the One and its others.

According to the colonial-modern binary pattern, for any element to achieve ontological fullness, or plenitude of being, it must be purged of its radical difference or uniqueness and be equalized. In other words, it must be made commensurable according to a grid of universal reference or equivalence. Thus, any manifestation of otherness constitutes a problem that can only be remedied when sifted through the grid that breaks down and equalizes particularities and idiosyncrasies. The "Indian other," the "nonwhite other," and the woman must undergo a process that transforms their difference into a recognizable identity within the global pattern. Otherwise, they do not fit the neutral and aseptic environment of universal equivalence, of that which can be generalized and assigned universal worth and concern. In the modern world, only subjects —individual or collective—who have been filtered, processed, and transformed into the universal terms of the "neutral" sphere can acquire a political voice. Whatever cannot be processed according to that grid becomes excess (see my critique of multicultural identity politics in Segato 2007).

As others have explained, this sphere, this modern *agora*, has a native subject who can navigate it easily because he is its natural inhabitant. This subject created the rules

of citizenship to his image and likeness throughout the course of colonial-modern history. He is male, white, literate, a property owner, and *pater familias* (I use this term rather than heterosexual because his actual sexual life is unknown to us, but his "respectability" as head of family can be proved). Anyone aspiring to acquire his civic capability—the capability of embodying a public political identity—must transform themselves in his image (see West 1988; Warner 1990; Benhabib 1992; Cornell 1998; Young 2000).

Duality, as instantiated by gender duality in the indigenous world, is one variant of *multiplicity*. The "two" summarizes and epitomizes multiplicity. *Binarism*, which is characteristic of modernity, results from the episteme of the world of the One, which is based on purging and othering. The one and the two of indigenous duality are just one among many possibilities within multiplicity. And although the one and the two can be complementary, they are each ontologically complete and endowed with politicity despite being unequal in value and prestige. The second term within that hierarchical duality is not a problem that must be transformed through the grid of universal equivalence. It is also not conceived as what is left over from the process of transposing the one. Rather, the second term, the two, is fully *an other*, a *complete* and ontologically irreducible other.

In seeing this, we understand that the domestic sphere is an ontologically and politically complete space with its own politics and sociality. It is hierarchically inferior to the public sphere, yet capable of self-defense and self-transformation. Gender relations in this world constitute a *low-intensity patriarchy* when compared to the patriarchal relations imposed by colonialism and reinforced by colonial modernity. Without going into detail, I would like to draw attention to the well-known failure of prestigious international cooperation programs tackling gender injustice that fail precisely because of their universalist view that starts from a Eurocentric definition of "gender" and the relations it organizes. In other words, the evident fragility of such instances of international cooperation stems from their lack of sensitivity to the local categories where projects are undertaken. In both rural communities and indigenous villages, gender is dual, and so duality organizes their spaces, tasks, and the distribution of rights and responsibilities. It is duality that defines gendered collectives or communities. Hence, the communal fabric is divided into two groups, each with its own internal norms and modes of conviviality and association for productive, reproductive, and ceremonial tasks. Each group has its own politicity.

Generally, international cooperation projects formulated by European countries reveal how difficult it is to perceive the specificities of gender in the communal environment. Usually, projects aiming to foster gender equality incorrectly frame their work as being about empowering individual women or about producing equality between individual women and individual men. These projects' desired goal is to promote equality directly and without the mediation of local understandings of gender because gender equality is conceived as "equality of individuals" rather than "equality of gendered groups." By focusing on individuals, international cooperation programs designed to promote gender equality fail to be context-sensitive, that is, they fail to realize that their aim should be to promote the domestic sphere, and women as a collective, vis-à-vis the communal public sphere, and men as a collective. The actual goal of these programs should be to promote equality between women and men as collectives within a community. Only in this way can women gain prominence and take ongoing action within or outside their community while avoiding the risks of alienation and banishment.

The other major mistake that international cooperation programs, national public policies, and NGOs make is related to the notion of "gender mainstreaming" and its consequent strategy of "mainstreaming" the policies destined to remedy gender hierarchies. Basically, the error consists in assuming that some dimensions of communal life are of universal interest—the economy, social organization, political life, and so on—whereas other dimensions such as domestic life and women's lives represent only partial and particular interests.[13] The proposal to mainstream gender policies is based on the misguided idea that, for the village, public matters are akin to the "matters of universal concern" at the center of the colonial-modern public sphere, whereas domestic matters count only as particular interests. As a consequence of this misguided ranking, what needs to be mainstreamed are things thought to be of particular or partial interest, which are conceived as supplementary to the central issues of universal importance. Here we see, once again, the distortions that arise when modernity's institutions are Eurocentrically projected onto the institutions of the village-world. The attempt to mainstream issues of supposedly particular concern, like gender issues, so that they cut through "universal issues," is a glaring error when facing worlds that are not oriented by a Eurocentric colonial binarism. In the village-world, the political sphere may be more prestigious, but it is neither universal nor all-encompassing. Rather, just like the domestic sphere, it is one *part* of the whole. Both spaces are understood to be ontologically complete, and none can replace the other.

In addition to being individualistic, the modern world is the world of the One that casts all forms of otherness as a problem. The discipline of anthropology is proof of this because it was founded on the modern conviction that the "other" must be explained, translated, made commensurate, and processed by the rational operation that incorporates that "other" into the universal grid. What cannot be processed by this grid becomes a remainder that lacks reality and ontological plenitude; it is incomplete, irrelevant, discarded. Derridean deconstruction, which destabilizes the binary pair, is inapplicable and pointless within the logic of duality.

The transformation of duality—a variant of multiplicity—into the binarism of the universal, canonical, and "neutral" One with its marginal other, blocks movement between positions. Once the binary logic takes over, gender becomes rigidly fixed to the Western heterosexual matrix, creating the need for public policies that promote equality and sexual freedom while protecting people from homophobia and transphobia. Same-sex marriages were forbidden by colonial modernity, but they had been previously accepted by an ample number of indigenous peoples on the continent. Giuseppe Campuzano's extensive research on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century colonial chronicles and documents from the Andes shows that the colonial enterprise put intense pressure on the various forms of sexuality found among precolonial Andean civilizations (Campuzano 2006; 2009). In his archival evidence, Campuzano identifies norms and punishments created to incorporate said practices into the conqueror's binary heterosexual matrix, thereby imposing previously unknown notions of sin and spreading the conqueror's pornographic gaze.

We may thus conclude that many moral prejudices that human rights try to combat, which we now deem "custom" or "tradition," are actually modern prejudices. These prejudices, customs, and traditions belong to the pattern laid down by colonial modernity. In other words, homophobic "customs" and other harmful ideologies are in fact modern, and, again, we find that modernity presents a legal antidote for the evils it had itself introduced and continues to perpetuate. The straitjacket on identity is also a key feature of racialization, installed by the colonial process of modernity, that pushes

its subjects into fixed positions within the binary canon made up of the terms *white* and *nonwhite*. According to the new pattern, the second term becomes a mere "other": something anomalous, defective, peripheral, and marginal with respect to the first.

Another unfortunate outcome of this process is the reorganization of the cosmos and the earth—with all its animate and inanimate beings—into the binarism of the subject–object relationship in Western science. For many peoples facing a permanent, daily process of conquest and colonization, the struggle for rights and equitable or inclusive public policy is a feature of the modern world. Of course, my point is not to condemn these struggles but to help us understand that they belong to a modern paradigm, and that decolonial living entails making cracks in a territory totalized by binarism, possibly the most efficient instrument of colonial-modern power.

This is why, when I explained the Maria da Penha Law against Domestic Violence at the FUNAI Women's Office gender workshops, I would tell my indigenous women interlocutors that the state offers with one hand what it has already stolen with the other. When the binary world of the One and its marginal, peripheral others comes into contact with the world of multiplicity, it captures it and transforms it from within. This is a consequence of the pattern of the coloniality of power, which grants universal standing to one world and affords it greater influence over the other. What happens, more precisely, is that one world colonizes the other.

In this new dominant order, public space captures and monopolizes all deliberation and decision-making power related to the common good. Domestic space gets wholly depoliticized, in part because it loses its ancestral methods for influencing decisions made in the public space, and also because it gets "nuclearized," that is, encapsulated in the nuclear family and enclosed in privacy. The institution of the family adopts new norms of conjugal relationship that censure the extended ties that ran through domestic space (Abu-Lughod 1998; Maia 2011). This erosion of ties leads to the loss of a communal eye that oversees and evaluates people's behavior. Thus, the depoliticization of the domestic space renders it vulnerable and fragile. I recorded countless testimonies of the unusual forms of cruelty experienced by those who gradually lost the protection of communal vigilance over family life. In short, the authority, value, and prestige of women and their sphere of action crumbled.

The fall of the domestic sphere and the world of women from a position of ontological plenitude to that of a peripheral or marginal other has important gnoseological consequences too. For instance, although we perceive the ubiquity of gender in social life, we fail to grant it its rightful theoretical and epistemic status as a central category capable of illuminating all aspects of life. In contrast, the pre-intrusion world makes constant reference to duality in all symbolic spheres, thus showing that the gnoseological devaluation of gender is a nonexistent problem there.

What is most important to note here is that, in this context of change, nomenclatures are preserved and an illusion takes place: there is the false impression that the old order continues with names, formalities, and rituals that seem to endure, but said order is now ruled by a different matrix. This is an elusive, covert transition. The lack of clarity regarding the changes that have occurred makes women submit to men, unable to respond to men's frequent claim that "we have always been this way." Thus, an insidious form of manipulation is born. Men argue that if the gender hierarchy is modified, their struggle for continuity as a people will be undermined because their identity—as a form of political, cultural, and symbolic capital—will be damaged. Damaging identity would then weaken their people's demands for territories, resources, and rights (as resources).

Yet, in reality, colonization increased hierarchy in the village, aggravating inequality and boosting the rank of those already in power: old men, *caciques*, and men in general. As I explained, although it is true that ranking has always existed, and it is also true that gender relations involved unequal power and prestige, those inequalities grew larger as a result of colonial-state intervention and the introduction of the village to the colonial-modern order. *A mutation took place under the cloak of apparent continuity.* That is why one needs considerable analytical and rhetorical skill to dispel the illusion of historical depth characteristic of today's gender inequality, and to demolish the arguments that solidify men's authority and other hierarchies within the village. What we find here is a perverse strain of culturalism that leads to the growing fundamentalism in our current political culture, a process that got inaugurated with the fall of the Berlin Wall when Marxist debate became obsolete, turning politicized and essentialized identities into the only language of struggle (Segato 2007).

In sum, when we think that universalizing citizenship means replacing the hierarchy between men and women for a strictly equal relationship, we are in fact attempting to solve modernity's evils with modern solutions: the state offers with one hand what it had already stolen with the other. In contrast to the "different but equal" formula of modern activism, the indigenous world orients itself according to a formula that is hard for us to understand: "unequal *but* different." The indigenous formula posits a world characterized by multiplicity because the other—different and even inferior—does not constitute a problem to be fixed, since there is no imperative of commensurability in the village-world.

Here the in-between world of critical modernity may beneficially step in, supplementing ethnic authority with its egalitarian discourse and creating what some are already calling ethnic or communitarian citizenship. Such citizenship will be developed only through self-rule, that is, through the debate and deliberation of its members as they weave their own history. I want to conclude by recommending Ousman Sembene's extraordinary film *Mooladé*, which narrates how a group of women from a village in Burkina Faso struggled to eradicate the practice of infibulation. They fight from within the community, from its inner face, yet pierced, as always, by the surrounding world.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1 (all notes are translator's notes): the Spanish version of this article has been republished and updated a number of times. The version I translated here can be found in Segato 2015, 69–96. Any substantive changes in content and form between this English translation and the original were suggested and approved

by Rita Segato herself. I also want to highlight that Ramsey McGlazer's English translation of the book wherein this text appears will soon be published by Routledge. I thank McGlazer for several conversations where we standardized some of our terms, and I encourage the reader to turn to his translation of the book for a fuller understanding of Segato's thought.

2 Segato's notion of "ethnographic listening" stems from her reflections on psychoanalytic listening. For her reflections on anthropology and psychoanalysis, see "La célula violenta que Lacan no vio: un diálogo (tenso) entre la antropología y el psicoanálisis" [The violent cell Lacan missed: a (tense) dialogue between anthropology and psychoanalysis] in Segato 2003.

3 Segato uses the term *para-state* to describe the increasingly complex engagement in Latin America (and elsewhere) between criminal and state actors to further the accumulation of wealth and power by elites. Segato's concept of para-state violence encompasses a complex range of actors, including those typically conceived as nonstate actors like cartels and paramilitary organizations (which may act against the state or in collusion with it). It also includes state actors when they operate outside the realm of legality, for example, police forces when they engage in extrajudicial killings. Not only are the actors diverse, but so are the possible forms of violence as well as the norms regulating what Segato calls a "para-state sphere of control over life" (Segato 2018c, 198). For a longer treatment of the para-state and para-state violence, see Segato 2018a; 2018b; 2018c; 2020.

4 Segato's notion of cruelty refers not only to brutal or unfeeling actions but is specifically connected to her idea of a *pedagogy of cruelty* as "any act or practice that teaches, makes habitual, and programs a subject for transforming living things and their vitality into objects" (Segato 2018b, 11). See Segato 2018b for a longer discussion of cruelty.

5 The Maria da Penha Law introduced a number of measures, from longer sentences to the establishment of special courts and support institutions (such as women's shelters), to combat domestic violence in Brazil. For a more detailed description of the law and its impact, see Spieler 2011; Pasinato 2016.

6 For a more detailed discussion of the Brazilian debate on indigenous peoples and infanticide, see "Que cada pueblo teja los hilos de su historia: la colonialidad legislativa de los salvadores de la infancia indígena" [Let every people weave their history: the legislative coloniality of the saviors of indigenous infants] in Segato 2015.

7 What Segato denounces here is the hegemony of human rights as the only moral language, not their content or pragmatic importance. For a recent discussion on decolonial feminism and the peril in expecting or enforcing a single moral language, see Khader 2018; Khader 2021; McLaren 2021; Meyers 2021; Monque 2021.

8 The Spanish word I have translated as "peoples" is *pueblos*, not *gentes*.

9 *Contentious anthropology* is a term invented by Segato to highlight the political uses of anthropology in the contexts of litigation, legislation, and serving as an expert witness.

10 For a useful discussion of colonial modernity as a historical epoch with deep effects on social categorization, see Quijano and Wallerstein 1992 and "Aníbal Quijano y la perspectiva de la colonialidad del poder" [Anibal Quijano and the coloniality of power perspective] in Segato 2015.

11 The original text referred to Paraguay's *Guayaquís* and Panama's *Cuna*. These are the older names used for these peoples in many of the classic ethnographies.

12 What Segato alludes to here is the process by which the public sphere drains all politicity from other spheres, like the domestic one.

13 In more recent texts and interviews, the author summarizes this position as "the error of yielding to minoritization."

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