

# coloniality and feminist collusion: breaking free, thinking anew

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Feminist studies remains mired in coloniality. While the formal transfer from European empires to independent nation states appeared to mark a transition away from direct domination, rule and subjugation, continuities exist in the contemporary that have been strikingly reproduced through feminist alliances and loyalties with the new/old world order in line with the directives of capitalism, neoliberalism and nationalism. By positing that feminist studies has been both implicit and complicit in coloniality over time, this themed issue contests the notion of 'post'colonial as 'past'colonial, and instead recognises coloniality as the colonial past *and* present (Gregory, 2004). Thus, coloniality reflects a *longue durée* that requires a recognition not only of continuity but of epistemic violence and the ongoing hegemony of the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000, 2007). Sylvia Wynter (2003, p. 262) reminds us that the empirical outcomes of 'the rise of Europe' and its centring of itself within world civilisational narratives enabled and justified African enslavement, Latin American and other settler colonial projects of conquest and Asian subjugation. This is what Wynter (2003, p. 263) identifies as 'the master code of symbolic life and death', hinged on the notion of differential/hierarchical degrees of rationality based on distance or proximity to the apex of Western knowledge and power. Feminist studies, in its proximate positionality, like other academic fields, has been implicit and complicit with the modern episteme of coloniality by envisaging a feminism that can operate within the coloniality of power rather than viewing the dismantling of its tools and edifice as a necessary step for epistemic change. As Audre Lorde so resoundingly warns:

... survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support. (Lorde, 2007 [1984], p. 105)

We extend Lorde's argument by posing that feminist tools developed within the coloniality of power will never be able to bring about epistemic change. Some of the concepts embraced or critiqued by different trajectories within Western feminist scholarship, such as 'the family', 'patriarchy', 'equality',

'empowerment' and 'rights' deemed to be universal, require an excavation of a long and layered history of erasure, denial and silence in order to highlight the exclusionary foundations of Western feminist thought (Carby, 1982). The most blatant examples can be drawn from the annals and archives of Western feminist thought's own struggles to gain recognition through the coloniality of power during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a time when the European civilisational mission of capitalism fully utilised the arsenal of the master's tools through the creation of hierarchies of being and the exercise of racial terror through systems of slavery, other forms of unfree labour and subjugation.

This is not an excavational project to uncover 'unheard voices' or to include the 'Global South' as a corrective to the hegemony of 'Northern' scholarship (Roberts and Connell, 2017), nor is it a turn to subalternity. Instead, it is a call to name, recognise and then dismantle the apparatus of coloniality so deeply embedded within Western feminism's registers in order to move towards epistemic change. Feminist analyses and perspectives are increasingly central to structures that produce violence and harm globally, including, for example, the War on Terror, which has capitalised on the women's rights agenda as a justification for political and military intervention. However, the denial of feminist collusion or complicity with systems of oppression embedded in the coloniality of power points to the imperative of questioning feminism as a universalising project. The contemporary context is replete with examples of feminist organisations utilising the master's tools in their conceived feminist practice; for example, the Violence Against Women (VAW) agenda has been adopted by feminist organisations working alongside the powers of the state, which violently polices, incarcerates and kills targeted and racialised communities (Puar, 2017). 'Zero-tolerance' gender-based violence policies, for instance, feed into carceral regimes and into the policing of communities already on the radar of border regimes, 'anti-extremism' and other femonationalistic state controls in the name of women's rights (Farris, 2017). In this light, Western feminist studies has simultaneously found itself upholding aspects of 'civilisational knowledge' that, in accordance with the master code of symbolic life and death, has been selectively silent or vocal about which exclusions, violences and lives have been deemed worthy of Western feminist attention and outcry. Military strategies that invade, occupy and punish synchronistically align with 'women's rights' through the instatement of programmes and laws that claim to stand against violence against women and girls, trafficking and modern slavery, while being hinged on contemporary civilising missions that discriminately exert violence and promote unfreedom.

Examples of complicity, silence and collusion, when viewed through the prism of coloniality, stand out historically and in the present. British women's organisations in the 1920s and 1930s clashed with major all-India women's organisations' demand for universal adult suffrage and joint electorates for women, thereby hindering the extension of women's franchise in India (Fletcher, Levine and Mayhall, 2012, p. 225). There has also been a resounding wall of Western feminist silence around direct physical colonial violence, such as the detention and torture of Mau Mau women in Kenya rising up against white settler colonialism (Bruce-Lockhart, 2014) at the same time that feminists in Britain were debating the future of feminism in light of the newly established welfare state as 'women [had] moved within thirty years from rivalry with men to a new recognition of their unique value as women' (Brittain, 1953, p. 224). Britain still 'possessed' many colonies when the welfare state was established in 1945/1946. Meanwhile, the coloniality of the *longue durée* of human rights atrocities continued alongside the announcement of the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948). Such examples reveal the preoccupation with privileging certain rights over others and valuing some lives over others.

Failure to disrupt white supremacy and the privileging of the West and its Eurocentrism have inspired movements to call out and address structural racism, including demands for the decolonisation of universities and public spaces. The Rhodes Must Fall campaign is nothing less than an uprising against coloniality, inspired by student movements and activists mobilising to bring down the statues that commemorate white supremacist male figures credited and given honours due to their various roles in aiding colonisation and its legacies. The centennial commemorations of women's suffrage in different parts of the world alert us to another duplicity within Western feminism's own exclusionary centrism, which is the fact that while suffragists were demanding the right to vote for women in the West, most of the world was under Western/European subjugation either through colonisation, Jim Crow laws or other regimes of racial terror, or through settler occupation, including the US, Latin America, Canada and Australia—which are all, by definition, sites of settler colonisation. Western feminism's normative reproduction of the language of colonisation and the coloniality of power has meant that the amnesia of settlement as coloniality in different parts of the 'Western world' tends to go unnamed and therefore, in Wynterian (2003) terms, the master code persists.

There have been junctures at which analytical and epistemological decisions within Western feminist studies have been made in defining its purpose and concerns. Ongoing debates over gender recognition and trans rights uphold binary and heteronormative forms of gender, often fought most vociferously by feminist organisations whose *raison d'être* of standing up for 'women' has straightjacketed them into binary thinking while remaining adamant against changing the harmful imposition of the *status quo*. Privileging issues such as domestic violence in the context of the criminal justice system for certain communities fails to recognise the inherent and structural violence of the justice system for indigenous and non-white women, with high rates of incarceration creating new forms of violence upon these communities. Thus, coloniality both produces and disciplines gender regimes and vice versa, co-opting feminist social movements and directing resources towards institutional power structures.

Black, indigenous and queer scholarship has laid the groundwork for such a project. From Sojourner Truth's historic 'Ain't I a Woman?' speech in 1851 at the Women's Rights convention,<sup>1</sup> which demanded Black humanity be acknowledged, to the Combahee River Collective's (1978 [1977]) statement which spoke out against interlocking oppressions, to demands to recognise the ongoing denial of the existence and humanity of indigenous and non-conforming bodies and communities (Ramirez, 2007; Weheliye, 2014; Flowers, 2015; Zaragocin, 2019), such critiques have labouriously outlined the erasures and silences within Western feminism's 'universal truths' by fundamentally questioning its claims to 'truth'.

We use the framing of 'Western feminist studies' to imply the 'coherence of effects' of 'the West' as the primary reference in theory and praxis, as caveated by Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984). However, as an extension to this stance, we argue that the entire genealogy of feminist studies is imbricated within and formulated by hegemonic epistemic systems borne out of the modernity/coloniality complex (Mignolo, 2000) and the modern/colonial gender system (Lugones, 2007), thereby placing it in alignment with

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<sup>1</sup> Most people are familiar with the 1863 version of Truth's speech, published with the 'Ain't I a Woman?' title, but it differs from the 1851 version. Questions about representation, transcription and the politics of language in relation to race and gender are crucial in contextualising the speech. See the Sojourner Truth Project, <https://www.thesojournertruthproject.com/> [last accessed 22 April 2021].

systems of knowledge underpinning conditions of coloniality. It is no wonder that the most critical discussions about Western feminism's reckoning with ties to Eurocentrism and racism have occurred outside of or on the fringes of feminist studies through critical race studies, Afrocentric geographical perspectives and other interdisciplinary spaces not bound to the performance of feminist solidarity (Ware, 1992; Frankenberg, 1993; McKittrick, 2006; Jonsson, 2020). Even socialist and Marxist feminisms, which have been at the forefront of highlighting gender as embedded in capitalist social reproduction and primitive accumulation, have been uncomfortable in naming the Eurocentricity of their primary theoretical or conceptual referent of 'the West' in relation to the development of capitalism. They have, at best, utilised the tools of intersectionality to recognise race, gender and class as features of the social experience of capitalism (Federici, 2004; Boehrer, 2019).

The foundations and structures of academia itself are creations and continuities of hegemonic, racialised, masculinist hierarchies of knowledge and power: they have roots in entrenched extractive, exploitative and disciplining forces that further the broader cause of coloniality. We recognise the rich contributions within academic scholarship that have sought to question and even dismantle the coloniality of power within disciplines that offer and are informed by decolonial (Smith, 1999), queer and trans (Bakshi, Jivraj and Posocco, 2016; Luther and Ung Loh, 2019), fugitive feminist (see Emejulu, 2021, forthcoming) and abolitionist perspectives (Davis and Shaylor, 2001). In recognising these contributions, we are interested in examining how the field of feminist studies has been entwined with coloniality and its ongoing collusions. It is only in recognising, naming and calling out this complicity that we can consider ways to think and practice anew.

By and large, feminist studies to date has not sufficiently acknowledged the alignment of its own interests in the structures and institutions created for the purpose of colonial domination. What is therefore worthy of consideration is how slow feminist studies has been to recognise and acknowledge its own active and enabling participation. Rather, what can be seen is an overarching alignment of feminist studies with the modernity/coloniality complex through its accompanying (gender) fictions—such as rights, representation, equality and so forth—which, while being brandished as 'feminist', disguise the logic of coloniality. It is within the guises and disguises of coloniality that feminist complicity across a range of discourses, hierarchies and practices can be clearly identified.

We identify three main frames of thought that we believe to be necessary in shaping feminist strategies towards moving beyond this collusion in reconstituting an ethical 'feminist' project. These are not exhaustive; there are and will be more avenues to support these endeavours. These frames strive towards a more critical feminist engagement and interrogation of coloniality. The first follows Wynter's (2003) call to unsettle coloniality's persistence through narrow European racialised notions of who is and what it means to be human, or, in other words, which and whose lives matter within ostensibly feminist projects. This requires a reckoning with Western feminism's convergences and connections with the master code of symbolic life and death. A focus on the human, in its full cognitive and behavioural autonomy, as Wynter (*ibid.*) demands, necessitates a refocusing towards subjects, topics, lives and livelihoods that are excluded and rendered inviable in the abyss of coloniality. Therefore, feminist projects first must undo and unlearn what it means to be human in order to chart out new ways of envisioning humanity unshackled to an exclusionary centring of the European 'Man' as its primary referent.

A second frame can be attributed to María Lugones' (2008, p. 1) path-breaking contributions, which posit that gender was a tool for early colonial domination and classification meant to subjugate, order and control, and thus colonial imposition persists through classification and gender (binary) categories 'to make visible the instrumentality of the colonial/modern gender system in subjecting us—both women and men of color—in all domains of existence'. Lugones' work offers an understanding of 'normative' discourses on sex and gender as categorically defined through and by imperial and colonial narratives, acknowledging the existence of systems, experiences and lives that do not fit into the 'light side' of the colonial/modern gender system. This elision reveals the mythical construction of this system (which violently inferiorised others through the coloniality of power) and the chance to rethink gender as a category of possibility and difference. Thus, this frame follows Lugones' (*ibid.*) instruction 'to place ourselves in a position to call each other to reject this gender system as we perform a transformation of communal relations'.

The third frame offers a gender analysis of coloniality as 'the darker side of Western modernity' (Mignolo, 2011), which expands on the work of the decoloniality group (Mignolo, 2000, 2007; Quijano, 2000, 2007, 2010; Grosfoguel, 2002; Lugones, 2003; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018) by recognising how gender has been integral to the continuation of the coloniality/modernity complex and the coloniality of power. This area provides fertile ground for an interrogation of how feminist scholarship and knowledge, rather than calling for epistemic reconstitution, has colluded with the core elements of coloniality. These core elements are outlined by Aníbal Quijano (2000) as systems of hierarchies, systems of knowledge and cultural systems that centre European culture as 'modern' and are therefore conducive to the sustenance and penetration of capitalism. Feminist allegiances to modernity and its ensuing trajectories through its claims to rights, equality, demands for recognition and insistence on inclusion have often eclipsed or disguised coloniality as a violent, subjugating and exclusionary system. Even feminist organisations borne out of anti-racist, anti-colonial struggles have reproduced many aspects of these systems. In India, following nationwide protests concerning public cases of sexual violence and murder, critical voices have emerged that are challenging established urban, middle-class feminist movements by demanding the recognition of Dalit women's everyday experience of violence where structural caste subjugation has received little attention (Bansode, 2020). Even when movements begin from the margins, they do not necessarily remain in critical distance to the coloniality of power. In fact, they can so easily slip into the master code in exerting a 'feminist' coloniality of power. In Britain, the South Asian women's movement, once at the forefront of anti-racist organising, has changed through acceptance of government funding and through joining the 'voluntary sector'. This has seen such organisations aligning with the Islamophobia of the state's anti-terror laws (for example the Prevent duty in the UK) targeting Muslim communities while also claiming 'political blackness' reminiscent of the 1960s–1980s era of anti-racist and self-defence campaign organising. As colonial time passes, the master's tools alter and morph into new guises. Even established feminist organisations with rich political histories of anti-racist, anti-colonial organising are not immune from reproducing exclusions and even violences as they move further away from the margins and show their alignment with coloniality through evolving civilisational discourses of secularism and integration.

Coloniality regenerates itself through patterns of denial, erasure, extraction and domination, and reveals its embeddedness across different contexts and forms of hegemony. A critical feminist analysis requires decolonisation of feminism's own connections with coloniality. Similar to how formal

decolonisation of the twentieth century did not result in epistemic reconstitution of the world order and instead resulted in the continuity of coloniality, feminism requires an epistemic reconstitution of perspective in order for it to embody a conceptual delinking from the overall structure of knowledge. Without this reconstitution, feminism will remain on the dark side of modernity. This is a political project to which this themed issue is committed and with which each of the contributions engage. Not all feminism is complicit with coloniality. Resistance to coloniality, by reverting to or invoking indigenous, emancipatory, restorative or precolonial modes of knowing and being, offers innovative and radical insights for alternative possibilities to embark on an epistemic reconstitutive feminist process.

This themed issue displays the innovative work of scholars who are pushing to disrupt feminist interconnections with coloniality. This is done by presenting a challenge to epistemic knowledge creation and existing structures of knowledge, including critiques of paradigms and mechanisms of thought, praxis and power. These authors, working across a range of disciplinary backgrounds, demonstrate insightful and thought-provoking avenues in charting out 'an-other' decolonial, feminist rationality.

There are a number of overarching conceptual and thematic areas that cut across the contributions. First there is an investigation of 'feminist' praxis and its complicity with coloniality in the academy. In 'The radical limits of decolonising feminism' (2021, this issue), Suzanne C. Persard challenges the limits of calls to decolonise feminism in the contemporary US academic context, where 'decolonising' is synonymous with the inclusion of non-US alterity. From the vantage point of the US (and the West), Persard asks: what paradoxes are contained in this call, what violences are reproduced and what universalising effects end up subsuming modes of difference in the process? By offering a nuanced analysis of the politics of decolonial knowledge production within this context, Persard presents a warning over the performative invocation to 'decolonise' and problematises its deployment in feminist academic discourse; she calls us to be aware of our own limits and complicities, which in turn might create 'liberatory possibilities'. Similarly, an awareness of our own personal positionalities, partial standpoints and limitations informs Fabiane Ramos and Laura Roberts' article, 'Wonder as feminist pedagogy: disrupting feminist complicity with coloniality' (2021, this issue). By acting as 'guides' to students—invoking an understanding of guiding and travel in the sense of undertaking a difficult journey—Ramos and Roberts explore their experiments with wonder as pedagogy, theorising their approach to shared knowledge creation in the classroom. Utilising what they term a 'plurilogue design', Ramos and Roberts create a shared commitment to honouring the complexity of voices and experiences in the syllabus and classroom community, continually and consciously challenging the individual and group's 'readings' of different world views, and breaking with forms of possessive learning and arrogant perception. Critical self-reflection undergirds Ramos and Roberts' pedagogical practice, encouraging ways of what they term 'knowing-being-doing' that works towards disrupting feminist complicity with coloniality in the Australian context.

The crucial practice of self-reflection is also invoked by Hasnaa Mokhtar, in an Open Space piece entitled 'A plea to "Middle Eastern and North African" feminists: let's liberate ourselves from notions of coloniality' (2021, this issue). Mokhtar presents a humble plea for resisting coloniality in knowledge creation and production related to North Africa and West Asia, reflecting upon her own experiences as a Saudi American doctoral candidate in the academy. Acknowledging the varied and pervasive forms of coloniality encountered throughout her journey, Mokhtar shares thoughtful points to guide one's

approach as a feminist scholar, emphasising respect, humility, generosity and continual learning. Mokhtar's focus on humbly learning from those with whom we work and allowing them to guide our theorising is mirrored in Karla M. Padrón's Open Space piece, 'To decolonise is to beautify: a perspective from two transgender Latina makeup artists in the US' (2021, this issue). Padrón (*ibid.*) thoughtfully posits that feminist practices of decolonisation might be 'small, quotidian moments', which powerfully offer opportunities for 'self-authorship, community-building and a sense of spiritual fulfilment'. The practice of make-up rituals among the TransLatina community is offered as a mode through which individuals can mend and reconstruct themselves, in both their individual and collective identities. In the making of faces, Brenda and Renata are shown to create a sense of collectivity and autonomy that allows them to thrive, regaining a sense of humanity and dignity against institutional oppression. The power of narrating our own stories is reflected in 'Black women's lives matter: social movements and storytelling against sexual and gender-based violence in the US' (2021, this issue), an Open Space piece by Domale Dube Keys. Through investigation of the narratives utilised by two popular movements against gender-based violence—the In My Words movement focused on campus sexual violence and the Say Her Name movement, the leading US movement for Black women's lives—Keys presents the use of storytelling as a significant decolonial feminist method, focused here to analyse Black women students' experiences of sexual violence in higher education. Given the inability of punitive laws or policies to redress embedded inequalities and violences and in light of the ongoing coloniality of race and gender in the US as defining Black women as the 'other', Keys compellingly demonstrates the significance in the power of social movements and within them storytelling as a powerful tool to communicate lived experience.

The second overarching area is the challenge offered to exposing existing epistemic registers. To think anew, to forge new modes of thinking and doing that break with overall structures of extant knowledge, provides an epistemic reconstitution for feminist thought and yields new methods for consideration. In 'Extractivism and territorial dispossession in rural Colombia: a decolonial commitment to *Campesinas*' politics of place' (2021, this issue), Laura Rodríguez Castro focuses on dispossession and extractivism in *Campesinas*' territories in the rural regions of Boyacá and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, as linked to coloniality, capitalism and modernity. Rodríguez Castro's (*ibid.*) epistemic-methodological commitment to visual participatory feeling-thinking (*sentipensando*) research, an entangled process developed 'as a way of feeling and knowing the world', embedded in ancestral knowledge, performs a significant decolonial function, building upon conceptualisations of the coloniality of power and of gender. It further offers how rural women resist and negotiate epistemic and economic dispossession, providing critiques of the coloniality of gender that adopt different metaphysical commitments, as led by rural actors in the Global South. Sara Shroff's article, 'Bold women, bad assets: honour, property and techno-promiscuities' (2021, this issue), offers another innovative methodological approach, rethinking categories of sexual labour, racialised ethnicity and social media in contemporary Pakistan in relation to capitalism, neoliberalism and nationalism. Through the concept of 'techno-promiscuities' developed by the author (an investigation of digital sexuality as speculative currency), Shroff reveals how social media star Qandeel Baloch and other young women negotiate techno-capitalist heteropatriarchal regimes built on discourses of hegemonic masculinity, religion, nation and empire, offering embodiment of different forms of feminist agency through their challenge to normative structures of power. Centring the lives and afterlives of Qandeel, Shroff rereads honour killing as a crime of property rather than one of culture, where honour is read as an economic metric of heteropatriarchy, imbued with discourses on religious nationalism, the

'postcolonial' nation, racialised ethnic difference, digital culture and sexual deviancy. This challenge of rethinking existing registers that qualify and recognise demands to live and for rights is mirrored in Po-Han Lee's article, 'A pluralist approach to "the international" and human rights for sexual and gender minorities' (2021, this issue). Re-evaluating the applicability of universal rights discourses in advocating for sexual and gender minorities' (SGM) rights, Lee presents a way to decolonise state-sponsored heteronormativity and pursue LGBT rights by decentring our political imagination from the imagined subject for rights, the 'modern/sovereign man', through a decolonial-queer praxis. Lee argues that state-centric internationalism and universalist calls for rights produce exclusionary effects that undermine the granting of SGM rights. Lee proposes a pluralist approach in reimagining sovereignty and its relationship with rights, utilising a framework of epistemological cultural relativism in which culture is understood as diverse, malleable and contingent. This pluralist approach advocates for the recognition of polyvocality in transnational queer activism (countering the monopoly of state representation), challenging a normative focus on statecraft in international studies and thereby offering a fresh epistemological approach to rights discourses rather than one based on individual state representation. This leads to our third overarching area covered by the themed issue.

The third disruption is a critique of the state and its mechanisms and logics. The next two articles focus on the role of the state and its treatment of groups that pose a particular threat to the modern nation state, and therefore whose subjugation or erasure is necessary in the pursuit of homogeneity. The threat posed by newly immigrated Ethiopian Jewish women to the Israeli state is the focus of Bayan Abusneineh's article, '(Re)producing the Israeli (European) body: Zionism, anti-Black racism and the Depo-Provera Affair' (2021, this issue). Through an examination of the Depo-Provera Affair (where the contraceptive was administered to Ethiopian immigrant women without consent), Abusneineh considers how racial and reproductive anti-Black violence through reproductive politics is fundamental to Israel's political project of modern nation-building, constructing the normative body politic and becoming part of the civilised, modern, 'superior' West. Linking anti-Blackness, anti-Arabness and anti-Semitism with Israel's settler colonial project aids the construction of what Abusneineh terms the 'New Jew' (European/Ashkenazi), the idealised subject against whom other populations must be managed by the state based on logics of abjection. In so doing, Abusneineh offers a nuanced examination of the state construction of modern Israeli identity through this reproductive management, presenting a thoughtful reading of reproductive, racial politics as an ongoing site of coloniality. Ongoing Indian coloniality over Kashmir has been a long-term phenomenon, but its drastic escalation since the August 2019 Constitutional Coup is the focus of Nitasha Kaul's article, 'Coloniality and/as development in Kashmir: econationalism' (2021, this issue). Examining the domination of Kashmiri Muslims under the colonial imperative of 'development', Kaul's article highlights key features of this mode of coloniality as development, which she terms 'econationalism'. Akin to readings of homonationalism and femonationalism, liberatory rhetoric in the name of 'development' is invoked to mask subjugation and erase possibilities of freedom for Kashmiris. Kaul's close reading of the mobilisation of such rhetoric by the masculinist, nationalist, predatory state as a mode of coloniality in Kashmir provides critique of the state's adoption of development discourse in its true guise of reasserting proprietorial control over the territory and its people. A critique of the state's adaptation and manipulation of discourses in forging a sense of nation through violent exclusions is similarly considered in Abeera Khan's article 'In defence of an unalienated politic: a critical appraisal of the "No

Outsiders” protests’ (2021, this issue). Khan critically appraises the discursive formations surrounding the 2019 Birmingham school protests in the UK against LGBT+ equality lessons and examines what forms of statecraft are consequently enabled: a positioning of racial others as against supposed freedoms (positioned in relation to to ‘LGBT’ equality), and a weaponising of this ‘otherness’ to justify the securitisation of Muslim communities. Additionally, by examining a particular type of response by some queer Muslim groups (read as an ‘authentic’ response) as model minority exceptionalism, Khan demonstrates further how numerous myths perpetuated by liberalism are shored up, justifying and advancing the state’s homonationalist ends. Asking how queer positionality might instead refute such dehumanising logics and act with dissent or refusal by opposing exclusion and structural violence is a stark but significant challenge to state logics of co-option. The call to refuse such logics is similarly expedient to naming and challenging feminist complicity with coloniality. We must learn to critique, challenge, stand defiant, refuse and object.

At the same time, we tread with caution, acknowledging the pervasive and imbricated nature of coloniality with feminist studies even as we seek to negotiate its boundaries and its interiors. As Persard eloquently posits in the article that opens this themed issue:

we proceed with these tensions with a commitment to pedagogy and praxis that seeks to problematise traditionally oppressive structures of knowledge production and endeavour to create new knowledge formations and pedagogical practices, even as coloniality and its remnants saturate and structure our feminist realities. (Persard, 2021, this issue)

This may indeed be a time to recognise that feminist studies may not be the site for this restructuring and reconstitution to take place. By virtue of becoming a field of study in its own right, feminist studies in a multitude of acts and positions has mimicked the patterns and power structures that exist elsewhere in academia, reproducing hierarchies of knowledge and cannibalising ‘other’ knowledges when they feed back into feminist studies’ self-perpetuating narratives. To break free and think anew is a challenge to us all. As Quijano (2007, p. 177) writes, epistemological decolonisation is necessary to create the way ‘for new intercultural communication, for an interchange of experiences and meanings, as the basis of another rationality’. If delinking feminist studies from coloniality is the goal, then we must acknowledge our complicity and act by ‘knowing-being-doing’ differently, listening to the margins and making space for feminist anti-colonial thinking. How we do that is up to us.

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