

Intersectional Decoloniality: Re-imagining IR and the Problem of Difference

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Synopsis:

The encounter of “other” ways of knowing, being, and enacting has historically created debates and struggles that aim to understand and organize these differences. As globalization decreases some distances, this problem has gained saliency in domestic, international, and global politics. The objective of this book is to assess diverse ways to think about “others” while also emphasizing the advantages of decolonial intersectionality. In order to achieve this goal, *Intersectional Decoloniality: Re-imagining IR and the Problem of Difference* systematically analyzes the disputes and struggles that emerge among Andean intellectuals, governmental projects of Bolivia, and scholars of “International Relations” to define ways to deal with “others” between 1825 and 2017. By focusing on the epistemic assumptions (i.e., definitions of what is real, how we know reality, and who knows reality) and the marginalizing effects that emerge from these constructions (i.e., definitions of what is not real, how “others” do not know reality, and who these “others” are), this book separates four ways to think about differences and it analyzes their implications. Each approach represents a location; a locus of enunciation found in a struggle to define a dominant epistemic possibility to deal with “others.” By studying the distinct epistemic approaches used in a struggle for the possibility to define relationships with “others,” the book thus analyzes four positions in a process of epistemic politics and it highlights the ways in which intersectional decoloniality moves beyond some of the limitations found in the other discourses.

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Introduction

The encounter of “other” ways of knowing, being, and enacting has historically created struggles that aim to know, organize, and control these differences (Said 1978; Agathangelou and Ling 2009; Mignolo 2011). As Todorov asserts, the encounter of difference and “others” often leads to the organizational principle of hierarchy, which establishes conditions of possibility for different forms of colonialism and for the civilizing models that unfold henceforth (1982). This organizational principle entails bounded notions of equality for some, but not “others.” It constructs particular ways of knowing, being, and enacting that are regarded as superior, while all “others” are organized in downward echelons. Despite the historically continuous institutionalization of colonial discourses, Todorov also examines the ways in which particular missionaries thought about the possibility of coexistence between “diverse universes” (190). He shows how some intellectuals actively sought to understand decolonial possibilities of equality that would not lead to excluding, exterminating, and/or assimilating “others.” Of course, European missionaries are not the only ones who have thought about “other” ways to deal with the problem of difference. In the Americas, many indigenous uprisings, rebellions, political actions, and intellectual productions have aimed at the destruction of colonial orders. Many indigenous leaders and intellectuals have sought to achieve this goal in order to establish more respectful forms of coexistence.¹ As Mignolo and Walsh discuss, many movements currently continue to construct decolonial possibilities of doing “otherwise” (2018). To Todorov, this struggle to define ways to deal with difference exploded in 1492, but it has only become more prominent in current times (1982, 249).

As globalization decreases some distances and reinforces colonial processes of homogenization, the problem of difference continues to gain saliency in domestic, international, and global politics (Mignolo 2000; Quijano 2000; Richards 2014). Thus, in this book, I assess diverse ways to think about “others” while also emphasizing the advantages of decolonial intersectionality. How is it possible to deal with different ways of knowing, being, and enacting while also enabling a possibility of decolonial praxis? How is it possible to respect differences while also disrespecting colonialisms? I answer this question by analyzing a genealogy of struggles and debates between intellectuals from the Andes, indigenous movements, governmental projects of civilization for Bolivia, intellectuals of International Relations from different parts of the world, and my explicit intervention. As this genealogical journey unfolds throughout the book, I examine different epistemic positions that struggle to define distinct ways to deal with “others” and I highlight the benefits of the approach developed by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui.

By focusing on the analysis of epistemic assumptions and the marginalizing effects that often emerge from them, I separate four sets of discourses that deal with the problem of difference in distinct ways. Each one of these approaches to the problem of difference represents a position; a discursive locus of enunciation that is found in a struggle to define a dominant possibility to deal with “others.” Colonial, anti-colonial, post-structuralist, and intersectionally decolonial positions thus dispute the meaning of difference and deal with “others” in particular ways. By studying the epistemic approaches used in this struggle for the possibility to define relationships with “others” in Bolivia and by relating these discourses to discussions of “International Relations,” I thus analyze four positions in a process of epistemic politics.² Then, I highlight the ways in which

intersectional decoloniality moves beyond some of the limitations found in the other three sets of discourses.

The Problem of Difference in I.R.

Since the 1980's, the study of the problem of difference has gained saliency in International Relations through the work of several authors who deploy diverse approaches. Post-structuralism entered International Relations as a way to unveil dominant limitations against difference, erected by discourses such as realism and liberalism (e.g., Ashley 1981; George and Campbell 1990; Ashley and Walker 1990; Walker 1993; 2010). Much of the post-structuralist literature has discussed the ways in which theories of International Relations and discourses of international politics construct binary boundaries between a "superior" inside and a "barbaric," "uncivilized," "dangerous," "mad," "irrational," or "inferior" outside (Campbell 2013). As several authors have pointed out, these classifications of "others" are often related to epistemic assumptions of different sorts (Walker 1993; 2010; Mills 1997; Seth 2010).

Feminist scholars have denounced the dominance of patriarchal ways of knowing, being, and enacting, which silence "other" voices and oppress "other" identities in international politics and International Relations. J. Ann Tickner points out that International Relations often reinforces a masculine reading of politics, which silences the voices of women, hides consequences of state-centric and realist definitions of security, and misses the opportunity to learn about new insights emerging from feminism (1992). Other feminist scholars show how these kinds of masculine biases justify wars to "protect" women and children, but end up causing disproportionate

violence against those same groups (e.g., Enloe 1993; Moon 1997; Sjoberg 2006; Shepherd 2008). Post-structuralist feminists examine the ways in which many of these biases emerge from relationships between knowledges and power, which often construct epistemological ideas that categorize “men” as authorized knowers (Tickner and Sjoberg 2013, 211). Post-colonial, intersectional, and black feminists also emphasize the specific characteristics of different experiences of oppression and they highlight the agency of “other” voices (e.g., Mohanty 1988; Crenshaw 1991; Agathangelou and Ling 2009; Mann 2013; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Collins 2015; Treva 2015). Many of these discussions of the problem of difference also include the study of political and epistemic alternatives. For example, intersectional feminists often discuss the problem of difference and its relationship with axes of power in order to deconstruct systems of domination and to construct innovative possibilities of equality (e.g., Fraser and Honnet 2003; Collins and Bilge 2016).

The study of the problem of difference in International Relations owes much to post-colonial literature as well (e.g., Fanon 1952; 1968; Said 1978; Spivak 2010). The renowned author of *Orientalism*, Edward Said, uncovers how power and knowledge are related to each other in the construction of notions of superiority that justify the control, domination, and occupation of “other” countries such as Egypt (1978, 32). In the construction of the “Orient,” “to have such a knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for ‘us’ to deny autonomy to ‘it’ – the Oriental country – since we know it and it exists, in a sense, *as we know it*” (32). Orientalism is thus a form of knowledge that constructs the “other” as a racialized, sexualized, and inferior object, which can be objectively known and controlled. Then, the “West” regards these systems of truth as epistemologically objective and neutral,

which elevates these discourses above intellectual disputes (205). Post-colonial books such as *Creating Boundaries* (Manzo 1996) and *Transforming World Politics* (Agathangelou and Ling 2009) have used these insights to critique specific colonial legacies and to seek alternatives that move beyond them. Authors have also focused on the study of classifications and boundaries that silence “others” and often construct the conditions of possibility for violence (e.g., Grovogui 1996; Doty 1996; Assad 2007; Pasha 2012). These boundaries entail epistemic assumptions that validate specific kinds of knowledge, authorize particular knowers, and legitimize singular projects of civilization. For example, since “secularity” is often regarded as the public realm of “knowledge” and “politics,” “religion” often appears as the inferior opposite, which is “...emotional, irrational, unpredictable, and behind the march of progress” (Hurd 2008, 169). As Hurd asserts, “secularity” is the “...secured place for the good, rational, and universal in Western moral order, which is then opposed to series of nonrational or irrational particularism, aberrations, or variations” (169).

Together with these theoretical discussions of the problem of difference, interpretivism reemerged in the 1980s as a methodological opportunity to expand the scope of International Relations, emphasizing the complexity of meanings that are practiced in international and global politics. Although still operating from a marginalized position in International Relations, interpretivism is often involved in a mutually enabling relationship with the theories mentioned above and with other post-positivist approaches. Interpretivism aids in the construction of a more pluralistic space of knowledge production, which aims to encompass multiple theories and epistemic discussions (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 139). To achieve this goal, interpretive scholars often question the tendencies of positivist epistemic assumptions such as the notions of

truth correspondence and objectivity, which validate single ways of knowing. This methodological orientation can limit International Relations and it tends to generalize particular empirical trends. In the continuous struggle of many scholars and students to sustain a more open space of knowledge production, the enabling relationship between methodological discussions and theories has created an existential crisis in the old boundaries of the discipline and a fruitful proliferation of ways of knowing (George and Campbell 1990; Milliken 1999; Smith 2013; Pachirat 2014; Lynch 2014; Gofas, Hamati-Ataya, and Onuf 2018). This proliferation encompasses the theories mentioned above, but it also includes queer theory (e.g., Butler 1990; Moraga 1993; Stoler 1995; Agathangelou 2013; Weber 2016), green theory (e.g., Laferrière and Stoett 1999; Wolfe 2010; Eckersley 2013; Cudworth and Hobden 2013; Dalby 2013), and many other voices and combinations that defy the boundaries often erected among approaches, isms, and disciplines. The proliferation of approaches and perspectives in International Relations thus encourages interdisciplinarity and even transdisciplinarity; it enables conversations about a wide variety of topics, while also elevating the problem of difference as a discussion of the discipline itself. In this sense, interpretivism introduces International Relations into struggles to define difference.

In 2004, Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney explicitly called this methodological, theoretical, and political possibilities of unveiling colonial legacies and engaging with alternatives the “problem of difference” (2004). While following much of their work to contribute to these discussions and to continue trespassing institutionalized boundaries of International Relations, I also use a decolonial perspective. Despite the saliency of decolonial approaches in other disciplines such as Latin America Studies, Comparative Literature, and Anthropology (e.g.,

Quijano and Wallerstein 1992; Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2000; 2009; 2011; Lugones 2007; Escobar 2010; 2017; Mignolo and Walsh 2018), this perspective has been largely ignored in International Relations. Some scholars have discussed the advantages of bringing decoloniality into International Relations (Taylor 2012; Blaney and Tickner 2017), analyzed the possibility of decolonizing Globalization Studies (Richards 2014), and introduced fruitful dialogues between feminist notions of intersectionality and decolonial insights (Méndez 2018), but the conversation has only begun.

Decolonial scholars seek to avoid the construction of yet another singularity. They try to renounce the possibility of universalizing a single definition of decoloniality and difference, which would aim to liberate all peoples, but would inevitably create other forms of irreflexive violence (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 1). Instead, decolonial scholars often aim to listen to multiple local histories, which might relate to each other in different ways and might confront the universalizing effects of colonial discourses in contextualized manners. I discuss several aspects of this approach in relationship to Rivera's work in Chapter Seven, but one of the main advantages of this perspective is its explicit concentration on both sides of the problem of difference and their relationships. Decolonial authors simultaneously analyze colonial limitations of difference, possibilities of alternatives, and diverse epistemic relationships that emerge between these two sides (Wynter 1995; Mignolo 2000; Rivera 2015). As a result of this area of study, decolonial scholars construct a particularly fruitful locus of interpretation, which enables the discussion of a variety of positions in the struggle to define relationships with "others." Additionally, authors often examine the epistemic conditions of possibility that are necessary to construct these ways of studying and practicing decoloniality. Walter Mignolo thus asserts that

decolonial studies move beyond the limits of “western” social sciences to create a possibility of “border thinking” from the multiple localities of the “other” (2000, 203).

Throughout the book, I follow this decolonial concern for the multiple localities of “others” to study a Bolivian genealogy of the problem of difference, encouraging a dialogue with International Relations and highlighting the advantages of intersectional decoloniality. Similar to other decolonial scholars who understand that “so long as we do not unsettle our inherited colonial frameworks of assessing truth, we will continue to erase ways of being and knowing that might hold a promise for more just future” (Méndez 2018, 22), I analyze how colonial legacies continue to limit differences while some Andean intellectuals such as Fausto Reinaga and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui construct epistemic possibilities of decoloniality. Many decolonial scholars develop this topic, but the genealogical struggle between Andean intellectuals, the government of Bolivia, indigenous movements from the Andes, and other scholars of International Relations contributes to this discussion in several ways. First, I examine the epistemic characteristics of specific colonial discourses and I highlight their similarities with some liberal and Marxist theories of International Relations. The proximity between these understandings of difference unveils the biases and violent consequences that unfold from the universalizations of particular ways of knowing, being, and enacting. Second, I connect decolonial perspectives to discussions from different territorial and disciplinary boundaries, highlighting the advantages of listening to the implications of an Andean approach, which expands the discussions of decoloniality and contributes to the work of scholars that discuss the problem of difference in International Relations. Third, I show how the contributions that intellectuals such as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui make are related to the construction of a dynamic epistemic condition of possibility for the

coexistence of multiple ways of being, knowing, and enacting. In addition to the importance that is granted to dynamic multiplicity and difference in this perspective, Rivera also practices a reflexive form of decolonial praxis; she creates a self-problematized and yet politically committed possibility of thinking about various ways of knowing, being, and enacting. In order to sustain a possibility of decolonial and political praxis, this approach demands the de-universalization of colonial discourses and it emphasizes the struggles, voices, and project of those who are often othered. Fourth, I examine how Rivera's approach highlights a reflexive understanding of the epistemic boundaries that even decolonial intersectionality includes in order to sustain a possibility of transformative action against colonialisms. This reflexivity demands the problematization and analysis of all othering tendencies, but it also shows why a precarious epistemic decision is necessary if decoloniality aims to listen to the multiple struggles that "others" face against oppressions. Fifth, I follow the implications of this approach to argue that decoloniality ought to begin from intersectional conditions of possibility, which avoid prioritizing specific experiences of race, ethnicity, or geo-historical locations over other struggles, identities, and projects. Mignolo and Walsh have discussed, for example in their new book *On Decoloniality* (2018), the importance of taking into account different kinds of struggles and voices, but I further renounce the primordality of geo-historical loci of enunciation, which Walsh and Mignolo still sustain in their latest book.³ This decision has intersectional implications, which emphasize the importance of understanding the ways in which multiple struggles overlap and sometimes confront each other. Hence, I study one way of thinking about the epistemic requirements that are necessary to establish a reflexive and dynamic possibility of decolonial intersectionality. Then, I examine the implications that unfold from this platform, contributing to debates that are prominent in feminist, post-structuralist, post-colonial,

decolonial, and other interpretive approaches. Sixth, I follow the argument of María José Méndez about the need to use intersectionality while also moving beyond its limitations, constructing an ethics of incommensurability (2018). Here, intersectional decoloniality enables a possibility of praxis and political action, but the goal of listening to multiple “others” also leads towards the demand of trusting ways of knowing, being, and enacting beyond “our” levels of intelligibility, understanding, and familiarity. Finally, I aim to create a possibility of dialogue and ally-ship between multiple ways of knowing, being, and enacting the problem of difference. Despite the differences that I highlight throughout the book between intersectional decoloniality and other perspectives, I also emphasize that the possibility of differentiating discourses emerges from a moment of epistemic faith, which allows us to classify “colonialisms” and to construct praxes of transformation in a variety of ways. That is, even in the decolonial approaches that claim to stay within “border thinking” (Mignolo 2000; 2009; Mignolo and Walsh 2018), decolonial action depends on the construction of boundaries against “colonialism.” This epistemic notion localizes our own criteria of classification and praxis, humbling our own approaches to the problem of difference and creating a much more egalitarian possibility of inter-epistemic dialogue. My hope is to encourage post/de/anti/settler-colonial approaches, as well as many others who also find themselves resisting disciplinary, territorial, political, and social domination, to contribute in discussions of the problem of difference from their own locality, which might prioritize other epistemic “decisions” about coloniality, oppression, and injustice, teaching us to limit our own voices in order to walk the here/now together and in respect at the same time.

Methodology: Archeology, Genealogy, and Involvement

In order to achieve these goals, I begin the genealogical journey of this book from an approach that renounces foundations, bedrocks, and structures. “We must renounce all those themes whose function is to ensure the infinite continuity of discourse and its secret presence to itself in the interplay of a constantly recurring absence” (Foucault 1972, 129). As I discuss in Chapter Five, the possibility of abandoning ideas that attach meanings to an unquestionable, independent, universal, and intelligible “reality,” allows me to study how different discourses construct their own epistemic assumptions. Hence, I begin from a dynamic, complex, and “untamed” notion of practices (Doty 1997). These sudden irruptions (i.e., practices) are the data of interpretation; they are momentary settlements of meanings, which can be interpreted in order to follow the regularities and patterns that make up discursive formations (Foucault 1972). By following Foucault’s archeological approach, I analyze how each discourse endogenously includes a set of epistemic assumptions and conditions of “reality,” which separate it from other formations. To analyze different ways of knowing, being, and enacting the problem of difference, I thus focus on how each discourse entails ideas of what is “real” (i.e., ontology), how “reality” is knowable and who knows it (i.e., epistemology), and how “reality” can be enacted (i.e., temporality). Additionally, the construction of epistemic platforms often determines the boundaries of classification that exclude or hierarchically organize “other” ways of knowing, being, and enacting. They determine what is not “real,” how “others” do not know “reality,” who these “others” are, and how the “unreal” can be avoided, transformed, or killed. By following this epistemic focus, each chapter of the book entails an archeological examination of a discourse, which deploys its endogenous epistemic assumptions to separate and elevate itself from “others,”

determining how difference is defined and limited. This epistemic separation of discourses is the beginning of my study.

Notwithstanding this archeological separation of distinct approaches to the problem of difference, I combine archeology with genealogy, which is a more dynamic way to re-connect and analyze these discourses. Here, genealogy is understood as a way to interpret discourses that are included in historical processes of meaning contestation and definition (Klotz and Lynch 2007, 31). Genealogy allows me to arrange distinct discourses as dynamic positions that confront each other to know, be, and enact the problem of difference in particular ways. Hence, the struggle between the ways in which each discourse is practiced throughout history in Bolivia and in International Relations is the thread connecting the chapters of this book.⁴ Since I specifically focus on how Indianismo – an indigenous movement from the Andes – and other Andean intellectuals confront *dominant* discourses, I use genealogy as a “...way of playing local, discontinuous, disqualified, or nonlegitimized knowledges off against the unitary theoretical instance that claims to be able to filter them, organize them into a hierarchy, organize them in the name of a true body of knowledge, in the name of the rights of a science that is in the hands of the few” (Foucault 1997, 9). Of course Andean intellectuals such as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Alejo Ticona, and Fausto Reinaga have already achieved much of this goal, successfully confronting notions that have repercussions far beyond the territorial borders of Bolivia. However, the walls of International Relations continue to marginalize their contributions. Hence, I seek to listen in order to learn and to decolonize some of the boundaries that are more familiar in my own positionality. In this sense, genealogy becomes a process that explicitly includes my own contribution and set of questions as an active locus of enunciation in the dispute to define

the problem of difference. Here, genealogy becomes a process of confrontation and conversation that narrates a discussion about the problem of difference.

In order to examine some of my own assumptions and locus of enunciation, it is necessary to highlight that the narration of a genealogical thread always entails epistemic decisions, which enable the possibility of classifying some discourses as “dominant” and others as “decolonial,” “disqualified,” “non-legitimized,” “dominated,” “subjugated,” etc. This moment of classification of discourses does not consistently unfold from an approach that renounces all epistemic foundations; instead, it requires a moment of epistemic decision and settlement. Said differently, the consistent and generalized abandonment of all foundations and bedrocks leads towards an understanding that classifies all discourses as equal constructions of foundations. This approach allows us to study multiple epistemic assumptions, but it also undoes the possibility of classifying “coloniality” or “domination.” If I regard all meanings as equal discourses, how could I elevate a criteria above them? How could I create a discourse to analyze discourses? How could I discern what is “colonial,” “dominant,” “decolonial,” “resistance,” “alternative,” etc.? How could I demand a transformation or change from whatever is “oppressive,” “colonial,” “unjust,” and so on? Moreover, how could I commit to the prioritization of multiple subaltern ways of knowing, being, and enacting? How could I create a moment of decolonial praxis?

As the first four chapters of the book illustrate, this question is particularly problematic for the differentiation of discourses that equally universalize and elevate their own notions above “others.” Are the different branches of Indianismo equally “dominant” or “dominating” as colonial notions of liberalism or Marxism? Of course not, but what exactly distinguishes them in

the struggle to define the problem of difference? The possibility of answering this question risks creating another foundation, bedrock, or set of epistemic assumptions; it leads towards the predefinition of “power” as something that lies beyond discourse and then it forecloses the problem of difference again, creating yet another set of othering tendencies. This is why some feminist, queer, and interpretivist scholars highlight the importance of dynamic understandings of meaning (McCall 2005; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Lynch 2014; Weber 2016; Wibben and Rutazibwa 2019). On one side, renouncing foundations enables the possibility of untaming meaning, which allows me to study multiple kinds of epistemic assumptions and discourses; it enables me to cope with more difference. Despite this possibility, completely untaming meaning prevents me from constructing a criteria to differentiate discourses and their “colonial” tendencies. On the other side, the construction of boundaries of classification and the utilization of an extra-discursive notion of power can enable me to create decolonial praxis, but it also leads to othering tendencies that foreclose the possibility of thinking about the problem of difference. These questions turn my own genealogical narration into an explicit intervention, which includes its own way of classifying and undoing boundaries into the struggle to define the problem of difference. This tension between the respect of epistemic differences and the possibility of creating decolonial praxis unapologetically includes me into a dispute of the problem of difference; it is the core of the plot that organizes all the chapters of the book and my own contribution in this struggle. As a result of this genealogical discussion and dispute, I follow the work of Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui to propose a reflexive, dynamic, epistemically precarious, ethically important, and intersectional criteria of classification, which aims to cope with multiple epistemic differences while also defining a form of judgement against various kinds of “colonialism,” “oppression,” “assimilation,” etc.

Genealogy and Book Plan

In order to enter into this genealogical struggle for the problem of difference, the first four chapters of the book illustrate how epistemic definitions of “reality” often lead to certain notions of power and equality, which create classifications, lead to universalization, and end up marginalizing “others.” Despite this shared tendency towards othering, the genealogical approach connecting these four chapters also leads me to ask, together with other intellectuals from the Andes, how can I respect more differences while also separating “coloniality” from alternative ways of resistance. How is it possible to abandon epistemic bedrocks that lead towards othering tendencies while also differentiating between colonial and anti-colonial discourses?

In Chapter One, I discuss how intellectuals and governmental policies construct what most intellectuals regard as *colonialism* in and for Bolivia. Since much of the literature in International Relations focuses on examining colonialisms, this chapter briefly analyzes the epistemic commonalities found between the discourses that created the projects of civilization in Bolivia between 1825, which is when Bolivia gained independence from Spain, and the end of the Nationalist Revolution in 1964. First, I analyze the constructions of an oligarchic form of liberalism, which defined the dominant shape of the state of Bolivia between 1825 and 1952. As a colonial project, liberalism encompasses a set of epistemic assumptions that fix boundaries of citizenship and individual rights within particular territories. These boundaries construct a marginalizing and assimilationist understanding of “others” for Bolivia, but some of the epistemic assumptions and othering effects of liberalism can also be found in International

Relations. Second, I analyze the structuralist form of Marxism that became institutionalized in 1952, when the Nationalist Revolution gained control of the government in Bolivia and sought to move beyond the inequalities created by liberal ideas of citizenship. Despite their goal of emancipation, the Revolution imposed Eurocentric notions of class-based equality, which still hierarchicalized indigenous peoples as inferior “others.” In this section, I not only examine the governmental construction of Marxism in Bolivia, but also discuss how other intellectuals continue to reproduce a similar epistemic stance in much of the literature of International Relations that focuses on “peasantry.” Finally, the analysis of these two sets of discourses leads towards a conceptualization of the epistemic dimensions of colonial discourses. This chapter shows how the utilization of “colonial” epistemics often leads to particular definitions of power and equality, which universalize singular forms of classification and create othering tendencies.

In Chapter Two, I interpret the Revolutionary branch of Indianismo, which officially emerged in 1962, when the Indianista party was created in Bolivia.⁵ As an *anti-colonial* approach, Revolutionary Indianismo seeks to construct a discourse to oppose the notions and effects of oligarchic liberalism and structuralist Marxism. To achieve this goal, intellectuals create a different platform, which validates a particular kind of knowledge, promotes a specific form of ethnic and/or racial equality, authorizes a distinct kind of agent, and enacts a singular type of temporality. As a result, liberal and Marxist colonialisms are regarded as the invalidated, de-authorized, and illegitimate enemy, which has to disappear through revolution and, if necessary, war. Despite the important possibility of listening to the struggle and voice of an “other,” Revolutionary Indianismo universalizes a particular experience of oppression, generalizing its own notion of equality, authorizing a single kind of agent, and legitimizing a singular kind of

liberation. Hence, this branch of the movement views “other” struggles, voices, and projects as potential obstacles against the “true” revolution. The epistemic assumptions of Revolutionary Indianismo lead towards the universalization and romanticization of a single “other.” In this sense, this Indianista possibility of establishing a bedrock of judgment to separate “colonialism” from anti-colonialism leads to the exclusion of “other” struggles, voices, and projects; it creates other “others.” As Lord Audre states, the “master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (2018). Hence, the problem of difference re-emerges because other “others” seek to expand the possibility of encompassing more difference, while also classifying and defining the “colonialisms” that need to be resisted and transformed. Additionally, the study of these Revolutionary epistemic tendencies poses another question: how is Revolutionary Indianismo different to colonial discourses that also universalize their own singularities?

In Chapter Three, I focus on how Fausto Reinaga - the father of Indianismo - seeks to move beyond Revolutionary limitations, while also constructing another *anti-colonial* discourse that opposes the projects of oligarchic liberalism, Marxism, and neoliberalism. Since it uses an anthropocentric set of epistemic assumptions to critique colonialism, Revolutionary Indianismo excludes or hierarchicalizes ecological aspects of indigenous cosmologies. Hence, Fausto Reinaga follows this critique and he moves towards the construction of Indianismo Amáutico after 1974. This newer kind of anti-colonial Indianismo seeks to include inter-human and ecological equality simultaneously. In order to achieve this goal, Reinaga synthesizes a particular reading of Andean cosmology, which helps him to think about the problem of difference while including epistemic critiques of colonial discourses. Despite his concern for the problem of difference, Reinaga’s construction still sustains essentialist assumptions and it creates an

epistemological form of authorization that only allows for the “Indio” to know the single and universal “truth” of cosmic order. Indianismo Amáutico thus ends up imposing a single experience of ethnic and ecological equality as a form of universal liberation that everyone else has to follow. Similarly to Revolutionary Indianismo, the problem of difference re-emerges in relationship to Indianismo Amáutico because other intellectuals seek to expand the possibility of encompassing more multiplicity while also classifying the “colonialism” that needs to be resisted and transformed. Other “others” denounce these boundaries as well. Additionally, the discourse does not answer the question of how Indianismo is different from colonial discourses. Fausto Reinaga sought to investigate colonial notions of epistemic foundations and universalization, but he ended up sustaining some of their tendencies by universalizing yet another singularity.

In Chapter Four, I examine the governmental project of Evo Morales Ayma, president of Bolivia between 2006 and 2019, and Álvaro García Linera, former vice-president of the Republic. As a critique against neoliberalism in Bolivia began to unite Marxist and Indianista movements, some intellectuals sought to expand Indianista ideas to include other ways of knowing, being, and enacting in the early 2000s. By constructing epistemic notions that seek to validate multiple identities, Evo Morales and García Linera created another *anti-colonial project*, which denounces “occidental” domination, but also respects aspects of “occidental” identities. In order to resist neoliberal colonialism - the current expression of “occidental” domination - Evo Morales and García Linera have established a plurinationalist project of ethnic equality in Bolivia and they have promoted their ideas of “Buen Vivir” (live well) internationally. This discourse has been used to reconstruct the state and to approve, in 2009, a new constitution, which respects “liberal” and “indigenous” identities simultaneously. This project also assimilates

notions of sustainable development and gender equality. Despite the expansion of equality for ethnic identities and the important inclusion of other forms of equality, the discourse epistemologically authorizes a particular voice, institution, and leader to define who is a “true” “indigenous” person in Bolivia. Hence, the plurinational notions of citizenship, structures of the government, and characterization of representatives tend to simplify the diversity of ways of being that are practiced in the country. In this manner, plurinationality still silences voices of other indigenous peoples, feminist movements, ecological organizations, etc. Additionally, the ontological notion of “reality” that is used within the discourse validates and elevates a particular idea of equality, which hierarchicalizes other notions of struggle and justice. Environmentalism and feminism are thus assimilated within a logic of ethnic equality, which reframes these struggles through the lenses of a particular criteria. These struggles are also hierarchicalized underneath notions of ethnic equality, which often become prioritized whenever the different forms of struggle confront each other. Despite the expansion of boundaries of validation, authorization, and legitimation, then, plurinationalism also utilizes colonial epistemics that lead to the construction of other “others.” Unlike other forms of Indianismo, however, this discourse has been successfully institutionalized in the government of the country. This process of normalization and partial sedimentation emphasizes the importance and complexity of the question that I pose in previous chapters: how are anti-colonial discourses different to colonial projects? How is plurinationality different to neoliberalism? How are anti-colonial discourses different to colonial discourses that also universalize and institutionalize their own singularities?

In order to answer this question and continue analyzing the problem of difference, the following chapters turn away from epistemic foundationalisms and strong bedrocks of judgement. The

possibility of encompassing more difference turns against foundations, bedrocks, and universalizing notions of “reality,” which often aim to sediment the boundaries of a particular discourse. Despite this move, the chapters continue the search of a possibility of classification in order to sustain the conditions of possibility for political action. How is it possible to re-think the problem of difference beyond the othering tendencies that emerge from foundations while also sustaining criteria of judgment that are necessary to differentiate “coloniality” from those who resist or seek to transform these legacies?

In Chapter Five, I discuss the approach that is proposed by Michel Foucault. The relevance of this approach in the genealogy that I am narrating emerges from the ways in which Andean scholars and intellectuals that study Andean cosmologies deploy and critique some of his discussions (e.g., Estermann 2006; Escobar 2010; Viaña, Claros, and Sarzuri-Lima 2010; Alcoreza 2014; Rivera 2015). Additionally, the work of Foucault has been used within International Relations to think about difference (e.g., George and Campbell 1990; Milliken 1999; Campbell 2013; Weber 2016). Finally, I used this approach to begin the study of the problem of difference from an archeological and genealogical understanding of discourse. Since my own intervention was explicitly introduced into this dispute of the problem of difference, the possibility of questioning the limitation of this approach became important as well.

To create a possibility of encompassing more difference, Foucault constructed a starting point that validated multiple discourses and highlighted their epistemic incompleteness simultaneously. He sought to deal with the problem of difference by thinking about an epistemic possibility of multiplicity. Since post-structuralism validated multiple knowledges, the approach

also authorized diverse knowers and it legitimized various temporalities. Despite this respect of epistemic differences, Foucault located the interpreter above foundationalism and he generalized a tendency towards deconstructing epistemic assumptions of reality, identity, and history. This tendency to generalize deconstruction regarded all foundationalist discourses as equally dominant and it undermined the possibility of committing to the subaltern. Of course some post-structuralist authors have moved away from this tendency and have sought other ways to respect differences while also stopping the generalization of deconstruction (George and Campbell 1990; Stoler 1995; Milliken 1999; Campbell 2013; Weber 2016), but the question that remains understudied is, how can we stop deconstruction while also staying reflexive of the boundaries that we erect? How is it possible to enable epistemic levels of multiplicity while also creating decolonial possibilities? In this sense, the question that emerges from the tension between multiplicity and decolonial praxis is still standing.

In Chapter Six, I thus examine the work of Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui to propose a way to answer this question. Rivera takes into account Indianista insights and moves beyond the limitation of post-structuralism, while also critiquing colonial projects. In her construction of a “Ch’ixi” approach (“grey” or “mestizo” in Aymara), Rivera begins from an Aymara cosmology that respects all differences and commonalities from a relational perspective, but, instead of falling into the generalization of deconstruction, Rivera creates a “profession of faith;” she constructs an epistemic moment of definition in order to prioritize the multiple forms of knowing, being, and enacting that demand the deconstruction of the universalizing discourses hierarchicalizing them. This epistemic possibility explicitly locates Rivera’s epistemic locus of enunciation as a distinct position within the struggle to think about difference. Here, the “profession of faith” prioritizes

the voices of “others” that confront the epistemic privilege of universalization and the oppression that unfolds from it, but this boundary does not assume the “reality,” epistemic superiority, or philosophical perfection of other understandings of the problem of difference. Instead, Rivera sustains a cosmological abyss that demands constant reflexivity and problematization. Hence, the form of decolonial praxis that Rivera constructs includes a different kind of boundary and epistemic stance. Additionally, Rivera uses this strategy to emphasize multiple moments of confrontation against different kinds of colonial wounds. This creates a dynamic, circular, and intersectional form of praxis, which views different ways of knowing, being, and enacting as the moments that denounce suffering and create another kind of agency at the same time.

In Chapter Seven, I unpack the advantages of Rivera’s approach for some of the discussions that have been engaged in International Relations, undoing the disciplinary boundaries of this field of knowledge and hopefully expanding the possibility of debating about the problem of difference. This chapter shines the light on two particularly important benefits that emerge from the work of Rivera. First, Rivera uses a cosmology that sustains epistemic equality, which prevents the possibility of elevating any kind of equality, authorize any kind of knower, and legitimize any kind of project. Instead of generalizing nihilism and the epistemic abys that could be philosophically created from this idea, Rivera makes a profession of faith, which sustains the abys while also making a momentary and reflexive possibility of walking in a here/now. Rivera thus sustains an epistemic precarity, which demands the constant reflexivity that foundationalist or generalizing discourses cannot reach. Second, the decoloniality that emerges from the profession of faith prioritizes voices that confront different kinds of privilege and oppression, creating a boundary of praxis that has to constantly listen to different ways of knowing, being,

and enacting. That is, the boundary that Rivera creates includes multiplicity in an intersectional and dynamic sense. Both of these possibilities together help us to think about difference beyond the limitations and tendencies of other approaches. Additionally, this understanding of a profession of faith allows us to create a much more democratic dialogue between the different approaches that are concerned with the problem of difference, constructing a more egalitarian and reflexive possibility of ally-ship. In this chapter, I thus illustrate some of the potential dialogues that can engage other intellectuals of decoloniality, post-colonialism, feminism, and interpretivism, posing important questions that could encourage those discussions. How do other approaches create their “profession of faith”? What differences do they regard as “colonial” or “oppressive”? What are the ethico-normative benefits of those approach? How can we walk together while decolonizing and confronting colonialities? Moreover, how do other professions of faith demand reflexivity from my own boundaries? What are my own privileges and tendencies of universalization?

In the concluding chapter, I first summarize the four loci of enunciation that I highlighted throughout this genealogical discussion and narration: colonialism, anti-colonialism, post-structuralism, and intersectional decoloniality. Second, I emphasize the benefits of the Ch’ixi approach of intersectional decoloniality. Third, I make several of my own ethical tensions explicit in order to examine the implications of this genealogical discussion and to pose relevant questions. One of my main concerns here is the tension that emerges between listening to others, learning from them, translating their ideas, expropriating their work, and committing yet another form of colonial violence. Of course perfect translation is impossible due to the polysemic characteristics of meaning, but abandoning the possibility of communication also entails

renouncing decolonial praxis, ignoring the call to action that often emerges from the voices that we might be interpreting never without some degree of violence. Hence, I aim to accept a call to imagine a different kind of “planetarity” and decolonial praxis (Rivera 2018, 57), which localizes our struggles and positionalities in order to confront the oppressions that might affect us and the privileges that we might sustain, but interpretation and syncretization always entails a potential deficit of meaning. In this sense, I seek to walk in a particular here/now, living my own struggle and risking contributions that move beyond the safety of inaction. This possibility entails sustaining this tension between interpretation and symbolic extractivism in order to propose an imperfect assertion of decolonial praxis while also holding on to the reflexivity of understanding the violence of my own intervention. In other words, I momentarily settle a written genealogical discussion and a possibility of decolonial praxis, but I stay waiting to listen for other lessons and voices, which I hope will confront my own violence while also keeping the open invitation to struggle together for planetarities of difference, heterogeneity, multiplicity, and life.

- ¹ In 1534, for example, Manco Inca sieged the city of Lima in order to fight against racial segregation and slavery. In 1727, Juan Bautista Aruma gathered an army of 14.000 warriors to fight in the region of Tarija, which is in the south of current Bolivia. Later on, during 1780 and 1781, one of the most famous indigenous risings took place. Around the city of La Paz, those years saw the three-month siege led by Túpac Katari and Bertolina Sisa. Together with 40.000 Aymara warriors, these leaders sought to destroy the colonial order and to create an indigenous Bolivia that could respect the differences between peoples. As Waskar Ari asserts, Pablo Zárata Willka later led a strong and historic rising against the Bolivian liberal state during the 1870's. This leader sought to create an Aymara republic separated from the colonial republic, but including the possibility of coexisting with the decedents of European colonizers. This idea of two republics, one seeking the respect of differences and the other promoting colonial homogeneity, lives through time and inspires even current leaders. During the 1920's, the Alcaldes Mayores Particulares also began struggling for land and decolonization (Ari 2014). Their project took into account the notion of two republics in order to create the possibility of a multi-ethnic space for all peoples. As Sinclair Thomson points out, indigenous revolts in Latin America such as the one that took place in 1780-81 often sought to redefine the relationships of power and self-determination within states or regions (2002).
- ² I use quotation marks to talk about International Relations as a discipline whose boundaries are constructed, sustained, and disputed by different practices of scholars throughout history. The same can be said about other disciplines and academic communities. Despite the transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary discussions of methodological and empirical issues, these boundaries of "International Relations" continue to create authorizing and silencing effects. In this sense, I use the name of "International Relations" to highlight its current boundaries and to explore the possibility of trespassing them. In the rest of the book, I do not use quotation marks again, but continue to regard the discipline in this manner.
- ³ In his book *Local Histories/Global Designs*, Mignolo asserts that the divisions of the world change throughout history and they include epistemological distributions (2000, 113). Instead of proceeding first from each geo-historical classification of the world to study the modifications and struggles between local ways of knowing and colonial designs, I begin from the ways in which epistemic platforms are constructed. Here, the "sense of territoriality" becomes secondary (191).
- ⁴ Despite the rhetorical separation that I use throughout the book between "Bolivia" and "International Relations," I realize that such boundaries sustain colonial notions of who is the authorized knower of the "international." These separations remain powerful, but I do not aim to reinforce them. To the contrary, the entire book aims to undo colonial boundary of disciplinary and territorial separations, which entail hierarchical notions of knowledge production and often silence voices. Hence, my role in this book includes the possibility of contributing in the possibility of trespassing boundaries and pushing these discussions further.
- ⁵ Bolivia has a long and complex history of indigenous movements and uprisings. While I acknowledge the antecedents of Indianismo, I focus primarily on the officialization of the movement because it has particularly fruitful and influential discussions of the problem of difference. Additionally, Indianismo recognizes other indigenous struggles as antecedents of a history of anti-colonial resistance. These connections highlight the importance and agency of indigenous voices in the region.

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