


Decolonizing Ability, Latinizing Feminist Disability Studies

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Abstract: The objective of this article is to identify the contributions of decolonial feminism to feminist disability studies, emphasizing the implications of considering ability as a colonial category, and the search for theoretical and methodological supports associated to the decolonization of times, spaces and ways of relating to disability. To do so, we briefly contextualize decolonial feminism. We then argue that ability is a colonial category and point to modernity as the genealogy of ableism. We conclude by highlighting elements that corroborate the importance that feminist disability studies dialog with decolonial feminism and the latter with the categories of ability and disability.

Keywords: ability; feminist disability studies; decolonial feminism.

Decolonizar a capacidade, latinizar os estudos feministas da deficiência

Resumo: Neste artigo, objetivamos identificar as contribuições do feminismo decolonial para os estudos feministas da deficiência, com destaque para as implicações de se considerar a capacidade como uma categoria colonial, e também para a busca de subsídios teórico-metodológicos alinhados com a decolonização dos tempos, espaços e formas de se relacionar com a deficiência. Para tanto, contextualizamos brevemente o feminismo decolonial. Em seguida, argumentamos que a capacidade é uma categoria colonial. Após, apontamos a modernidade como a genealogia do capacitismo. Finalizamos o texto destacando elementos que corroboram a relevância de os estudos feministas da deficiência dialogarem com o feminismo decolonial e este com as categorias capacidade e deficiência.

Palavras-chave: capacidade; estudos feministas da deficiência; feminismo decolonial.

Descolonizar la capacidad, latinizar los estudios feministas de la discapacidad

Resumen: En este artículo, pretendemos identificar las contribuciones del feminismo decolonial a los estudios feministas de la discapacidad, destacando las implicaciones de considerar la capacidad como una categoría colonial, así como a la búsqueda de subsidios teórico-metodológicos alineados con la descolonización de tiempos, espacios y modos de relacionarse con la discapacidad. Para ello, contextualizamos brevemente el feminismo decolonial. A continuación, argumentamos que la capacidad es una categoría colonial. Posteriormente, apuntaremos a la modernidad como la genealogía del capacitismo. Concluimos el texto destacando elementos que corroboran la pertinencia de los estudios feministas sobre discapacidad dialogando con el feminismo decolonial y este con las categorías capacidad y discapacidad.

Palabras-clave: capacidad; estudios feministas de la discapacidad; feminismo decolonial.

Introduction

Based on our analyses of decolonial feminism, we believe that this theory offers important contributions that allow feminist disability studies to produce knowledge that breaks with epistemicide, ableism, and narratives that generalize women with disabilities and portray them as incapable. In Latin America, socio-political relations with people with disabilities are permeated by the historical process of coloniality (Aníbal QUIJANO, 2000) which as Ochy Curiel (2020) has shown produces racialized, impoverished, and sexualized people, and we add pathologized and 'disabled' people. We also consider it fundamental to "establish a relationship between these realities and the modern-colonial capitalist world order"¹ (CURIEL, 2020, p. 133, our translation).

In this article, we dialogue with authors of decolonial feminism, emphasizing researchers from Latin America, such as Lugones (2014; 2020), Gonzalez (1988; 2020), Curiel (2020), Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso (2020), and Marcela Ferrari (2020), without neglecting other authors who have produced important knowledge to denounce coloniality and fight against the oppression suffered by people who are socially read as threats to the white, male, hetero, and able-bodied colonial norm, such as the Chicana author Gloria Anzaldúa (2021). Ferrari's work (2020) is a decisive reference for the arguments that support this text, since her assertion that ability is a colonial category that is largely disregarded in the classic texts on decoloniality is the basis for our claim that there is no decolonial turn (Luciana BALLESTRIN, 2013)² if ability is not considered as a colonial category, alongside the other categories already considered by decolonial feminism. Thus, from the perspective of decolonial feminism, ableism, like racism and sexism, is an oppressive system that has colonial roots, since, based on modern constructs, it positions people with disabilities as hierarchically inferior to those fit for the maintenance of the modern colonial capitalist system.

Although in this text we intend to dialogue more strongly with authors from the global South, we recognize the importance of some contemporary perspectives that have emerged in the global North and which have contributed to broadening the understanding of disability. North American authors such as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2005) and Eva Kittay (2015), linked to the field of *Feminist Disability Studies*, criticize the medical model of disability, which emphasizes curing and the need for subjects to adapt to the norm, to the detriment of a society built to guarantee care for and participation of people with disabilities. According to Garland-Thomson (2005), this field places the experience of disability in the context of rights and exclusions, detaching it from the realm of pathology and abjection. It also assumes that disability is an intersectional experience and that considering it as a category of analysis contributes to expanding feminist studies from a scientific and political point of view. Based on the feminist premise that the personal is political, feminist disability studies value the narratives of people with disabilities as a political device capable of challenging stereotypes that hierarchize and marginalize people with disabilities. Furthermore, by questioning the assumptions that disability is a flaw, a lacking or an excess, feminist disability studies reimagine disability, circumscribing its meaning in the interactions between bodies and their social and material environments. Furthermore, by questioning that independence is something to be sought and defending that dependence and interdependence are inherent to the human condition (KITAY, 2015), feminist disability studies challenge the ableist premise of self-sufficiency. Other fields – such as *crip* theory (Robert McRUER, 2021) and *disability justice* (SINS INVALID, 2019) – have also been producing counter-hegemonic knowledge that is very important for decolonizing ableism, and have also established dialogues with decolonial authors. Our aim is to strengthen dialogues with authors from the global South, to break with the epistemicides (Ramón GROSFOGUEL, 2016) that, because of the colonialities of knowledge and power, make Latin American productions of knowledge invisible.

These epistemicides have resulted in the invisibility of authors such as Léila Gonzalez who, since the 1980s, has been producing knowledge from a decolonial perspective and who, according to Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda (2020), is the forerunner of decolonial feminism based on the category of "amefricanity". In the text "Por um feminismo afro-latino-americano", [For an Afro-Latin American feminism], originally published in 1988 as part of the collection *Pensamento feminista hoje: perspectivas decoloniais*, (*Feminist thought today: decolonial perspectives*), Gonzalez (2020) sharply criticized the process of classification and hierarchization in Latin America, which reiterates hierarchies of race that guarantee the superiority of whites as the dominant group (GONZALEZ, 1988). She also denounced the dehumanization suffered by "amefrican" (Black and Brown) women, which abolished their humanity and legitimized socio-economic exploitation and sexual super-exploitation. Before the emergence of what Lugones (2014) calls decolonial feminism, Gonzalez proposed an Afro-Latin American feminism, which is open to the participation of ethnically and culturally

¹ Translation of: "estabelecer uma relação entre essas realidades e a ordem mundial capitalista moderno-colonial" (CURIEL, 2020, p. 133).

² "'Decolonial turn' is a term originally coined by Nelson Maldonado-Torres in 2005 and basically signifies the movement of theoretical and practical, political and epistemological resistance to the logic of modernity/coloniality" (BALLESTRIN, 2013, p. 105).

diverse women, and prioritizes the struggle against racism and patriarchy from an anti-imperialist perspective. In the text “A categoria político-cultural de amefricanidade” (The political-cultural category of amefricanity) (GONZALEZ, 1988), the author also developed the concept of amefricanity, a category that transcends geographical dimensions and incorporates the historical process of intense Afrocentric cultural dynamics, which includes adaptation, resistance, reinterpretation and the creation of new cultural dynamics that go against the system of racist domination.

We begin from the assumption that as long as decolonial feminism includes ableism in the decolonial turn, it has the potential to Latinize feminist disability studies, to offer elements that problematize the effects of coloniality that maintain the processes of hierarchization that position people with disabilities as inferior. Based on our dialogues with decolonial thinking, we believe that modernity is the genealogy of ableism.³ The relationship between modernity and coloniality produces processes of classification and hierarchization that dehumanize not only women and racialized people, but also bodies with disabilities, although this latter group is rarely embraced by authors of decolonial feminism.

In this context, we will first give a brief presentation of decolonial feminism. Then we will show how ability is a colonial category. Next we point to modernity as the genealogy of ableism. Finally, we will present some proposals for the construction of feminist disability studies from the global South, to treat the experiences of people with disabilities as fundamental to Latinizing them, considering their realities and political practices.

Decolonial feminism – brief considerations

Our sources are our own political practices.
Ochy Curiel

Decolonial feminism as a theoretical perspective was first proposed as a theory by Argentine feminist María Lugones (2014). According to Curiel (2020), it is based on two important fields of knowledge. One refers to feminist criticisms of hegemonic white feminism for universalizing the concept of women and for its racist, classist and heterocentric bias. These criticisms were made by theorists from *Black Feminism*, women of color, Chicanas, Latin American autonomous feminism, Indigenous feminists and French materialist feminism. The other field refers to the proposals of decolonial theory, the decolonial project developed by various Latin American and Caribbean thinkers, among whom the author highlights Quijano, Nelson Maldonado Torres, and Santiago Castro-Gómez. Curiel’s proposition is in line with the thinking of Brazilian researcher Debora Diniz (2023), since this author is important for both feminist studies and disability studies and criticizes those feminisms that treat the category “women” as universal – disregarding the experiences lived by women and the relationship of these oppressions with the coloniality of knowledge and power.

Hollanda (2020) affirms that decolonial feminism uses situated counter-epistemologies to confront what she calls the “cognitive and North American empire”. In addition, decolonial feminism is based on a critique of the modern colonial system and proposes a radical epistemological revision of Eurocentric feminist theories, which includes an end to the division between theory and activism that has been characteristic of feminisms throughout history. In other words, as pointed out in the epigraph to this topic that cites Curiel, decolonial authors construct knowledge from their political practices.

These issues raised by Curiel (2021) and Hollanda (2020) about the need to break the schism between theory and activism and to produce knowledge based on political practices prompt us to bring to this topic the debate that took place in an educational space in which the three authors of this text were present. This was Module III of the “Mulheres como corpo político”, [Women as a political body] course run by the Brazilian Movement of Blind and Low Vision Women (MBMC). In this space, many women from this social movement expressed astonishment that the text on decolonial feminism entitled “Construindo metodologias feministas a partir do feminismo decolonial”, [Constructing feminist methodologies from decolonial feminism], written by Curiel (2020), which was presented for discussion, did not address disability, although they recognized themselves in many of the issues raised by the text. The second author of this article, who was coordinating the encounter, raised the perception that this astonishment is productive, and presented an important question to the group. This referred to the fact that the embodied experience of disability, which was not present in the text on decolonial feminism, is also a producer of knowledge, as are the experiences of women and racialized people. Based on this issue, it was problematized that disability activism has very important things to say to decolonial feminism, in the sense of crippling it, as proposed by McRuer (2006)⁴ and Mello and Gavério (2019), through

³ From the perspective of decolonial feminism, ableism can be understood as an oppressive system produced by the modern colonial capitalist system, which positions people with disabilities as hierarchically inferior and, ultimately, killable. “Killable lives” is a category presented by Giorgio Agamben (AGAMBEN, Giorgio. *Homo sacer: o poder soberano e a vida nua I*. Tradução Henrique Burigo. Belo Horizonte: Editora da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2010.).

⁴ McRuer (2006) proposed *crip* theory on the basis of a dialog between *queer* theory and disability studies, although the author has also dialogued with decolonial feminism, in particular Gloria Anzaldúa – whom he positions as the

the transformation into knowledge of the embodied experience of disability shared in political education spaces such as those proposed by the MBMC. As discussed in the “Contracartilha de acessibilidade: reconfigurando o corpo e a sociedade”, [The contra-booklet of accessibility: reconfiguring the body and society], crippling has the meaning of “decolonizing, mutilating, deforming and bruising hegemonic thinking about disability, access and inclusion, causing it to crack”⁵ (Anahí MELLO; Marco GAVÉRIO; Olívia von der WEID; Valéria AYDOS, 2020, our translation).

To identify the contributions that women with disabilities can make to decolonial feminism, in this topic we present decolonial theory, also known as decolonial thinking, and then address important assumptions of decolonial feminism.

One of the contributions of decolonial thinking is related to the emergence and meaning of modernity, since, as Quijano (2000, p. 343, our translation) states, “there is no modernity without coloniality”.⁶ In other words, to reaffirm modernity – philosophical, epistemological, political modernity – it is necessary to maintain power relations that circumscribe the colonized as hierarchically inferior in comparison to the settler from the global North. In this sense, Walter Mignolo (2003, p. 30, our translation) points out that “coloniality is the dark and necessary side of modernity”,⁷ since, as Miñoso (2020) pointed out, modernity is racist, Eurocentric, capitalist, imperialist, colonial and, we would add, ableist and cisheteronormative.

Quijano (2005) points out that one of the fundamental axes through which colonial power is expressed is the classification of the world’s population based on the idea of race. According to the author, this classification emerged after the colonization of the Americas began and “race was a category established for the purpose of basic social classification of the population, to create social hierarchies used to justify the domination of the colonizers by the colonized”⁸ (QUIJANO, 2005, p. 107, our translation).

The authors of the “Modernity and Coloniality Group” emphasized that there is a triple dimension to coloniality, that is: the coloniality of power, knowledge and being, which act together to form the nefarious side of modernity. These concepts have been incorporated by decolonial feminism. The **coloniality of power** is described by Quijano (2005) as a process of classification, hierarchization and control of the global population based on the idea of race. Mignolo (2010) points out that the coloniality of power encompasses a complex structure centered on the control of the economy, authority, nature and natural resources, gender and sexuality, as well as subjectivity and knowledge. The **coloniality of knowledge**, in general terms, “has to do with the way in which certain Western knowledge is legitimate, which always studies these others, but does not legitimize them as part of knowledge”⁹ (Analba TEIXEIRA; Ariana SILVA; Ângela FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 119, our translation). From this perspective, subaltern knowledge and cosmologies are represented as pre-modern and pre-scientific, and northern knowledge generates an academic dependency (BALLESTRIN, 2017), since modern science is the only way to validate knowledge (MIGNOLO, 2017). In other words: “a grand universal narrative is created in which Europe and the United States are simultaneously the geographical center and the culmination of the temporal movement of knowledge, where the knowledge of subalternized populations is undervalued, ignored, excluded, silenced and made invisible”¹⁰ (CURIEL, 2020, p. 128, our translation).

The **coloniality of being** was proposed by Maldonado-Torres based on the author’s reflection on whether Black people are included in humanity, based on Franz Fanon. “This idea has a history, starting with the debate about whether or not Indigenous peoples were human, whether or not they had souls, and then with the animalization of Black people. This process continues to this day in coloniality”¹¹ (TEIXEIRA; SILVA; FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 119, our translation). Curiel points

first *crip* author. McRuer points out that while *queer* theory starts from the assumption that contemporary society is governed by compulsory heterosexuality, a concept the author borrows from Adrienne Rich, *crip* theory is based on compulsory ability. Mello and Gavério (2019) point out that the term cripple highlights the abjection directed at people with disabilities. Thus, similar to the term *queer*, the use of the term *crip* has an openly aggressive, derogatory and subversive connotation, favoring the emergence of fissures in ableism and coalitions.

⁵ Translation of: “descolonizar, mutilar, deformar e contundir o pensamento hegemônico sobre deficiência, acesso e inclusão, provocando-lhe fissuras” (Anahí MELLO; Marco GAVÉRIO; Olívia von der WEID; Valéria AYDOS, 2020).

⁶ Translation of: “não há modernidade sem colonialidade” (QUIJANO, 2000, p. 343).

⁷ Translation of: “a colonialidade é o lado obscuro e necessário da modernidade” (Walter MIGNOLO, 2003, p. 30).

⁸ Translation of: “raça foi uma categoria estabelecida com o intuito de classificação social básica da população, de modo a criar hierarquias sociais utilizadas para justificar a dominação dos colonizadores pelos colonizados” (QUIJANO, 2005, p. 107).

⁹ Translation of: “tem a ver com a forma como são legítimos certos conhecimentos ocidentais, que sempre estudam esses outros, mas não os legitimam como parte do conhecimento” (Analba TEIXEIRA; Ariana SILVA; Ângela FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 119).

¹⁰ Translation of: “cria-se uma grande narrativa universal na qual a Europa e os Estados Unidos são, simultaneamente, o centro geográfico e a culminação do movimento temporal do saber, onde se subvaloriza, ignora, exclui, silencia e invisibiliza conhecimentos de populações subalternizadas” (CURIEL, 2020, p. 128).

¹¹ Translation of: “Essa ideia tem história, começa com o debate se os índios são ou não são humanos, se tinham ou não alma e, em seguida, com a animalização das pessoas negras. Esse processo continua até hoje na colonialidade” (TEIXEIRA; SILVA; FIGUEIREDO, 2017, p. 119).

out that the denial of the humanity of these groups is also sustained under the narrative that they are “an obstacle to Christianization and modernization” (CURIEL, 2020, p. 127).

Lugones made an important contribution to decolonial thinking by introducing gender as a colonial category. The author criticized the Quijano for circumscribing gender to a dimension that she classifies as reductionist and excessively biological, as something from the “basic sphere of life”, which he calls “sex, its resources and products”. Thus, Lugones points out that, from Quijano’s perspective, “there is a description of gender that is not questioned, and that is too narrow and hyperbiologized – since it presupposes sexual dimorphism, heterosexuality, the patriarchal distribution of power and other ideas of this kind¹²” (LUGONES, 2020, p. 67, our translation). Thus, based on the studies of Oyèrónkẹ Oyèwùmí, a theorist who studied the Yoruba thematic tribe/population, Lugones developed the argument that gender is a colonial imposition, and proposed the ‘modern colonial gender system’ (LUGONES, 2020; TEIXEIRA; SILVA; FIGUEIREDO, 2017).

Rita Segato (2021) presents a position that counters Lugones’ (2008/2020) understanding that the patriarchal structure began after the colonization of Latin America. However, she also points out that it is not possible, as Eurocentric feminism does, to claim that the problem of patriarchal domination is universal and does not differ much between different contexts. Segato affirms that, from the point of view of Eurocentric feminism, “it would be possible to transmit the advances of modernity in the field of Western women to the non-white, indigenous and black women of the colonized continents” (p. 103, our translation). She also criticizes Eurocentric feminism for defending the self-declared moral superiority of European and Europeanized women, who feel authorized “to intervene with their ‘moral’ civilizing, modernizing and colonial *mission* – the so-called *mission civilisatrice* of the West” (p. 103, our translation).¹³ Specifically on patriarchy, Segato (2021), based on her studies of Indo-American, African and New Guinean tribes, highlights the existence of a patriarchal structure in these societies, which she calls *low-intensity patriarchy*. Her analyses indicate, however, that “despite the recognizable character of these gender positions, the tribal world allows more movement and circulation among positions than the modern Western gender” (p. 105), because the colonial structure of the conquerors reproduced a high-intensity patriarchy, which consisted of patriarchal relations imposed by colonialism and reinforced by colonial-modernity. The author points out that the presence of a pre-existing patriarchal structure in Latin America contributed to the success of the conquest, since “it is possible to affirm that the presence of a pre-colonial patriarchal domain made men vulnerable to colonial intrusion and opened the door to colonization” (SEGATO, 2021, p. 111, our translation).

Therefore, based on our reading of the contributions of decolonial feminism, we highlight that it aims to: a) denounce the modern colonial capitalist and neoliberal system and build strategies to confront the effects produced by the oppression it generates in subaltern groups; b) break with epistemologies which, based on knowledge constructed from a universal subject, hierarchize, pathologize and medicalize subalternized groups, dehumanizing them; c) break with the dissociation between theory and practice, militancy and academia, to foster collective strategies of resistance; d) revive and value the knowledge produced in the global South, to break with epistemicide. Finally, although little discussed so far in decolonial feminism, we would also like to highlight the importance of this field of knowledge for understanding ability as a category of colonial oppression, which will be the subject of the next section.

Coloniality of ability

Although decolonial feminism has expanded decolonial thinking by showing that gender, like race, also suffers from the effects of coloniality – since this intensifies the effects of patriarchy – it has barely looked at disability over the years of its existence, which may be due to the absence of women with disabilities in this field, who thus share their political practices to “cripple” knowledge, as discussed in the previous topic. From our readings and discussions on decolonial feminism, we understand that ability is also a colonial category like gender and race. The knowledge that sustains and determines what is an able body, is produced by a modern colonial knowledge matrix that classifies and hierarchizes bodies, positioning them as inferior in order to allow exploitation and, if they are not considered to be able according to the demands of the neoliberal capitalist system, their erasure.

Marcela Ferrari was a pioneer in this dialogue, arguing that decolonial feminism could reconceptualize disability from a Latin American perspective, since the considerations of this field of study would make it possible to refer to a coloniality of ability. Ferrari argues that

¹² Translation of: “existe uma descrição de gênero que não é questionada, e que é demasiadamente estreita e hiperbiologizada – já que traz como pressupostos o dimorfismo sexual, a heterossexualidade, a distribuição patriarcal do poder e outras ideias desse tipo” (LUGONES, 2020, p. 67).

¹³ Segato (2021) points out that the gender strategies of prestigious international cooperation programs “fail precisely because they apply a universalist vision and start from a Eurocentric definition of ‘gender’ and the relationships it organizes” (p. 115, our translation). Furthermore, she adds that these programs, by focusing on individuals, fail to be sensitive to community contexts, which would be ideal because they encourage prominent women to act within their communities, rather than alienate themselves from community life.

the hegemony of the modern/colonial paradigm and the Euro-centered epistemological position left as valid a single, isolated way of understanding the multiple existences in which human beings present themselves in the world¹⁴ (FERRARI, 2020, p. 124, our translation).

In this way, it is possible to argue that the same knowledge that gave rise to the racial theories that, under the nomenclature of scientific racism, position not only non-white people as hierarchically inferior, but also oppress people who, under the scientific notions that define what an able body is, are categorized as less able and sick.

Based on the considerations of decolonial feminism, especially Lugones, Ferrari (2020) states that the coloniality of gender, race and power paves the way for the elaboration of the concept of the coloniality of ability, which is decisive for us. In the author's words,

in the same way that we name a coloniality of power to express the effects of race and racism, and name the structure of oppression built on women and non-binary gender identities as a *coloniality of gender*, we can name as the *coloniality of ability* the disarticulation, blurring and replacement by modern/colonial thinking of the communal ethics of reciprocity and cooperation typical of the cosmivision of our Latin American peoples, and of the logics that correspond to the forms of organization and management of work and resources for existence¹⁵ (FERRARI, 2020, p. 125, emphasis in the original, our translation).

The invasion and conquest of the Americas was responsible for creating hierarchical societies based on race, gender and ability. According to Ferrari (2020), what was established from then on was a colonial position of subalternization as if this were a natural phenomenon and not what it actually is: a power relationship. In this way, the hegemony of modernity/coloniality imposed a single, isolated way of understanding the diversity of bodily landscapes that constitute us. The author emphasizes that it is possible to trace different historical and cultural lines to understand the phenomenon of disability. There are historical and cultural conceptions that construct the concept of disability based on values such as the perfection of the body and intellectual power, going back to some ancient societies, such as the Greeks and Romans. From a materialist perspective, disability is the result of the rise of capitalism and the demand for able and productive bodies to feed the production system (McRUER, 2011-2012; GESSER; Pamela BLOCK; MELLO, 2020; MELLO, 2021). From this perspective,

the events that took place during the 18th century, with Enlightenment values and the beginnings of industrialization in Europe, inaugurated the category of *disability*, which was strengthened by the effects of Darwinism in the following century¹⁶ (FERRARI, 2020, p. 126, our translation).

In these historical trajectories, ability is synonymous with a perfect, robust, intellectually powerful body, ready and available to feed the machinery for the accumulation of wealth. Those who don't correspond to these values are abnormal, unproductive. In capitalism, ability is synonymous with productivity. And disability is its opposite, as also pointed out by Mello (2019).

It is precisely this Eurocentric conception of disability that is called into question if we take another turn in the decolonial turn, to take ability as a colonial category. Ferrari (2020) argues that

from the decolonial critique, the problem that keeps us in the situation of domination and exploitation does not have its genesis in the economic, but in the existence of a civilization that imposes its only perspective on the social, the economic, the sexual, the spiritual and the epistemic, from a complex entanglement of dimensions that configures the entire cosmivision of colonial/modernity, and which is based on an economic system, in this case capitalism¹⁷ (FERRARI, 2020, p. 127, our translation).

If we go back to Latin America before the colonial period, as Ferrari (2020) invites us to do, we will find other forms of social relations, based on reciprocity and community as a social

¹⁴ Translation of: "la hegemonía del paradigma moderno/colonial y la posición epistemológica eurocentrada dejó como válida una única y aislada forma de comprender las múltiples existencias en las que los seres humanos nos presentamos en el mundo" (FERRARI, 2020, p. 124).

¹⁵ Translation of: "de la misma manera que nombramos una *colonialidad del poder* para expresar los efectos de la raza y el racismo, y nombramos como *colonialidad del género* a la estructura de opresión construida sobre las mujeres e identidades de género no binarias, podemos nombrar como *colonialidad de la capacidad* a la desarticulación, borramiento y reemplazo por parte del pensamiento moderno/colonial, de la ética comunal de reciprocidad y cooperación propias de la cosmivisión de nuestros pueblos latinoamericanos, y de las lógicas que les corresponden a las formas de organización y gestión del trabajo y los recursos para la existencia" (FERRARI, 2020, p. 125, emphasis in the original).

¹⁶ Translation of: "Los acontecimientos sucedidos durante el siglo XVIII con los valores de la Ilustración y los inicios de la industrialización en Europa, inauguran la categoría de la *discapacidad* que se fortalece con los efectos del darwinismo en el siglo siguiente" (FERRARI, 2020, p. 126).

¹⁷ Translation of: "desde la crítica decolonial, el problema que nos mantiene en la situación de dominación y explotación no tiene su génesis en lo económico sino en la existencia de una civilización que impone su única perspectiva para lo social, lo económico, lo sexual, lo espiritual y lo epistémico, a partir de un complejo entramado de dimensiones que configura toda la cosmivisión de la colonial/modernidad, y que se sostiene en un sistema económico, en este caso el capitalismo" (FERRARI, 2020, p. 127).

organization. The ways in which work was organized were also different from what was established with capitalism. It was the communal logics of reciprocity, community and collectivity of the pre-colonial Andean peoples that were dismantled by colonial domination and exploitation. In this sense, it is worth pointing out that in Mayan society, before colonization, the existence of some unusual bodily feature gave prestige, prominence and power to the person who had it.

This difference was indicative of divine intervention in the person. Therefore, there was no concept of disability as it came to be established with colonial domination. Thus, if we consider ability as a colonial category, what we are saying is that, for the original peoples, there was no conception of disability as a deficit or personal tragedy (Mike OLIVER, 1990).¹⁸ Taking another turn in the decolonial turn therefore means including ability as a colonial category linked to race and gender. And for us, in this article, taking this further turn is a decisive step towards Latinizing feminist disability studies.

Modernity – the genealogy of ableism

*Ableism is the tyranny of able, skillful and perfect bodies to the detriment of disabled, crippled, deformed, deviant bodies, in short, all bodies considered abject within corponormativity. In a corponormative world, we see the existence of an hierarchy of bodies and when a certain body is considered superior to another, we are practicing ableism.*¹⁹
 Anahí Guedes de MELLO (2019, emphasis added, our translation)

In this section, we will show how modernity is the genealogy of ableism. We were warned about the importance of tracing this genealogy by Adriana Dias (2013), when she associates ableism with eugenics, which also has its roots in modern colonial thinking. Following in Dias' tracks and our own dialogues with decolonial feminism, in this study we develop this argument based on an analysis of how modern thought classifies and hierarchizes bodies and minds based on the ideal of the Eurocentric subject – which takes the white European man as the universal (standard), positioning him as more capable, more intelligent, more enterprising, the great conqueror. In contrast, subalternized populations are positioned as hierarchically inferior and less able, which has legitimized their pathologization.

Throughout history, the colonialities of knowledge and power have delegitimized the knowledge and ways of life of populations positioned as inferior by establishing fixed standards of being in the world. Furthermore, based on modern criteria – which currently sustain the neoliberal capitalist system – people with characteristics that fall short of the ideal of ability, productivity and competitiveness have been positioned as dependent, sick, disabled and, in some situations, subject to erasure and elimination.

Ramón Grosfoguel argues that modern knowledge, widely disseminated in Westernized universities, presents a modern-colonial epistemic structure that is founded on genocides and epistemicides. The author states that the “idolatrous Cartesianism of the 1640s that assumes the eye of God and arrogates to itself the right to say ‘I think, therefore I am’ is affirming ‘I exterminate, therefore I am’”²⁰ (GROSFOGUEL, 2016, p. 25, our translation). The author's analysis indicates that the epistemic privilege of white Western men has the power to define what is true, privileging imperial/colonial/patriarchal projects in the world and marginalizing various social groups. Furthermore,

the inferiorization of knowledge produced by men and women all over the planet (including Western women) has given Western men the epistemic privilege of defining what is true, what is reality and what is best for others. This legitimacy and monopoly of the knowledge of Western men has generated structures and institutions that produce epistemic racism/sexism, disqualifying other knowledges and other critical voices in the face of the imperial/colonial/patriarchal projects that govern the world-system²¹ (GROSFOGUEL, 2016, p. 25 our translation).

¹⁸ Oliver (1990) points out that the biomedical model, which in this text we classify as modern and colonial because it reproduces the norm/deviation binarism, positions disability as a deficit and a personal tragedy. Therefore, even if there was some kind of discrimination against the disabled body prior to the emergence of this model, the effects of pathologization, medicalization and normalization are inherent to it. Our analysis corroborates Segato's thinking (2021, p. 119, our translation), which points out that the binary scheme “may be the most efficient instrument of modern colonial power”.

¹⁹ Translation of: “[...] **Capacitismo é a tirania dos corpos capazes**, hábeis e perfeitos em detrimento dos corpos deficientes, aleijados, deformados, desviantes, enfim, de todos os corpos considerados abjetos dentro da corponormatividade. Em um mundo corponormativo percebe-se a existência de uma hierarquia de corpos e quando se considera um determinado corpo superior a outro, está se praticando capacitismo” (Anahí Guedes de MELLO, 2019, emphasis added).

²⁰ Translation of: “cartesianismo idolátrico dos anos de 1640 que assume o olho de Deus e arroga-se o direito de dizer ‘penso, logo existo’ é o ‘extermino, logo existo’” (GROSFOGUEL, 2016, p. 25).

²¹ Translation of: “a inferiorização dos conhecimentos produzidos por homens e mulheres de todo o planeta (incluindo as mulheres ocidentais) tem dotado os homens ocidentais do privilégio epistêmico de definir o que é verdade, o que é a realidade e o que é melhor para os demais. Essa legitimidade e esse monopólio do conhecimento dos homens ocidentais tem gerado estruturas e instituições que produzem o racismo/sexismo epistêmico, desqualificando outros conhecimentos e outras vozes críticas frente aos projetos imperiais/coloniais/patriarcais que regem o sistema-mundo” (GROSFOGUEL, 2016, p. 25).

Furthermore, this modern colonial epistemic structure is an excellent device for understanding the process of objectification and pathologization of certain populations. Curiel (2020) explains this phenomenon by pointing out that the coloniality of knowledge positions certain groups as objects to be studied, investigated, made exotopic, and explored in order to identify possibilities for intervention.

The notion of ability is used as a basis to justify the domination of women and racialized people, and it is therefore possible to relate ableism to modernity (which needs coloniality to exist). Race, gender, class and disability are closely intertwined – racialized people, women, LGBTQIA+ people and people with disabilities are positioned as less able (Sunaura TAYLOR, 2017) of reproducing/maintaining the current neoliberal capitalist system. The transformation of Latino men and women into males and females (LUGONES, 2014) is also a very important element for understanding the strategies of colonial domination. It is important to note that this oppression is necessary to legitimize the current neoliberal capitalist system, as it justifies the exploitation of so-called subaltern populations by modernity and the sale of a set of technologies produced by the colonizing countries to cure/produce normalization. Thus, the hierarchization of bodies based on ability is the central element to be problematized, as it fosters oppression. In other words, as highlighted above, the same knowledge that gave rise to racial theories which, under the nomenclature of scientific racism, consider non-white people to be hierarchically inferior, also oppresses people with disabilities based on scientific notions of ability, positioning them as sick and less capable.

Lilia Lobo (2015), in her book *Os infames da história: pobres, escravos e deficientes no Brasil* (*The infamous of history: the poor, slaves and disabled in Brazil*), shows, based on her analysis of travelers' accounts, how native peoples were represented in the imagination of the Europeans who colonized Brazil. The author highlights:

With the discovery of a new world, Renaissance man felt “seized by the vertigo of curiosity” (SOUZA, 1986, p. 23). His interest in the rare, the strange, became accentuated, but the narratives gradually began to lose the characteristics of the medieval “hearsay”. For a long time, however, this unknown world, lost in the middle of the Atlantic, would occupy European fantasies, sometimes of a paradise on earth, a place of permanent beauty and bonanza, sometimes of prodigious dangers, monstrosities and demons, the borderline of humanity, hell for the purging of crimes and punishments²² (LOBO, 2015, p. 24, our translation).

Therefore, the characters in Lobo's work (2015) are presented based on representations of the 'Brazilian savages', 'cannibal Indians', and the 'figure of the idiot'. They are described from the perspective of monstrosity, anomalies and degeneracy. Renata Prudencio da Silva's (2011, p. 194, our translation) analysis of Lobo's work points out that these representations that objectified and dehumanized these subjects were made “from erudite and scientific discourses, inspired by European theories”.²³

The process of positioning people from the global South as insane and degenerate, an expression of the modern colonial system, can also be seen in the profile of the population that has been institutionalized in psychiatric hospitals in Brazil. In her book *Brazilian Holocaust*, about the Barbacena Psychiatric Hospital – the largest mental hospital in Brazil – Daniela Arbex (2013) reports on the process of psychiatric hospitalization, which had commonly been carried out in a standardized way, including in relation to diagnoses. The author points out that approximately 70% of the people hospitalized did not have a mental illness, but were epileptics, alcoholics, homosexuals, prostitutes, single mothers, Blacks, homeless people, the poor, undocumented people and also those who rebelled against the social order. Furthermore, the eugenicist theory, which reiterated the idea of social cleansing, strengthened the hospital and justified the abuses committed there. Thus, this theory supported violent practices aimed at “ridding society of the dregs by getting rid of them, preferably in a place that could not be seen”²⁴ (ARBEX, 2013, p. 26, our translation). And so, based on the dialogue between decolonial feminism and the thinking of Judith Butler (Baukje PRINS; Irene MEIJER, 2002), coloniality produced (and still produces) disability as abjection,²⁵ distancing itself from the demand of many disabled activists that it be understood as a category of difference, a way of life.

²² Translation of: “Com a descoberta de um novo mundo, o homem do Renascimento sentiu-se “tomado pela vertigem da curiosidade” (SOUZA, 1986, p. 23). Seu interesse pelo raro, pelo estranho, acentuou-se, mas as narrativas pouco a pouco começaram a perder as características do “ouvi dizer” medieval. Por um bom tempo ainda, porém, esse mundo desconhecido, perdido no meio do Atlântico, ocuparia as fantasias europeias, ora de um paraíso na terra, lugar da beleza e da bonança permanentes, ora dos prodigiosos perigos, das monstruosidades e dos demônios, linha limítrofe da humanidade, inferno da purgação dos crimes e dos castigos” (LOBO, 2015, p. 24).

²³ Translation of: “a partir de discursos eruditos e científicos, inspirados em teorias europeias” (Renata da SILVA, 2011, p. 194).

²⁴ Translation of: “livrar a sociedade da escória desfazendo-se dela, de preferência em local que a vista não pudesse alcançar” (ARBEX, 2013, p. 26).

²⁵ Abjection is understood as that which, because it diverges from what is considered normative, seeks to avoid and distance itself at all costs. This definition is close to Butler's, who in an interview with Prins and Meijer (2002) affirms that

Latinizing feminist disability studies from the global South

We often share situations that make us feel lonely, exhausted, insecure, wondering if we are overreacting to empowering speeches and actions, or if we are less of an activist because we suffer for them. By sharing, we realize that these feelings are collective and, even without pretending to name them, we manage, each in our own time, to re-signify them and thus strengthen ourselves for political action.

Karla Luiz, Laureane Costa, Mariana Rosa e Thais Silveira (2023, p. 253)

In this section, we will present, based on dialogue with decolonial feminism, some elements to support Latinizing feminist disability studies. For us, Latinizing has a dual and articulated meaning. Firstly, it considers ability as a colonial category that like gender, race and class must be analyzed as a producer of oppression by the modern neoliberal capitalist colonial system, which demands able and (re)productive bodies to maintain itself. Secondly, Latinizing feminist disability studies also means fostering, harvesting and disseminating insurgent, insubordinate narratives that are woven daily into the struggles and movements of Latin America's disabled.

To Latinize is to retell the Latin American social history of people with disabilities, resisting and producing confrontations to the ableism that is so present on our continent and which, by inferiorizing and dehumanizing them, makes it difficult to produce coalitions among subalternized groups. For Gloria Anzaldúa (2021, p. 109), "building coalitions is an attempt to balance power relations and destroy and subvert the system of domination-subordination that affects even our most unconscious thoughts"²⁶ (our translation). To this end, it is necessary and urgent to produce cracks in the hierarchies of knowledge which, based on the coloniality of knowledge, power, being, gender and ability, position people who do not correspond to the ideal of ability demanded by neoliberal capitalism as incapable, corroborating to the maintenance of social hierarchies that will produce the subaltern, the incapable. In this direction, Curiel (2020), based on the work of Patricia Hill Collins, emphasizes the need for Black women to investigate their lived experiences. Thus, our political practices have as their direction the establishment of alliances and struggles so that women with disabilities are increasingly inserted into academia and other community spaces and, based on their experiences and political practices, and in coalition with other groups positioned as inferior, produce 'crippled' knowledge, in the direction of cracking racist, sexist, classist, ableist and cisheteronormative narratives. In short, the subjugated experience of women with disabilities must stop being an object and become a subject in the production of knowledge.

Latinizing feminist disability studies and decolonial feminism is an ethical-political challenge for promoting human emancipation. We understand that to emancipate women with disabilities, it is necessary to break with the bonds of coloniality which, through processes of classification, hierarchization and pathologization, hinder the coalition of the oppressed aimed at strengthening the anti-ableist struggle. Based on our research with women with disabilities and not about disability (Marivete GESSER; Adriano NUERNBERG; Maria Juracy TONELI, 2014; GESSER, Ilze ZIRBEL; LUIZ, 2022; MORAES, 2010; MORAES, 2022; LUIZ, 2023; Juliana PAIVA, 2023), we situate ourselves as activists for the emancipation of women with disabilities because for us research is an emancipatory political action.

The accounts we have shared with women with disabilities in our research and political practices support the premise that modern colonial knowledge has corroborated the process of incarceration, sterilization and elimination of people with disabilities, as Adriana Dias (2013) and Jéssica Teixeira (2020) have pointed out. Thus, it is important to criticize modern colonial thinking and the effects it has had on the lives of people with disabilities as a strategy of denunciation and take the ethical-political direction of breaking down ableism.

We mentioned earlier the joint work we did with blind and low-vision women, activists from the feminist social movement MBMC. On that occasion, in April 2023, we held a course whose main theme was the study of decolonial feminism. As we mentioned, the visually impaired women who read the texts indicated expressed astonishment and concern at the absence of ability as a relevant category for the decolonization of knowledge. This astonishment, rather than indicating regret, was affirmed as a productive force: the experiences of women with disabilities are also producers of situated, embodied knowledge. Of course, the experience of living in a disabled body is not enough for the insurgency we experience in our meetings with the MBMC, because there is a process of political construction of living in this embodiment that is woven daily by the social movement. This work consists of situating oneself politically in power relations, beginning with the experience of disability. Thus, the astonishment that the women experienced at the lack of thematization of ability on the part of decolonial feminism was also propositional, in the sense that, to decolonize knowledge, it is necessary to intersect disability with other social markers of oppression. Building a feminist experience where women with and without disabilities meet, presupposes recognizing the singularities of disabled bodies. It is this turn that urgently needs to be made in the decolonial turn.

object bodies are all kinds of "bodies whose lives are not considered 'lives' and whose materiality is understood to be 'unimportant'" (p. 168, our translation).

²⁶ Translated of: "construir coalizão é uma tentativa de equilibrar relações de poder e destruir e subverter o sistema de dominação-subordinação que afeta até nossos pensamentos mais inconscientes" (Gloria ANZALDÚA, 2021, p. 109).

Finally, in a similar way to what *queer* and *crip* theories propose by subverting the pejorative meanings of these terms (*queer* and *crip*) to gain a political and emancipatory meaning, we believe that by employing the term 'Latino' as 'Latinize', we are making a call to action. Collins and Bilge (2021) pointed this out when they examined a movement that was formed in the 1970s in Chicago, around the recognition of the political and strategic position that brought Mexicans and Puerto Ricans together as part of a larger collective, as Latinos. The movement, which was built on coalition practices, sought to confront prejudice and discrimination. In the words of the authors, in this movement, Latino or Latina "signifies a political coalition aware of multiple differences"²⁷ (p. 206, our translation) and not a homogenization or erasure of differences.

For us, Latinizing fissures decolonial feminism because it places ability as a fundamental category for this field of knowledge. Latinizing, for feminist disability studies, shifts the axis of discussion to the Latin American context, making visible the embodied experiences of women with disabilities, which throughout history have been reduced to objects of study. The call we make in this text is in the direction indicated above, that of a political coalition among women with disabilities, so that they can tell their stories and produce new narratives of disability: diverse, plural and insurgent. This inaugurates a whole other field of knowledge.

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²⁷ Translated of: "significa uma coalizão política consciente das múltiplas diferenças" (Collins; Bilge, 2021, p. 206).

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