

Decolonial Gestures

Anarcho-Feminist Indigenous Critique

In the Casa del Museo de la Moneda (House of the Coin Museum) in Potosí, Bolivia, large glass exhibits display the first coins produced from silver extracted from within the nearby Cerro Rico (Rich Mountain) mine. First made in 1536, before switching to tin in 1576, these rough-edged coins circulated within the local and global economy until they became odd-shaped pieces that had to be taken out of circulation when bits of silver were picked off each of the *monedas*. By early in the seventeenth century, Potosí, Bolivia, was a bustling cosmopolitan center. Dubbed “the richest city on the planet,” Potosí became the epicenter of a colonial global economy based on extracting silver from Cerro Rico, a mountain sacred to Aymara Indigenous people, and originally named Sumaj Orco. The extreme conditions of the mine diminished the Indigenous labor force that worked there, and after a request made in 1608 to the Spanish Crown, African slaves were imported to the Andes to supplement the arduous death work of silver extraction, fundamentally reshaping the character of colonialism, slavery and the racial caste system.¹

In the two-hour tour of the museum through exhibitions on Potosí colonial art with detailed panels dedicated to the colonial life of the city and an intricate explanation of the coin production process, the colonial and modern history of Indigenous and African labor was curiously absent from the museum narrative. When pausing in front of the famous anonymous eighteenth-century painting *Virgin Cerro Rico* for a long explanation of its metaphoric content, there was little reference to the colonial condition that produced the rendering. In the painting, Cerro Rico Mountain is symbol-

ized as a syncretized Virgin Mary, with a depiction of Diego Hualpa folded into the deity’s mountain skirt. The Aymara discoverer of silver lights his way through the cavernous spaces of the deep mine. Even while the dense symbols of this painting were thoughtfully interpreted by our guide, what he did not address were the enslaved eight million Indigenous and the thirty thousand African peoples who labored within Cerro Rico. Or was there any mention of the one million whose remains are still buried within it. Finally, the gender, sexed, and racialized meaning of the Cerro Rico Mountain, as a mestiza Virgin Mary, was also not commented upon.

How can we understand the disappearance and silencing of Indigenous and African labor within the museum narrative of primitive accumulation that jump-started the global economy? Where were the displays that attended to the memories of the slavely conditions of the *mita* (forced labor) system that lasted from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth century? As I moved from one cold thick-walled adobe room to another, the museum continued to forestall an answer. Overcome by these thoughts, I could not find warmth within the vault-like spaces.

As the museum tour came to a close, I looked up in the courtyard and hanging several feet above me was a large brown mask with a smile on its face and a thick bandana over the forehead. This “red face” mask hung over the courtyard entrance, a cartooned and racist presence that reminded the visitor of the conspicuous disappearance of Indigeneity elsewhere.² Finding a slice of warm sun on the patio, I ditched my tour guide and instead made room for a groundskeeper who was also in need of sunlight. As we looked out onto the pale orange Cerro Potosí in the distance, we noted how from our two-kilometer vantage point we could not see the sinkhole on the top of the mountain that had been created by five hundred years of overextraction.

As a majority Aymara Indigenous space and the site of primitive accumulation since the sixteenth century, Cerro Rico represents a highly symbolic geography of Spanish colonialism and early extractive capitalism. It is also a dense site of heteropatriarchy because of the mining industry’s tendency to absent Indigenous gendered labor from national and local narratives.³ My tour through the amnesiac corridors of the Casa del Museo de la Moneda led me to study intersectional critique and histories replete with the memory of collective and embodied resistance as found in the genealogies of Indigenous anarcho-feminisms.

My analysis in this chapter attends to the complex of anticolonial and anticapitalist genealogies that are also linked to Indigenous anarcho-feminisms. As Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui has critically conceptualized, Indigenous anarcho-feminisms simultaneously defy the capitalist global economy and find routes of escape from the reinscription of Andean patriarchy.⁴ Thus, the specific connections I develop in this chapter move through genealogies of contestation that presence enactments of feminist, queer, anarchist, and Indigenous resistance that refuse and contend with institutions of foreign control, the *criollo* (European elite) state, sex normalcy, and forms of Andean and colonial patriarchy.⁵ More specifically, I examine Indigenous anarcho-feminisms as decolonial gestures, or political enactments that articulate the complexity of overlapping forms of subjugation from within the extractive zone.

Anarcho-Indigenous feminisms represent a form of living otherwise that opposes, critiques, makes visible, and remakes the extractive zone. What lessons can be learned from anarcho-Indigenous feminism, which is both rooted within and disidentified from coloniality and Andean “tradition”? How does this form of social affiliation and long-standing intersectional critique provide a model for moving beyond the colonial divide and the extractive zone?

Since the 1980s, *Mujeres Creando* has been an important nexus of activity for anarcho-Indigenous feminisms. The group uses the principle of embodied and autonomous critique as a source for knowledge production. It draws upon historical models of horizontal organizing endemic to Indigenous Andean societies and anarchist praxis, articulating a mode of critical living that is not satisfied with the erasure of gender/sex embodiment. Rather than a land-based episteme, it is an intellectual and vernacular formation that begins with modes of being, thinking, doing, and relating otherwise, that are experienced through the body and in relation to each other.

Mujeres Creando represents two different paths of anarcho-feminism, both of which are rooted in antiracist work and within decolonial expressive praxis.⁶ I address early *Mujeres Creando* performances and the later instantiations that include Julieta Paredes’s work with feminist cultural center *Café Carajada* as well as her writings, and María Galindo’s activities at the cultural house in La Paz, also called *Mujeres Creando*. I also analyze one of the most important expressions of current anarcho-Indigenous

feminisms, the rewriting of Evo Morales’s Plurinational Constitution (2011) as “The Feminist Constitution.”

It is impossible to understand a formation such as Indigenous anarcho-feminism and the important work it does to lift decolonial perspectives without thinking about the extractive zone that is silver and tin mining. In the first part of the chapter, I complicate the parameters of radical history within the Andes to rewrite the narrative of colonial dissent through anarcho-Indigenous feminist critique. These early sections allow me to show how *Mujeres Creando* and *Mujeres Creando Comunidad*, two different, if imbricated, formations, have inherited this genealogy, activating anarcho-Indigenous-feminist politics, aesthetics, and communal modes of decoloniality from within the extractive zone.

The Potosí Zone

Whether resisting the forced labor of the *mita* system or by creating forms of local trade, horizontal living, or land-based economies that parallel the colonial order, the sheer number of revolutionary social movements and alternative models in the region lead me to describe the particular extractive zone of silver and tin mining as one of permanent insurrection.⁷ Like the Black radical tradition born from inquiry into racialized subjugation and disidentification with the death project of transatlantic slavery, the Andean radical tradition emerged during the sixteenth century to critique, contend with, and seek routes out of colonial subjugation and violence. Indeed, this intellectual and grounded genealogy of struggle presences the Indigenous laborer and resistance in the extractive zone, in spaces such as Cerro Rico, throughout the mining economies of Bolivia, and later within the urban peripheries of La Paz.

To move toward an anarcho-Indigenous feminist critique of the extractive zone, several points are key. First, as Glen Coulthard, Sarita See, and many others have pointed out, Marx’s concept of primitive accumulation incompletely theorized that capitalism was historically predicated upon Indigenous dispossession.⁸ Second, because Indigenous peoples and their territories have long figured as a shadow global labor force, whose territories fuel the global capitalist system, critical Indigenous theory becomes a major, rather than minor, analytical frame in relation to the topic

of extractivism. And third, like the *maquila* (assembly factory) industry along the US border, and the garment industry that depends upon Asian and Latina/Latin American working-class labor, mining extracts from and profits upon gendered and sexed bodies to literally power global capitalism.⁹ Thus, using the lens of Indigenous feminisms, an analytic that does not conform to European gender and sex systems, allows us to see deeper into the workings of the mining industry, its demand for racialized and gendered labor within the extractive zone, and genealogies of resistance.

As a gendered enterprise, mining plays a major economic, political, and cultural role within Andean societies,¹⁰ often to the exclusion of its female laborers. For instance, since the nationalization of natural resources in 1952, mining cooperatives such as the Corporación Minera de Bolivia continue to retain a highly visible, powerful, and much celebrated culture of mining organized through masculine work and survival. Within mining, female Indigenous workers have often been relegated to a secondary status, and within studies of revolutionary activity, female organizing has been even less visible, overshadowed by a masculinist narrative of revolutionary heroism. The lesser-known story of mining is its dependence on the labor of women and children, a fact that is often hidden from archives of anticapitalist and anticolonial struggle. In particular, women and children provide labor to the extractive zone by supporting the heterosexual “mining family” at home, while also working within the slag waste piles that lie just to the south of Cerro Rico, the million-ton heap of the mining sector’s wasted materials. Over the course of five centuries, hundreds of thousands of women and children have labored as porters, recycling mining extraction’s toxic materials.¹¹

In her study *Nos/Otras en democracia: Mineras, cholas, y feministas, 1976–1994* (Us Feminists: Miners, Cholas, and Feminists), Lourdes Zabala details how extreme exploitation within the mining industry could take place only by normalizing patriarchy, a condition that was later refuted by female anarchists who organized among working-class women. In the context of labor’s increasing radicalization during the 1920s, female laborers worked alongside their male counterparts to achieve the eight-hour workday. Furthermore, through hunger strikes and other embodied means of protest, they also successfully liberated political prisoners and improved wages, developing an antistate and profeminist agenda.¹² Thus, Indigenous and working-class women often articulated their dissent through multiple

viewpoints and perspectives, opening the hemisphere’s horizon of radical politics beyond that of a heteronormative and masculinist vision.

In *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us*, June Nash famously interviewed Aymara leader and organizer Domitila Chúngara about the hunger strike led by Indigenous women in 1962 to protest a labor union lockout in the tin mine industry. In the interview, Chúngara describes how the “housewives organized themselves because they did not pay their salaries on time. The army came and imprisoned the union leaders. Then all the workers declared a strike. Those women whose husbands were in jail . . . went to get their husbands’ liberty, but failed. They decided to unite and make a solid front to ask for their liberty.”¹³ Though female organizing began as an expression of solidarity for male union leader mistreatment, it soon unfolded into a force of its own that grew in both size and consequence.

Moreover, as a response to the lack of remuneration, female leaders structured their protests through collective bodily dissent, namely through the public activity of self-starving. As Chúngara describes it, “The committee went to La Paz and declared a hunger strike. Radio ‘Pío XII’ censured the act because it was immoral—they said a person could not declare a hunger strike because it was against God’s law . . . but the hunger strike was successful because they brought in the food and pay and also their husbands. At first there were only seventeen women in the strike, but it grew.”¹⁴ As news of the hunger strike traveled, more joined, to the point that self-starving bodies became a critical nexus for antistate, anticapitalist resistance within structurally impossible conditions.¹⁵ Chúngara and the Comité de Amas de Casa (Housewives’ Committee) worked to rearticulate their positions within the mining economy, challenging the extractive gaze that made their unremunerated work invisible. By engaging in hunger strikes and mining organizing efforts, they showed how their labor was not menial to but rather a mainstay of the global economy, and thus demanded visibility for their embodied labor. Given that mining firms routinely withheld payment to their employees and systematically imprisoned those suspected of labor organizing, mining has been the hotspot of Bolivian labor discontent and organizing activities, with female organizers leading slowdowns, strikes, marches, and other activities of dissent.

Another group of workers that have been rendered invisible within the extractive zone are the poorly paid *pailliris*, or slag pile workers, who opened up new spaces of visibility and a discursive terrain of struggle in

otherwise masculine radical narratives and geographies of gender occlusion. During the late 1960s and 1970s, when the Lozada authoritarian regime was in power, the authoritarian state extracted gendered Indigenous labor through a military and police apparatus that was deployed to control “dissidents.” In this period, the slag pile workers and female counterparts to male miners emerged as main protagonists, organizing against the increasing tide of state violence. Radicalized by their experience and successes, Indigenous female workers within the mining industry challenged and endured some of the most brutal conditions, and police patrols controlled their labor. Collective resistance by *pailliris*, then, has been essential to a genealogy of anarco-Indigenous feminist critique within mining economies.

Given that extractive economies depend on Indigenous and female reproductive labor as part of its primitive accumulation, anticapitalist organizing must necessarily take place at the interstices of the peripheral and global economies. By opposing the heteropatriarchal structures embedded within the industry, Indigenous female anarchistic resistance placed duress upon extractive capitalism’s uneven distribution. As I show in the next section, as colonial capitalism historically expanded and gave rise to an uneven process of modernity, the field of opposition also increased such that the social ecologies produced out of struggle also rose to the surface. In other words, new articulations of Indigenous feminist politics and sex managed to slip through the tight grip of the extractive zone.

The Chola’s Submerged Activities

Writing on the interstices of resistance within the extractive zone, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and Julieta Paredes both cite the *chola* market woman as a key figure of Indigenous anarcho-feminism. In this section, I analyze how *cholas*, or Indigenous women in the local market spaces of La Paz, historically organized and represent an important genealogy to present forms of anarcho-feminism. Unlike the slag-pile workers, the *chola* operated through new market circuits, linking her activities to traditional ways while disidentifying from the dominant European heterosexual order and from Andean patriarchy. In this way, *chola* market women posed an alternative to bourgeois and racialized norms of femininity while also challeng-

ing the hegemony of global capitalism. Even as their decolonial acts were often hidden, *cholas* radicalized the local, national, and international political sphere by linking anarchism, Indigeneity, and feminism in ways that produced new publics for themselves and their communities.

Let me elaborate. Early in the twentieth century, anarchism and Indigeneity found similitude in ways that proved fruitful to intersectional challenges to capitalism and heteropatriarchy. Given the exploitative legacies of coloniality, within modernity new forms of radicalism passed through anarcho-syndicalism in which female subjects were vitally present.¹⁶ Lacking access to elite privileges, working-class and Indigenous women found new avenues of visibility through anarcho-syndicalism, such as the groups Sindicato de Minos de Oficios Varios and Federación Obrera Femenina, which included the participation of such female anarchist activists as Catalina Mendoza, Petronila Infantes, and Susana Radar.¹⁷

There were important resonances between Indigenous formations and anarcho-syndicalism. For Aymara peoples, the main social and economic formation was the *ayullu*, or horizontal bartering and exchange system, which functioned as a flexible and nonhierarchical social structure. Similarly, during modernization, anarchist principles challenged hierarchies by seeking alternatives outside of the capitalist system. Bartering, horizontal decision making, and nonhierarchical forms of living were central to daily life in Bolivia. In this way, the rise of anarcho-syndicalism found resonance within Indigenous communities, presenting social alternatives and models of political organizing that addressed the inequalities of the “winner take all” approach of extractive industries.

As Indigenous women entered the labor market in vast numbers during twentieth-century industrialization, they found themselves within an increasingly complex matrix of coloniality. With capitalism expanding into the hinterlands, rural to urban migration dramatically altered the social fabric, intensifying racial and cross-class contact and enhancing the uneven conditions of a gendered public sphere. In this context, Bolivian middle-class women fought for suffrage rights within organizations such as El Ateneo Feminino. Meanwhile, Indigenous feminisms made visible the asymmetries within the labor market, while also drawing attention to the racialized and moralizing exclusions within gender-equality campaigns.

As touchstone figures within a rising and defiant anarchist feminist po-

litical culture, *cholas* actively worked against the normative structures of gender and sexuality. Zabala documents how *cholas* challenged middle-class and upper-class feminists by raising such issues as “couple violence, and the need for a new morality, the defense of free love, absolute divorce, and the rejection of civil marriage,” and incorporating such principles into a radical new feminist agenda.¹⁸ The radical proposals by *cholas* paid close attention to sex and gender in ways that challenged moral discourses while also addressing the dramatic changes wrought by Bolivian modernity. For instance, they challenged the presumption of bourgeois marriage, and the idea that sex had to be tied to one partner within a normative European or *criollo* family structure.

Over the course of the twentieth century, *cholas* gained considerable power through their commercial success that came from selling, buying, and bartering goods in the regional marketplace, creating a network of female Indigenous activists that pushed beyond the constraints of a masculine public sphere. As Julieta Paredes told me, according to her grandmother, who was an Aymara market woman, the *chola* was not someone to be messed with: she had the confidence and skill that made her dominant within a supposedly male economic sphere.¹⁹ *Cholas* organized, sold, and bartered within complex marketplace economies using the *ayullu* system as a system of commercial exchange that was not legible to the rules and structures of capitalism; they also created new social systems and extended kinship networks, thereby growing the spaces of influence for Andean cultural forms. Thus, local market spaces run by *chola* women represented a submerged network of economic and cultural activity within the wider global structure of the extractive mining economy. And within urban spaces that were in close contact with the rural sector, *chola* market women were powerful and visible brokers of alternative commercial exchange.

However, *cholas*’ newfound visibility functioned in contradictory ways, as they were often met with hostility by a racialized and gendered system of coloniality that sought to circumscribe Indigenous and mestiza women’s roles within society. While *cholas* continued to mediate the marketplace, retaining authority in alternative economic circuits, they increasingly faced workplace discrimination for wearing Indigenous clothing, such as *polleras* (Indigenous skirts and petticoats) and the bowler hat that was popular from the 1920s on. In short, because of their rising economic and political position, *cholas* often contended with ever-changing forms of racism and

sexism that reproduced their invisibility within masculine spheres even as their highly visible image was appropriated by national culture.²⁰

In addition to *criollo* society’s contradictory discourses, which often scrutinized the “less than moral” behaviors of *cholas*, masculinist political movements also occluded the presence of Indigenous feminisms, specifically in relation to anarchism. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui threads together how the history of anarchism in Bolivia and throughout the Américas has been contained and obscured by leftist Marxist hegemony.²¹ She shows how revolutionary forces increasingly consolidated around a growing Marxist hegemony that culminated in taking state power, forcing feminist anarchist leaders to pull back in subsequent decades. Although the rise in 1954 of the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR) nationalized the substantial wealth that came from Bolivia’s resources, for instance, it did not register significant levels of female membership during its reign. What happened in Bolivia, as Rivera Cusicanqui explains, is that “there have been two official histories: The official history written by the [Revolutionary] Nationalist Party—MNR—that basically denies all the agency of both workers and peasants and indigenous peoples; and the official history of the Left that forgets about anything that was not Marxist, thus eclipsing or distorting the autonomous history of anarchist unions. It’s the links between the anarchists and the indigenous people that gave them another nuance, because their communities are self-sustained entities and they basically are places where anti-authoritarian type of organization can take roots.”²² Rivera Cusicanqui analyzes how the MNR tended to write out non-Marxist lineages from Bolivia’s history, specifically marginalizing anarchism from radical history. She later addresses the eradication of female protagonists as another significant omission. Then, as now, anarchist feminist Indigenous critique offers other models of anticolonial struggle often imperceptible to the official Marxist political narrative.

By giving primacy to the social, cultural, economic, and political role of *cholas* and *pailliris* within the modern capitalist global economy, an Indigenous feminist genealogy of radicalism emerges. Piecing together these histories, as Rivera Cusicanqui reminds us, *cholas* reshape masculine revolutionary narratives “because the *chola* figure, the women, the female fighter, the female organizer are all part of Bolivian daily life.”²³ Engaging Indigenous anarcho-feminist critique by centering on the *chola* offers a powerful decolonial femme perspective that peers into the hidden but parallel

economies of the global capitalist system. At the same time that Indigenous anarcho-feminisms enliven the social ecologies that organize to survive within the extractive zone, they also lift the hidden transcripts of non-normative sexualities.

Decolonial Gestures

Over the next several decades, the afterlives of authoritarianism, the rise of neoliberalism, and the ravages of a debt economy demanded new spaces of anarcho-feminist intervention. As in many nations of the Global South, and especially within South America, the 1980s represented a period of hyperinflation, with devastating outcomes for the middle and working classes. Bolivia, in particular, was in the middle of a US austerity experiment and an uneven transition to liberal democracy.²⁴ As Julieta Paredes, cofounder of Mujeres Creando, explained, “Feminist communalisms offered economic and social alternatives, as well as a critical stance during the failure of the Washington Consensus.”²⁵ Thus, the Mujeres Creando network was created at a time of acute capitalist crisis, a time when Bolivia was undergoing intense political and economic change within an expulsive and debt driven global economy.

A series of video performances from this decade, produced by Mujeres Creando and housed with the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics, shows how anarcho-Indigenous feminisms addressed sexuality, desire, and the invisibility of homoerotic intimacy amid this bleak economic backdrop. In one performance, an Aymara woman stands in the middle of a tin container filled with water and washes her feet. The cityscape of La Paz stretches behind her, as she pauses, looks into the camera, and directly states, “I am a *chola*.”²⁶ In this direct address, she affirms her Indigenous feminist positionality. In the next scene, the same member of Mujeres Creando addresses her sexual preference by saying, “It has been very lovely to be in the company of other women.” She then declares herself heterosexual, recounting that it has taken her a very long time to make such a decision. Posed defiantly as she unbraids and then combs through her hair, she tells the story of how she met and decided upon being with her current partner. As she says, “He needed to know that *soy una chola diferente, soy una chola libre*” (I am a different kind of chola, a free chola), and “you will have to accept that.”²⁷

The Mujeres Creando video archive represents a composite consideration of the intertwining of race and gender within the stratified public sphere, and a confrontation to expectations about traditionalism. It also articulates local vernaculars with respect to sexuality. As Paredes describes it, this work emerged in a time of neoliberal transition when anarcho-feminist performances symbolically blocked the reach of US Empire by moving away from imported discourses about gay liberation toward the declaration, “I am a different *chola*, a free *chola*.” Linking this difference back to the history of coloniality, Indigenous embodiment has long been inscribed within Spanish conduct codes and outside of the bourgeois paradigm of heterosexual female normalcy. While these constructions produce few actual spaces of sexual autonomy, the performance videos archive the importance of *chola*’s free expression in whatever form it takes.

An instance of this emerges in another performance video, in which a large bed is framed within an open public square in an unidentified part of La Paz. On the bed, two female lovers lie provocatively and openly. While this may seem like a simple act of visibility, the political implications of the work are profound, especially given that at the time lesbianism and female sexuality were themes that were hardly publicly addressed. Thus, the performance extends the site of homoerotic desire and political aesthetics from the bedroom to—in this case, quite literally—the public square.

Public expressions by the Indigenous and mestiza women of Mujeres Creando have often taken an even more confrontational approach, making the colonial hierarchies of the extractive zone visible through a range of interruptions. For instance, dressed in *polleras* and with their hair in long braids, Mujeres Creando would enter high-end restaurants of La Paz and wait to be served. If denied service, members of Mujeres Creando would decry differential treatment by the restaurant owners and its patrons, denouncing such spaces as exclusionary. The objective of such actions was not solely to contest the vernacular condition of racism or to recenter a politics of recognition through the figure of the *chola*. By visibly performing the *chola* identity in spaces of economic and cultural exclusion, members of Mujeres Creando also were not “playing Indian” or putting on “redface.” Indeed, given that the members of Mujeres Creando were mostly Aymara and mestiza with intimate connections to *chola* cultural forms, such interruptions instead presenced the gender and racial nonnormativity of *cholas* within the Bolivian public sphere.

Perhaps the best-known work by Mujeres Creando is their graffiti, signature slogans with distinctive cursive writing that found their way first onto city walls and later into the exhibition hall of the Reina Sofía museum. The tag line, “Ser indígena es tan bonito como ser lesbiana o ser maricon” (To be Indigenous is as beautiful as being a Lesbian or a fag), spoke to the late 1990s political moment in the context of Indigenous uprising and the increasing visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights. In fact, these graffiti expressed symbolic interpolations of the self/other as an alternative form of knowledge production and dissemination, writing anarco-feminist Indigenous histories through condensed and public formats. When the street graffiti were translated into the museum site of the Reina Sofía in Madrid, the critique addressed Spain’s historical debt with the Américas.²⁸

A memorable graffiti I encountered in the public sphere of La Paz was “Ní Dios, ní amo, ní marido, ní partido, Mujeres Creando” (Not God, nor boss, nor husband, nor Party, Women Creating), with the sign for “woman” crossed through with an A for “Anarchy” at its closure. This graffiti strikes through the cityscape with its triple-threat refusal of heteronormativity, Indigenous nationalism, and national party politics, while offering the proposal of “Mujeres Creando” (Women Creating) as an open invitation to its viewer.

In contrast to the normalizing visions of urban development and gentrification, graffiti served as a form of visual disobedience, perforating La Paz with moments of anarchic feminist rupture. Graffiti by Mujeres Creando marked out their political terrain not through capitalist transaction, as with real estate speculation or the building of new infrastructure, but instead through the somato-political improvisations of the written word. Furthermore, the expressive formats of Mujeres Creando dialogued with the street to interrupt the association of the public as inherently and primarily a space of male privilege.

Mujeres Creando: A Closer Look

Founded in 1985 by Julieta Paredes, María Galindo, and Monica Mendoza, Mujeres Creando is an important locus of anarco-feminist critique and of the creation of intentional horizontal networks, or feminist communalisms.²⁹ From its inception, the group was composed of mostly female-

bodied members, representing a range of genders, sexualities, and races — though mostly mestiza and Aymara — some of whom openly identified as lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

Since its inception, Mujeres Creando saw itself as the inheritor of an anarco-feminist Indigenous lineage. Therefore, it is not surprising that one of its founders would analyze social problems by linking gender and sex to the colonality of neoliberalism and state politics. As Paredes writes in the opening chapter of *Hilando Fino: Desde el feminismo comunitario* (recently published in its third edition),

Con los cuerpos marcados por el colonialismo, las mujeres hemos recorrido la historia, relacionándonos unas con otras y relacionándonos como mujeres con los varones, también. Estas relaciones, que se han dado en el contexto de un colonialismo interno, tienen por resultado un comportamiento colonial en el erotismo, el deseo, la sexualidad, el placer y el amor, por supuesto.

Sin duda las mujeres de clases medias y altas se beneficiaron en la época neoliberal y se siguen beneficiando del trabajo manual y doméstico de las mujeres jóvenes indígenas.

Given that our bodies are marked by colonialism, women have moved through history in relation to each other, such as women have also been in relation with men. These relationships have taken place within a context of internal colonialism that has, of course, resulted in colonial behaviors within erotics, desire, sexuality, pleasure, and love.

Without doubt, middle- and upper-class women benefited during the neoliberal period and they continue to benefit from the manual and domestic labor of young indigenous women.³⁰

In these lines, Paredes yokes the neoliberal and extractive condition to a specific critique of the gender/race/class order that neoliberalism intensifies. As Paredes defines it, internal colonialism resonates with an anarco-Indigenous feminist critical lens that begins to disentangle the overwrought colonial histories of feminized and racialized embodiment.

The theory and praxis of anarco-feminism often blend through vernacular experience. As Victoria Aldunate Morales analyzes, what it means to do the daily work of anarchist feminism exceeds the ability to theorize and find a language for it.³¹ As a member of Mujeres Creando Comunidad,

Morales describes how the group “works through collective experiences, reasoning through the body, and elaborating a never-ending flow of ideas, concepts, categories, proposals, images, that gives a new vision to feminists and other women.” Such close attention to embodiment, collectivity, and new forms of being requires what Aldunate Morales calls “opening one’s eyes in ways that cannot be closed again, either from oneself or in relation to the female eye.”³² From specific positions, the notion of a “female eye” could be read as liberal, essentialist, and as possessing an exclusionary definition of gender. However, I read Aldunate Morales’s “female eye” perspective here as a mode of seeing that is embodied, non-essentialist and that multiple genders have access to. The decolonial female eye, with an emphasis placed on decolonizing the female within a binary gender system, articulates intersectional consciousness visually, or in this case, defines an anarchist feminist perspective that subverts and exceeds the colonial sight of the normative. In this way, the multiple perspectives of the female eye perceives in opposition to the extractive gaze, the singular, patriarchal, and hierarchical organizing vision of gendered capitalist economies. Rather than an essentialist move, the term “the female eye” expresses a standpoint that moves beyond the cycloptic colonial view, envisioning theories, activities, and solidarities that the state cannot reduce, or that extractive capitalist economies cannot fully capture.

In the broader work of *Mujeres Creando*, Paredes asserts feminist pedagogies, including exchange with the other’s life history as a source of political insight. Paredes also advocates that nonindigenous feminists might see differently through an Aymara worldview, and that mestizas might find a new source of relationality through what she refers to as “communal feminisms” as a way to link back to the *ayullu* principle by specifically invoking anticapitalist ideas. Paredes’s project also queers the idea of Indigenous tradition by analyzing *chachawarmi*, or gender complementarity, as a Western projection of Indigeneity that operates within Andean societies without change. As I described in chapter 2, the notion that “men” and “women” have distinct but equal spheres of influence within Indigenous societies is a static concept of Indigenous tradition, yet it is one that continues to circulate within dominant renderings of Andean Indigeneity.³³ Native feminisms counters this normative idea of gender complementarity by analyzing how a liberal feminist vision of gender equality functions as its own episteme.³⁴

Paredes and *Mujeres Creando* trouble the epistemological certainty of gender and sex by rethinking tradition-bound conventions. More specifically, Paredes believes that *chachawarmi*, or the model of Andean complementarity, often reproduces forms of patriarchal authority that reinscribe national and masculinist forms of power. Rather than fixate on a timeless gender system and the presumed durability of extended kin relations, Paredes seems to theorize and put into practice an emergent and alternative structure of affiliations. By producing critical bonds through new circuits of intimacies, *Mujeres Creando* enlivens new, and future-oriented, horizontal networks. In such instances, Paredes reaches for a theory of multivalent criticalities that asks anarchic feminisms to challenge Indigenous traditions while asserting how Indigenous cosmopolitics help decolonize and rearrange the meaning of liberal feminism. In other words, anarcho-Indigenous feminisms create new transfeminist models that are appropriate to local and regional conditions, linking back to a genealogy of radical dissent, but reaching toward utopic potential.

In early July 2013, I visited Paredes at her La Paz home, a split-level brick house perched high above the center of the city, at the same altitude as white floating clouds. The house was filled with the books that she and Galindo had published together during the 1990s, including texts on sex education, the meaning of lesbian love, the principles of anarchism, and the graffiti of *Mujeres Creando Comunidad*. During Evo Morales’s control of the Bolivian state (2005–present), issues of gender and sex have been overshadowed by a state decolonization discourse that has continued through *caudillismo*, or the charisma of male leadership.³⁵ When the Plurinational Constitution was institutionalized by Morales’s *Movimiento al Socialismo* (Movement for Socialism, MAS) government in 2011, abortion rights, same-sex marriage legislation, and even the right to divorce were either overshadowed by religious morality regimes or underplayed in favor of anti-imperial and wealth redistribution concerns, even as the state continued to invest in an extractive economy. Even within its own rubric that emphasizes Indigenous subjects, languages, and cultures as central to the new government’s project, Morales’s government has not met its own benchmark of decolonization.³⁶ In contrast, Paredes and Galindo also consider sex/gender politics as an important pathway to the complex siting of decolonization, a counterpoint to the official version.

I was invited to present my research to *Mujeres Creando Comunidad* at

the feminist cultural center Café Carcajada. Tucked off a small side street near the center of La Paz, the space attracts a racially diverse group of differently gendered students, activists, and artists who have collaborated together for anywhere from a few months to up to fifteen years. Julieta Paredes and her partner, Adriana, run the cultural center and continue to make anarchist feminist Indigenous politics the center of their expressive agenda, publishing columns in local newspapers, producing lectures and cultural events, and making and selling their arts, crafts, and books.

During my talk, I made historical connections to the hunger strikes in mining by at one point characterizing the practice of Indigenous female hunger striking as a performative act that literally, as Patrick Anderson calls it, “wastes away” before the public view.³⁷ While some of the participants appreciated this theoretical point, one member in particular found the idea of equating hunger striking to a performative act to be a decidedly North American colonizing gesture that misappropriated the painful reality of hunger striking to propagate US performance theory. Though I hold on to the analysis and interpretation that hunger striking is performative, as well as often an intentionally visible political enactment, I also understand how the participant at the event questioned the way local vernaculars of struggle are run through the machine of North American theories, abstracting from local conditions of possibility and constraints. The contradiction, of course, in the member’s thoughtful opinion was that Mujeres Creando Comunidad had, in fact, used performative gesture as one of its emblematic modes of dissent. While the participant’s point about overly theoretical language was a necessary question to the proliferation of academic texts coalescing around the term “decolonial”—and the ever-capacious understanding of the term “performance” for that matter—what stuck with me most was not this often-stated critique of theory. Instead, I wondered how the conceptual language I named might indeed have emerged from my own vantage point that conditioned regional experience through the mill of US theory.

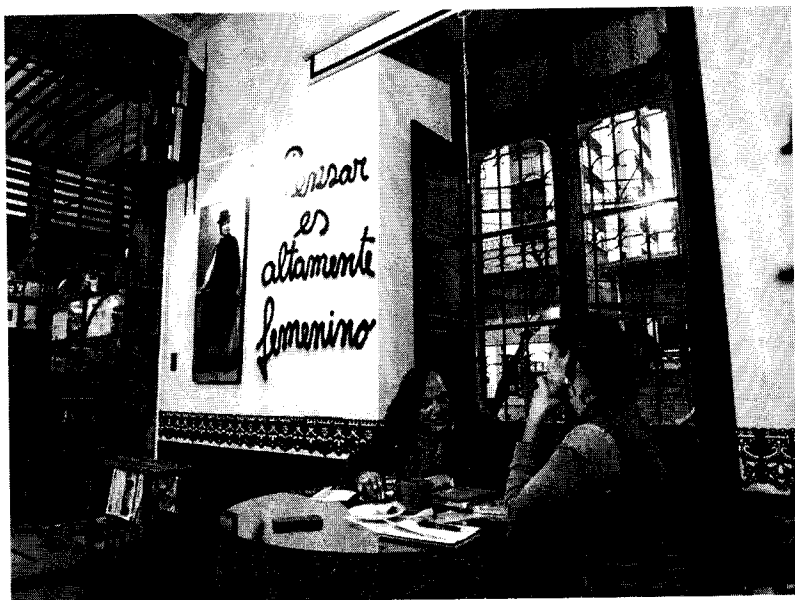
This kind of critique seemed central to the anti-imperial decolonial gesture in the new incarnation of Mujeres Creando Comunidad. As Paredes states, “Political activity does not only happen in political parties or in organized groups; it happens as soon as you are conscious of your actions and your decisions—an intuitive kind of feminism. . . . Through feminism, women come to know themselves and each other, with all our potential,

our strengths, our weaknesses, and we discover a freedom that we keep on developing.”³⁸ While what constitutes the category “women” in this quote might certainly be troubled, and could be widened to a perspective of trans-feminisms that is inclusive of genders not assigned female at birth, the idea of freedom as an operation of political activity that keeps on developing is an unusual and prescient way to define feminist and anarchic potential. Whether referring to the *chola*, the female slag-pile worker, or the hunger striker, together these figures produce a counterhistory of an anarchist Indigenous feminisms that cannot be reduced to the heteropatriarchal confines of the extractive zone.

The Feminist Constitution

My second visit to Mujeres Creando occurred in September 2014, this time to the site of María Galindo’s radio program, which has a restaurant café on its premises and is managed by local Aymara Indigenous women. When I first walked into the crowded two-story colonial house, where lunch patrons were tucked in eating steaming bowls of Andean potato quinoa soup, I was visually overwhelmed by an enormous, gorgeous photograph of an Indigenous woman plastered onto the adobe wall. Written below the photograph was the question, “What does racism look like to you?” This was the first time I had seen racism so visibly acknowledged and questioned anywhere within South America. Given that racism is often occluded within the public sphere, these direct and visible instances of race/class analysis within the feminist project of anarchism show the importance of Mujeres Creando’s stance and its intervention.

María Galindo’s radio shows, video work, performances, and ongoing writing on decolonization carry a decidedly direct critique of Andean patriarchy, Catholic morality, Morales’s extractivist politics and neoliberal agenda, and what I can only describe as a punk anarchist attitude. Galindo’s book, *No se puede descolonizar sin despatriarcalizar: teoría y propuesta de la despatriarcalización* (It is impossible to decolonize without destroying patriarchy: Theory and proposals for destroying patriarchy), opens with a dedication to “la india solitaria,” “la puta fiera,” “la lesbiana indomable,” “y a todas las mujeres rebeldes” (the solitary Indigenous woman, the fierce sex worker, the indomitable lesbian, and to all rebel women).³⁹ When I



Nicole Hayward, "To think is highly feminine,"
 María Galindo (left) with author Macarena Gómez-Barris, 2014.
 Photo courtesy of Nicole Hayward.

asked Galindo if this included trans-women, she responded, "trans-women also disobey gender norms." In an earlier period, perhaps such a direct and forceful response would not have come from *Mujeres Creando*, but the LGBT rainbow tide in Latin America has certainly made trans-awareness more widespread and central to its future oriented project.⁴⁰

Unlike my interviews at that time with Julieta Paredes, which were somewhat more tempered in their analysis of Morales's path to decolonization, Galindo was decidedly more critical, calling his politics paternalistic and regressive, and showing visible contempt for the "Aymara path to Andean socialism" rhetoric as mere liberal multiculturalism.⁴¹ In this regard, Galindo's efforts, alongside those of *Mujeres Creando*, include drafting the Feminist Constitution, an important critique of the 2011 Plurinational Constitution that Morales passed through a series of regional and then national assemblies. While the Plurinational Constitution made important gains, the Feminist Constitution functioned as a polemic against it, producing the single most important document of anarchist feminist In-

igenous critique in the contemporary period.⁴² Born of the assembly process initiated by Morales, yet reaching into the nexus of recent sex-positive rights discussions, while pushing back against the morality of colonial Catholicism and the rhetoric of tradition and family, the Feminist Constitution is a poetic, raging collaboration, and presents a parallel effort to its better-known counterpart. The Feminist Constitution's objective is not only to critique existing paradigms of state-centered decolonization but also to imagine concrete visions and proposals that extend Indigenous anarchist feminist projects.

I have discussed the many facets of the work of *Mujeres Creando* and *Mujeres Creando Comunidad* as two important collaborative efforts that use Indigenous feminist anarchist histories to build a present- and future-oriented imaginary of another kind of society. "The Feminist Political Constitution of the State: The Impossible Nation We Build as Women" is, in my mind, the pinnacle expression of this multidirectional articulation. Writing from the vernacular subjectivities and experience of Indigenous women, sex workers, and lesbians—those that "have been left out of the official constitution"—the document was drafted out of a collective sense of urgency. Because of its inclusion of perverse and amoral sexualities, feminist propositions, and queer locations, while also both building upon and inverting Morales's decolonization project, I engage this document as a transfeminist mode of theorizing and perceiving otherwise.

As Sayak Valencia explains, transfeminism has genealogies in global and local hemispheric sites, the postporn movement in Spain, and decolonial border activism and theorization. She states:

Los sujetos del transfeminismo pueden entenderse como una suerte de *multitudes queer/cuir* que a través de la materialización performativa logran desarrollar agenciamientos g-locales. La tarea de estas *multitudes cuir* es la de seguir desarrollando categorías y ejecutando prácticas que logren un agenciamiento no estandarizado y decolonial—es decir que no busquen asimilarse a los sistemas de representación impuestos por la hegemonía capitalista del sistema heteropatriarcal/clasista y racista y que inventen otras formas de acción crítica—que pueda ser aplicado en distintos contextos de forma re-territorializada, reconfigurando la posición del sur como un posicionamiento crítico y no sólo como un emplazamiento geopolítico.⁴³

Transfeminist subjects understand themselves within a nexus of queer/*cuir* multitudes that through performative instances are able to develop local forms of agency. The task of this *cuir* multitude is to keep developing and executing different kinds of practices that do not lead to standardizations of the decolonial; that is, they do not work toward assimilation as systems of representation imposed by capitalist hegemony and heteropatriarchal, classist, and racist systems, but instead invent other forms of critical action that can be applied to distinct contexts as forms of reterritorializations, reconfiguring the position of the South as a critical positioning rather than a geopolitical restructuring.⁴⁴

Using this model of transfeminism with a multidirectional attention to the issues of coloniality and Indigeneity, the Feminist Constitution analyzes MAS's decolonization project from the position of "political and social problems, pending and deferred . . . that stretch out into a remote and uncertain future."⁴⁵ The deferred future that María Galindo refers to in this quote is the decolonization process that gained political legitimacy by subsuming gender/sex difference into a homogeneous platform. Galindo's statement brings forward how the assembly constituent process that brought Evo Morales to power functioned as "a pact among men regarding their gazes, their parceling out of power." Reaching further back, it also emphasizes how the "ancient law of obligatory heterosexuality" has deferred equality for female subjects, extracting their labor to reproduce patriarchy even before capitalism.

Though Morales's road to the presidency included radical feminist proposals, once he was in office, these were put aside. *Mujeres Creando* articulated critical views of the nexus of forces that continued to absent radical female participation from the new configuration of state power:

We make clear that the voices of women in the official constitution were mediated, brokered, censored, and measured by the political parties that legitimated only the liberal NGOs and the conservative voices of indigenous women who spoke for their men, for their sons, and for their churches and their dogmas of faith. Other women's voices have been left out, left out of the constitutional text, expelled from history once more, along with all of the political and social problems, pending and deferred, that our eyes see, that stretch out into a remote and uncertain future.⁴⁶

The reference to the "pending and deferred, that our eyes see, that stretch out into a remote and uncertain future" is precisely the turn away from the extractive gaze and toward a submerged perspective that I have affirmed throughout this volume, and here takes a decided turn away from conservative formulations.

The Feminist Constitution is organized as a series of legislative, poetic, and sweeping proposals and gestures. Under the subsection "Forms of Government," Galindo states "no governments should exist," revealing the antistate ideology embedded within anarchic feminisms. In other sweeping and playful acts, the Feminist Constitution abolishes the armed forces, restricts religion to its spiritual function, makes art and artistic expression the universal language, dissolves the police apparatus, grants rights to animals, allows Indigenous peoples a future-oriented tense (rather than being fixed in the past), abolishes political parties, and considers the autonomy of the body a fundamental principle. Given the heated discussions regarding abortion and the conflicts within national governments throughout South American progressive governments, this last point about the female body's autonomous decision making reasserts transfeminist autonomy as central to multiple projects of liberation.

Conclusion

The Feminist Constitution calls for the visibility of submerged perspectives and the networked potential of social ecologies. In the last line it states how "this constitution is a fabric that weaves the daily with the historic, the utopian with the immediate, forming a rainbow of struggles and dreams that we will continue building without sacrificing a single one of them." This transfeminist, Indigenous anarcho-perspective imaginatively sees and describes the impulse behind not only the arc of radical genealogies but also their potential future.

Like the extractive viewpoint that flattens heterogeneity, masculine revolutionary politics has written out smaller yet pivotal histories of radical Andean feminisms. My work in this chapter has been to thread together a genealogy of anarcho-Indigenous feminism that makes connections between multivalent forms of critique and dissent that address the complexities of the extractive zone. That is, an anarcho-Indigenous feminist

perspective builds upon multidirectional opposition to the excesses of capitalism, the hierarchies of patriarchy, the normativity of heterosexuality, and the racism of colonialism in order to provide alternative models of sociality and perception.

We might consider the possibilities and limitations of hemispheric Indigenous feminist critique that would consider the principles of *Mujeres Creando* as part of a broader transfeminist and decolonial project. Again, the submerged perspective here is to challenge the idea of Indigenous tradition as static or pure, setting the stage for a more multivalent theory and actualization of critical praxis. As a method of perceiving and doing otherwise, this submerged form of organizing, critiquing, and living potentially makes visible the path toward undoing coloniality.

CONCLUSION

The View from Below

I have addressed visual and embodied knowledges, intellectual genealogies, and trans-feminist, Indigenous, and networked formations that exceed, escape, mediate, and invert the extractive view. And I have discussed how the extractive view refers to state and corporate logics that map territories as commodities rather than perceive the proliferation of life and activities that make up the human and nonhuman planetary. The geographies we have explored emerge out of specific regions within the *Américas*, placing South American living social ecologies at my study's center. I have focused on majority Indigenous territories but have also referenced Afro-descended ontologies, for how they perceive otherwise and contain the capacity to erode the extractive gaze, even as the figure of the African slave within the *mita* system in the South American extractive zone is often disappeared, even from radical histories. These modes of seeing and critiquing urge a reconsideration of the submerged, and of the heterogeneity that resides within the matrix of coloniality.

Throughout the introduction and the volume's five chapters, I put into view other modes of perception that organize time, space, sociality, and the cosmos. These include Mapuche visuality, Andean phenomenology, anarchist-feminist Indigenous analysis, Yasuní cooperatives, and a fish-eye episteme. Such fecund sites and methods constitute inverted visualities, and reversals of power through vernacular practices that dynamically shift the meaning of Enlightenment and Western forms of thought, feeling, and being. What these proposals share is a decolonial, and anti-authoritarian