



RECOVERING AND RE-EMBODYING LIFE  
DE(S) COLONIAL MOTHERING\*

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ABYA YALA DE(S) COLONIAL  
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CABILDO INDIGENA DEL RESGUARDO DE HUELLAS

## RECOVERING AND RE-EMBODYING LIFE. DESCOLONIAL MOTHERING\*

Coca leaf is prohibited in Austria. Any part of the coca plant is.

More than 500 years of European coloniality have failed to ban the use of the coca leaf for ceremonies and “mambeo” in Abya Yala (the indigenous name of the Americas).

The coca leaf, like many other abortifacient plants abortíferas, has been stripped of its traditional and ritual meanings.

By blowing and talking with a pair of coca leaves, one thanks and praises the goodness of nature.

This action is called k'intu in the south of the continent.

With a k'intu we begin this text in recognition and gratitude.

This is a brief de(s)colonial analysis of the self-determination of People of Color with uteri and the war that botany has declared on them.

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### 1.

I take care of a garden in front of the Family Center of Vienna's 6th district. It serves as a reminder that care, i.e. motherhood and mothering of women and people of non-binary gender (\*) (motherhood(\*)/mothering(\*)), can only be understood in relation to the ability and freedom of self-determination over one's own body in relation to the decision to have children or not. Without the right to decide, it is not possible to have a motherhood (\*)/mothering (\*) capable of effectively reproducing life. Without decision-making power, we would be talking about forced pregnancies.

These two sides of the same coin should also remind us of the intertwined system between the Global North and the Global South in which the conditions of childbearing in the North are connected to the conditions that threaten the continuation of life in the South.

The South holds the North together. The North has only constituted itself in relation to the South, not only materially and economically, but also symbolically. The resources that keep the North alive are produced in the South, where the

producers do not have access to them or to the resulting economic benefits.

As for the experience of motherhood (\*)/mothering (\*), the imbalance between North and South is even more evident in surrogacy, in which women in the North buy the use of uteruses in the South.

Furthermore, the forced sterilisations to which impoverished and indigenous women in the Global South are subjected are part of the development plan of the North, which needs vacant land in the South.

A child in the North has a larger environmental footprint than an adult in the South.

Biopolitics lurks behind the forced state sterilisations in Abya Yala (cf. Alejandra Ballón Gutiérrez), as well as in the spectrum of the female and non-hetero-normative (\*) body politics, in which the uterus is treated as a state affair.

Before the independence of the colonies in Abya Yala, Asia and Africa, the agenda was to increase the population of the colonies. Enslaved women were prized for their ability to “give birth”. A policy that changed radically after independence, when surprisingly, these regions were considered “overpopulated” because, as Shalini Randeria (2023) puts it, it is always the others who are too many.

Plants in the garden in the 6th district of Vienna are found in every kitchen in the world. Their use as abortifacients has been erased from everyday life. The action of caring for these plants as guerrilla urban gardening draws attention to the “witchcraft crimes” with which women in Europe and the “New World” were “disciplined”. These crimes included reproductive control through the use of medicinal plants and the murder of their own children. Women's wisdom and power stood in the way of the establishment of capitalism, which required absolute control over the reproductive capacities of people with wombs.

Talking about motherhood(\*)/mothering(\*) today should be an occasion to remember other dimensions of our historical struggle for reproductive rights and for conditions that guarantee life for all.

The neoliberal practices initiated by the Global North in ancestral areas of the South are also present in the diaspora from the South to the North.

Today we are here proposing to recover and re-enchant life (Federici 2020), in the collectively sustained care of a vegetable garden in the open urban space and in the remembrance of the actions carried out in Africa, Abya Yala and India, where the boundaries between the city and the countryside are blurred by the occupation of urban green areas to grow vegetables for community consumption.

This action of occupation in Vienna should remind us of the many coping strategies of impoverished women in the Global South, such as the Ollas Comunitarias (Community Pots), where women in a neighbourhood come together to cook with the food they have brought with them.

Gathering food in Ollas and Comedores Comunitarios (Communal Kitchens) is in many cases the only way to ensure a decent meal for the whole family in Abya Yala. In the face of the impossibility of life and the war on women and children (Segato 2016), all these proposals effectively reconstruct the social fabric. They are signs of hope and strength and therefore, of life, and they are the answer to the crisis: Only collectively we will find new ways to continue inhabiting the world.

The nourishment that the garden has also offered is that of the exchange of ideas and contact with the people of the neighborhood, which are of great value in a post-pandemic Europe.

It is mostly a conversation without words, conducted through the care of plants.

Our collective occupation of the urban space is a tribute to the resistance movement of the South and to the autonomy that the South has already gained through it. The occupation of public space is also a "tequio" (collective work) destined to reivindicar "Other" memories, which are archived in the action of maintaining the garden. "Riprendiamoci la vita" ('Let's take back life') was the slogan chanted by feminists in Italy in the 1970s in many demonstrations. With this they gave voice to a struggle that surpassed any

concrete demand, and that actually aspired to liberate women's lives from the clutches of the State" (Federici 2020: 264).

Today, women and non-binary (\*) diaspora people of Abya Yala in Vienna, we take up this idea and transmute it into "'re-embodying' our own life experience", reclaiming the territory we inhabit as diaspora, as also ours.

'Re-embodying' our own life experience points to the fact that we are "land that wanders" (Atahualpa Yupanqui) through the territory that is now called Europe.

It is a way of inhabiting the multiple dimensions of the migrant life experience, materially and symbolically. It is a recognition of the ancestral knowledge that has always connected women and non-binary people regardless of geopolitical locations and it is a call of attention to the fact that all migration to Europe contains elements of impossibility of reproduction of life created in our territories, that is, elements of exile imposed by the extractivist practices of the North in the South.

We are here today as a product of the exile forced upon us by the failed economies of unpayable debt and the consequent war against women and non binary (\*) peoples in our territories.

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## 2.

"Flowers are the applied arts of the master"

*In 1815, the Congress of Europe met in Vienna and created a continent of imperial powers unified in opposition to revolutions.*

*A new-old order required its wild-tame aesthetic, and flowers came, handily, to hand.*

*New flora had begun to enter Europe from distant lands and flower drawing classes were started at the Vienna Art Academy and its affiliated institutes, becoming influential in "Applied Arts" curricula, and leaving an imprint on everything, from ceramics to textile design.*

*The male artists of the applied arts spent their time drawing bouquets of flowers. The legacy of flower knowledge — their properties, powers, and poisons, preserved and expanded by those called witches and wise women across many generations — went*

*subterranean.*

*Exotic flowers bring with them the scent of life in faraway colonies and hitherto unimagined forms of vegetal excess. They are aphrodisiacs, poisons, abortifacients, medicine. They are also castrations, as flowers are the excised procreative organs of vegetal life.*

*Every bouquet is something of a crime scene. In Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium, Maria Sibylla Merian, born in 1647, records how the Amerindians and women from the African slave populations used the seeds of a plant she identifies as the Flospavonis—also called Poinciana (Caesalpinia) pulcherrima, literally “peacock flower”—as an abortifacient. Londa Schiebinger [2004], in her article on the cultural production of ignorance in the eighteenth century, describes the practice of induced abortion among Amerindian slave women as a deliberate act of resistance. She notes how the “peacock flower” went on to travel freely into Europe’s botanical gardens and greenhouses, although knowledge of its use as an abortifacient did not follow. (Raqs 2021: 12)*

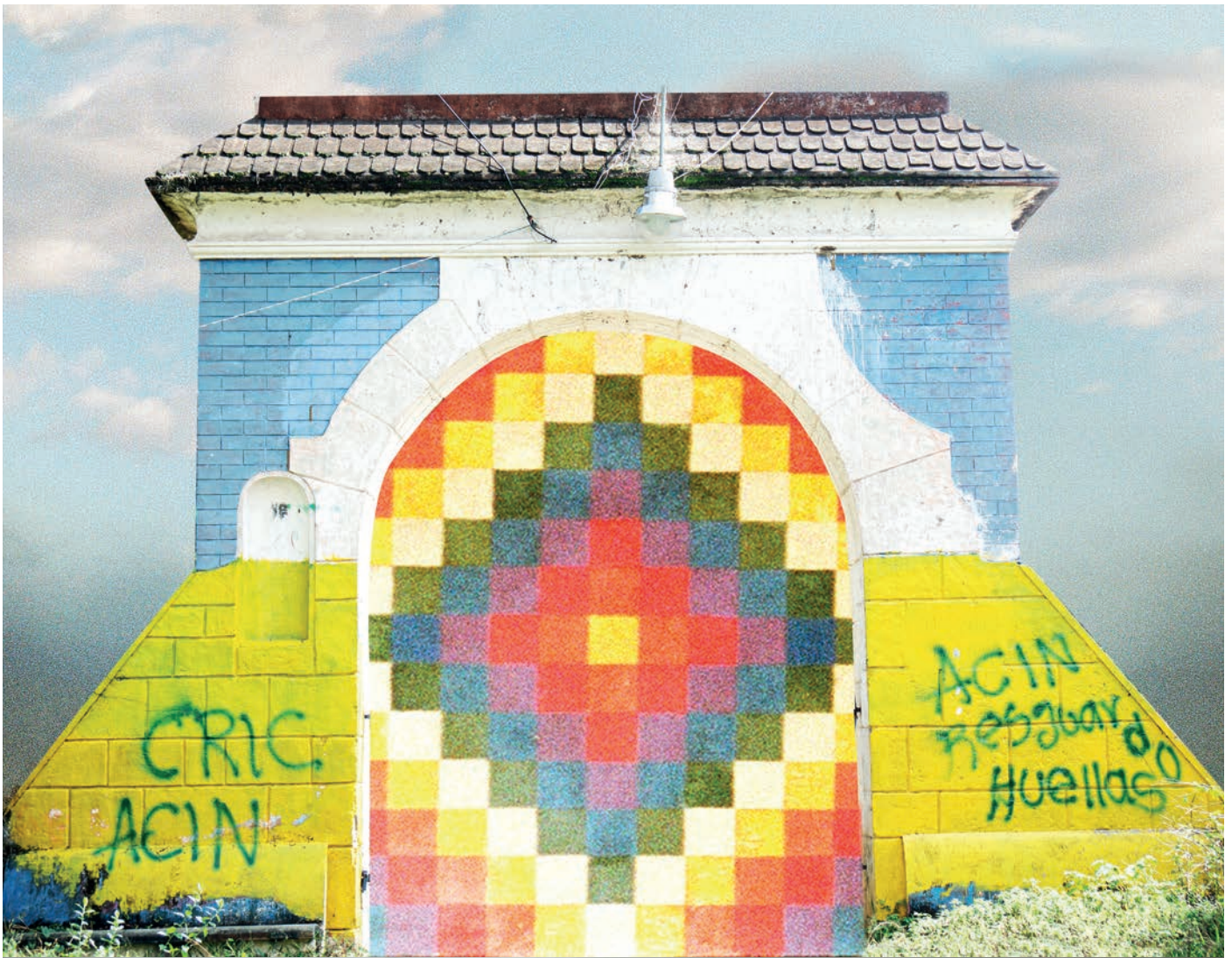
Our struggle today, migrants\* in Europe, is to recognize the erased knowledge of non-hetero-normative people (\*) from the South. Merian, found the peacock flower (Poinciana (Caesalpinia) pulcherrima) in the Dutch colony of Suriname and wrote: *“The Indians [sic.], who are not treated well by their Dutch masters, use the seeds to abort their children, so that they will not become slaves like themselves... In fact, they sometimes take their own lives because they are treated so badly, and because they believe they will be born again, free and living in their own land. They told me this themselves”.* Merian’s Flospavonis participated in both a revolution in the history of botany and a transformation of the history of the body (Schiebinger 2004: 239). Merian included in Western natural science epistemologies arising from inhabiting a body with a uterus and a body marked by territory, that is, a body-territory. In Suriname today, abortion is still banned, as it is as well in a surprising number of countries in Abya Yala, Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Oceania (cf. Statista 2022).

Merian failed to introduce in Europe the peacock flower in the discussion about abortifacient plants, even more so, about its use in the political struggles carried out in the “New World”. This was an “old female affair” that abortifacient plants were used “to defraud husbands comforts of children” (Apud Schiebinger 2004: 129). In the same direction Thomas Middleton in 1624 observes that “when I look to gather fruit, [I] find nothing but the savin-tree, too frequent in our orchards, and there planted by all conjectures, to destroy fruit rather.” (Apud Ibid. 105).

Species such as the pride of Barbados (peacock flower) are referred to in botany as *Neophytes*, which is an arbitrary definition of relocation and settlement following the “discovery” of the “New World” by Christopher Columbus in 1492. Some of these *Neophytes* cause disruption to the hosting ecosystems (cf. Verband Botanischer Gärten 2021), while others have been in use to save European agriculture and economies, thus becoming a defining part of Europe (Hobhaus 1992).

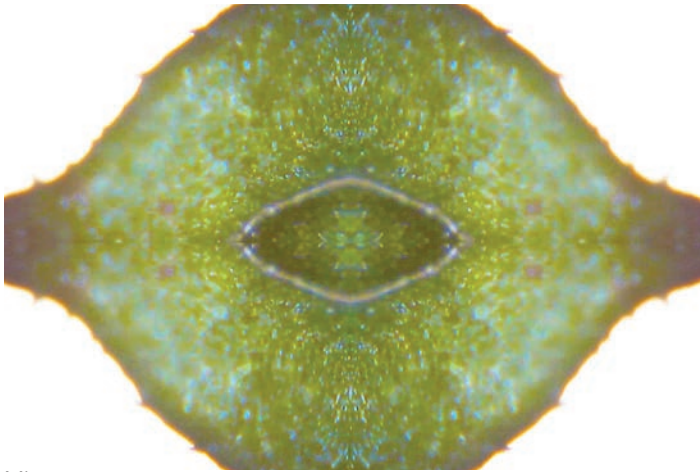
Other cases in the relation botany and female scientists in the west are Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Blackwell and Anna Atkins.

*A Scottish woman by the name of Elizabeth Blackwell (1707–1758) published, against all cultural odds, an ambitious and scrumptiously illustrated guide to medicinal plants, titled A Curious Herbal: Containing Five Hundred Cuts of the Most Useful Plants Which Are Now Used in the Practice of Physick. She realized that there was a need for a handbook depicting and describing the garden’s new collection of mysterious plants from the New World. A keen observer, a gifted artist, and an entrepreneur by nature, she set about bridging the world’s need and her own. Blackwell took rooms near the garden and began painting the plants as she saw them. She then took the drawings to her husband’s prison cell and had him supply each plant’s name in Latin, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, and German. (The Linnaean classification system did not yet exist — Carl Linnaeus, born the same year as Blackwell, was yet to revolutionize taxonomy with his binomial*

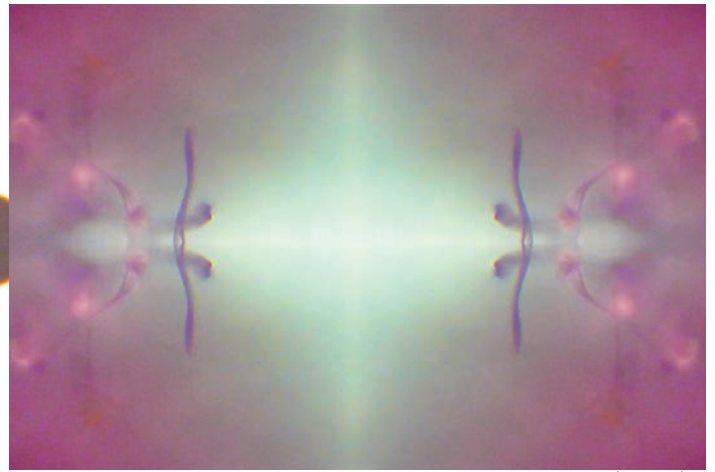


Collage of images with reference to the National Indigenous Council of Cauca - CRIC. Caloto, Cauca, Colombia.

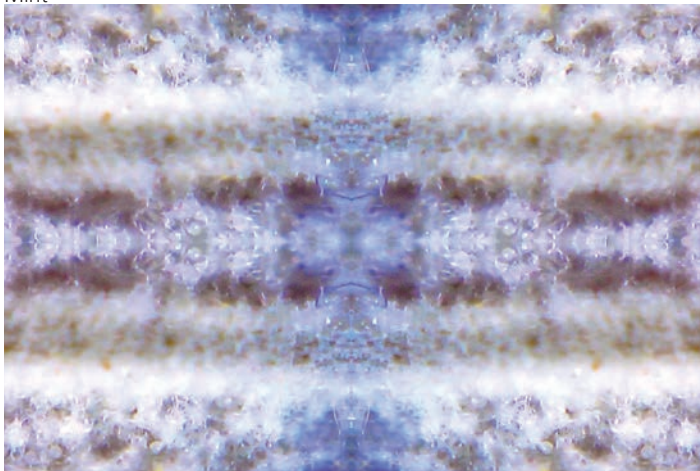
Abortive plants from the Garden in District 6. Richard Waldemar Park, Vienna, viewed under a microscope and with multiplied images.



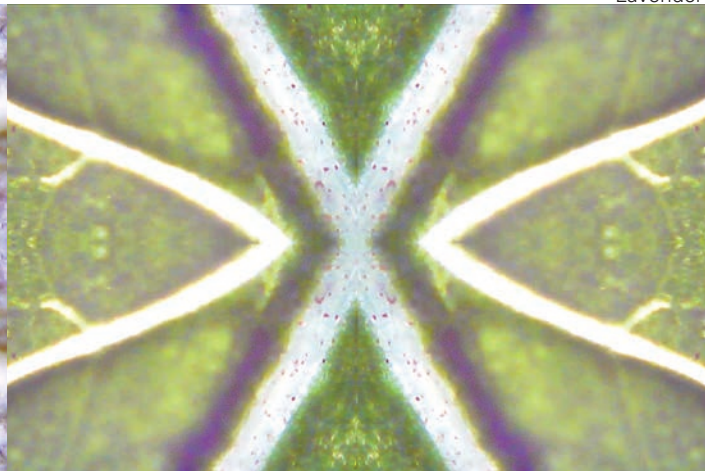
Mint



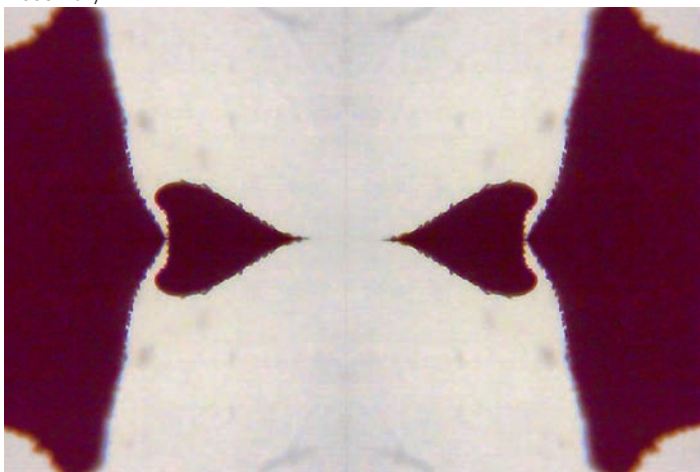
Lavender



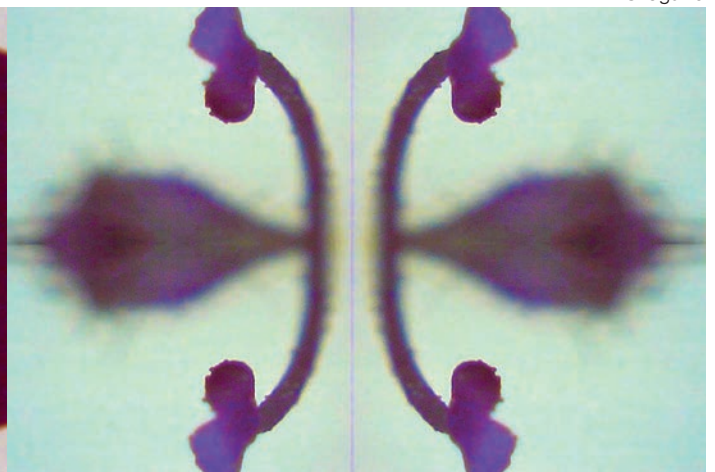
Rosemary



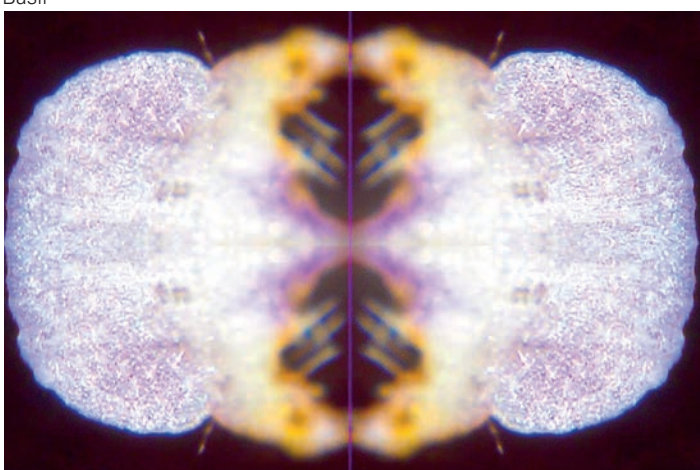
Oregano



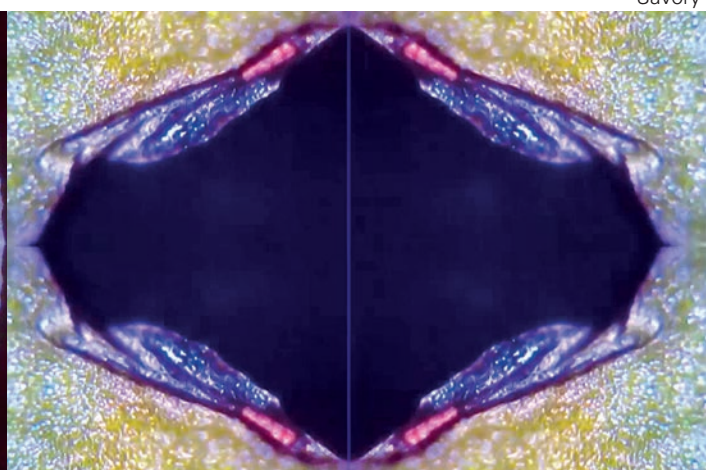
Basil



Savory



Savory



Parsley

nomenclature.)

*As Blackwell's illustrated botany made its way across Europe, it eventually reached Linnaeus himself, who came to admire her work so ardently that he gave her the affectionate nickname Botanica Blackwellia.*

*Blackwell's study of botanical forms is complemented by the stunning algae cyanotypes of the self-taught Victorian botanist and photographer Anna Atkins, who more than a century after Blackwell and shortly after the invention of photography became the first person to publish a scientific book illustrated with photographic images (Popova 2020).*

Today, the Linnean Society of London houses one of the original 17 Atkins's algae cyanotypes. The dark side of the struggles for visibility of European female scientists and artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is the physical and epistemological extermination that knew no gender differentiation in Abya Yala, but of which women and non-binary people (\*) were the main victims. Even today, their life experience and epistemologies are still denied value. Women and non-binary (\*) people of color and their families continue to lose their lives as a consequence of impune extractivism. Poverty has always had a female face since early capitalism, and today women are "the shock absorbers of the economic crisis originally triggered by the globalization process but now destined to become a permanent feature of the world economy" (Federici 2009).

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### 3.

Many indigenous women of Abya Yala resolved to sterilize themselves with herbs and drinks, also as a way to free their offspring from a life of slave labor in the mines (Federici 2020, Castro Gómez 2015: 198).

Reproductive control were practices of resistance so as not to give birth to servants and maids for the invaders, as documented also by the chroniclers:

*The American women, oppressed by their melancholy, or suffocated by the sight of strangers in their lands,*

*or as some said: in order not to give birth to servants and maids for the strangers, many resolved to sterilize themselves with herbs and drinks, which they took for this intent [ ...] I say many because I have efficient proof of it; and from the proof of the fact, in some provinces or islands one can, without recklessness, infer the same in others, where the same motive and blind barbarity of the Americans subsisted (Gumilla, 1994 [1741]: 313, apud Castro Gomez 2015: 198).*

And also:

*[...] as soon as she feels the first pains, the squaw goes with dissimulation to the river or the nearest stream, in order to achieve the birth alone; if a boy is born, she washes and washes him beautifully and very happy [...]; but if a girl is born, she breaks her neck, or without hurting her (as they say) she buries her alive; then she washes herself for a long time and returns to her house, as if nothing had happened [...]. And even if the birth takes place at home in front of the husband and the family, if the child comes out with some defect [...], whether female or male, no one opposes it, everyone agrees that it should die immediately, and so it is executed (Gumilla, 1994 [1741]: 209 apud Castro Gomez 2015: 198).*

There is much distortion and misunderstanding of indigenous survival strategies and cosmogony in the chronicles of the conquest and the colony, which makes it difficult to determine the reality of indigenous knowledge today, as it was also systematically made invisible and erased. Medicinal plant knowledge was conveniently seen as the *gift of God or nature, or mere causality discovered by original populations*. This communal knowledge, without particular owner, was trapped in the taxonomical grids developed by naturalists such as Carolus Linnaeus, Michel Étienne Descourtilz, Sir Hans Sloane, José Celestino Mutis, Francisco José de Caldas, Jorge Tadeo Lozano and many others. The botanical system was built on an extractivist-Cartesian system that was in charge of translating nature to the West, that is, to make visible only what was wholly spanned by language (cf. Foucault [1966] 2002: 175).

Part of the new imperial policy consisted of the State's function of expropriating all vassals of their private capital in order to centralize and redistribute it for public benefit, especially when this capital manifested itself in the form of useful knowledge (Castro Gomez 2015: 196).

*It is not to the wisdom of Indians and blacks but to the grace of God and the perspicacity of the Jesuits that we owe the existence of antidotes against snake bites... this art of healing - which [Maroni] calls "sorcery" - comes from the Omaguas' dealings with the Devil, from whom they undoubtedly learned "various abuses and evil spells for their revenge. (...)*  
*The pretensions of those who claim to cure snakebites are ignorance, charlatanry and "simple routine"*  
(Jorge Tadeo Lozano in 1808 Apud Castro Gomez 2015: 194).

Francisco José de Caldas, an enlightened Creole from Popayán (Colombia) and astronomer of the Royal Botanical Expedition, explains that these pure forms of knowledge and „happy experiences“ of indigenous origin are not yet sufficient for there to be science. For him, scientific truth certainly begins with experience, but it is defined thanks to the elaboration of universal categories, such as those developed by Linnaeus in the case of botany. Thus, when examining which snakes are poisonous and which herbs are suitable as antidotes, Caldas recommended using the classification tables developed by Linnaeus (Castro Gomez 2015: 194-196) and thus disproving the indigenous knowledge from which the scientific systematisation emerged.

The traditional method of plant classification used by indigenous and peasant peoples in Abya Yala, which is based on religious, spiritual and medicinal significance, was invalidated by Linnaeus' classification system for identification, naming and cataloguing of the kingdom plantae. Linnaeus declared illegitimate all names used before him "in all places and at all times" for botanical classifications. The names of the plants also had to be in Latin, "the language of the educated elite and of bureaucratic power" (Nieto Olarte, 2000: 119 Apud Castro Gomez

2015: 204-205) which was chosen for international communication precisely because few women spoke it (Schiebinger 2004: 200).

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#### 4.

From Carolus Linnaeus' biographies (and from *Systema Naturae*, 1735) we learn how Linnaeus "had a feeling that God Himself led him during his life, permitted him to have a look into His secret council chamber" (Engel-Ledeboer and Engel 1735:11).

Linnaeus considered the discovery of the procreation in plants his most important contribution to botany, as it revealed "the very footprints of the Creator" (Ibid).

Linnaeus describes many new genera of the East and West Indies that differ from the generally accepted system of Caesalpinus and is aware of the fact that his new system is not entirely "natural" but partly "artificial", but he is convinced that his system is a great improvement over the previous ones (Ibid.).

Botanical nomenclature is a shared fiction that paid favors and in which the "masters of the scientific field" paid homage to each other. "Therefore the naturalist is like a new Adam: in naming the world for the first time he discovers it, revealing the *systema naturae* designed by God himself" (Castro Gomez 2015: 207).

In this new Eden, only few women were mentioned. Surprisingly, Linnaeus did not name genera after Maria Sibylla Merian, even though he often cited her. In his "*Critica botanica*" he counted one hundred and forty-four plants named after prominent botanists, "fifty of which were coined by Plumier, five by Tournefort, and eighty-five by himself (...)" Meriania was introduced in the 1790s by Olof Swartz, a Swedish botanist who worked extensively in Surinam" (Schiebinger 2004: 202).

Similarly, in Linnaeus's extremely detailed archives there was no room for the *Botanica Blackwellia* that he seemed to admire so ardently.



All works published before 1753 (by Plumier, van Reede, or Merian, for example) were declared invalid for purposes of naming plants. These naturalists' naming practices, strongly based in local cultures both domestic and foreign, were replaced by Linnaeus' European-centered system (Ibid. 204). Botanical nomenclature arose from the attitude that the world was theirs for the taking, a characteristic attitude of male European scientists.

In 1776, the same year that the Royal Cabinet of Natural History in Madrid opened its doors to the public, an official decree was issued requesting viceroys and other officials to send natural products and artistic curiosities. The collection of these objects, in addition to satisfying the curiosity of Europeans for the exotic, points to their need to classify the peoples of the Americas as a way of gaining control of the unknown (Castro Gomez 2015: 77).

Life has not been built on clearly defined binary boundaries. On the contrary, it is only thanks to combinations between genera and species that the continuation of life has been possible. Linnaeus pointed out that the hydra, the conferva (which is an alga), the sponge and the coral, being animals, could not be classified in the categories he had defined (cf. Foucault [1970] 1994: 41).

In them, imperfect plants were united with imperfect animals, giving rise to monstrosity. The gender of hermaphrodite plants, such as linden, a plant from which the name Linnaeus emerged, was also a case that escaped binarism. In this in "betweenness" were classified the non-binary genders (\*) of the inhabitants of Abya Yala, as well as, in general, the indigenous populations whose possession of a soul was not recognised, and whose status as human beings of adult age was not legitimised.

Nature showed itself as a confused mixture of beings that seemed to have been brought together by chance; a mixture, indeed, so full of exceptions that this seemed to be its general law (cf. Foucault [1970] 1994: 161), which was subjected to binary and rigid classifications in

spite of all scientific evidence.

Life does not constitute an obvious threshold. If we apply categories of classification to it, we always run the risk of obtaining relative and imprecise results, since it always falls outside the norm and its analysis will produce different results depending on the criteria adopted (cf. Foucault [1970] 1994: 161).

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Botanical knowledge which made possible the survival of whites in Abya Yala, and natural resources such as plants, gold and silver that allowed them to continue "exploring" the world were exchanged by the colonizers for worthless trinkets such as mirrors, bells and glass, before imposing the encomienda, the extractivist/colonial taxation system (cf. Hobhouse 1992: 9, 64) through which the indigenous populations were enslaved.

The connections of the colonial extractivist system at all levels of economic and social life are still recognisable today. It is shocking that today we still have to fight to have the knowledge of women\*, especially from the Global South, recognized as valuable.

For Henry Hobhouse, silver and gold made the Incas interesting to the Spanish; however, what they really gave the world were corn and potatoes, without which the less fertile regions of Europe would not have survived during the famine (Hobhouse 1992: 246, 262).

In the countryside, agricultural production for subsistence has become impossible, both in Abya Yala and in Europe. Our actions as migrants from Abya Yala in the sixth and second district of Vienna should remind us of the struggle for land in Abya Yala, which still today involves indigenous peoples, government, army, guerrillas, drug trafficking and paramilitary forces.

These struggles are a contemporary manifestation of colonization, that is, coloniality.

Our migration to Austria is also a consequence of these processes of loss of territory in Abya Yala and the action of occupying spaces aims to create

territory, that is, community/land/life (Saldaña Torres 2023) also in the diaspora.

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6.

This garden is being cared for between a drugstore and a care space for pregnant and nursing women (\*) and their families.

Of the seven plants planted last year, rosemary, rue, oregano and mint remain.

A couple of months ago the garden suffered the theft of rue, thyme, artemisia vulgaris) and two other rosemary plants, as well as soil from a box in which flower seeds for bees had been sown.

The theft appeared as a sad metaphor for the loss of territory in Abya Yala and the constant dispossession to which we women and diverse people (\*), even more in the diaspora, have been subjected.

Faced with the loss of hope, a short time later, the sprouting of a bean sown by a neighbor and its heart shape, gave new impetus to the care of the garden. The bean carried with it the message that despite the dispossession we will find ways of collective resistance that will guarantee not only our survival but the continuation of life itself. If our disappearance takes place, we will be relieved (\*) by other species, of which we will also be part, in some way.

With the bean, we also understood that care should be carried out in a discreet manner and the neighbors, Alma (my daughter) and me, tacitly allowed the controlled growth of weeds, among which our precious plants hid.

In the wordless conversation held through the plants, the need to accompany life, which reproduces itself without our command, has prevailed. The discovery of this certainty tinged with great hope my life experience as a migrant artist and mother\* in the post-pandemic world of the anthropocene.

At the same time, we need to insist on the task of documenting our own experience, creating other archives that contain and respect all the deviations of the richness of our knowledge. This garden could be considered one of these counter-archives of the memory and of the

present time, that escape the classifications imposed by language.

In the face of the arbitrariness and fiction of science, other knowledge that reclaim the denied body is necessary because perhaps there, in the radically assembled and plurivocal archives, we will find keys to survival, or at least clues to the creation of political forms that will help us escape the struggle for power and reconcile us with the territory and the community.

claudia\* sandoval romero

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7.  
ABYA YALA DE(S)COLONIAL

As part of the exercise during "Mothering Communities", I have invited the compis from the collective abya yala deScolonial to be part of the conversation because their life experience and their voice are of enormous value in relation to inhabiting the city of Vienna as a diaspora, as a feminine/non-hegemonic (\*) body, with ancestral knowledge that also extends to plants, kinship with the no-human and community care. These experiences, as part of the temporary occupation of the abortifacient garden in the 6th district, are symbolic of the collective quest for the good life. Their words follow.

The reconstruction of the social fabric is becoming a more urgent task every day. As migrants who are uprooted, being part of a social reconstruction is something extremely difficult, because our realities are divided between here and there, a "there" many kilometers away from our roots.

It is precisely to find ourselves again in a new territory such as this one that, from the very first moment, becomes a great challenge mediated by loneliness and novelties, by limitations and sacrifices.

Then, the call to recover life and to occupy these new spaces from the physical to the symbolic, is a collective effort that gives meaning back to each one of our lives, to all our ancestors and to each living being that continues to resist in this aforementioned there, before an insensitive, unjust, excluding, patriarchal and disrespectful system that has tried to erase all our history.

Catherine Gomez

Many times we feel alone, lost, as if we are teetering on a tightrope in a new place or in a new situation, in a new image, under pressure, in a new reality, injustice, society. It costs us tears, hollows in the stomach, feeling far away from ourselves.

How can we also help each other to find and heal ourselves? Pachamama (Mother Earth) is in you and you are in her. She gives us life.

Like that phrase that says "go back to your roots" and the first thing that comes to your mind is the place where you were born and lived your childhood. I also think that going back to the roots is to connect with Pachamama wherever you are. In the forest, the garden, the park. Let's touch the earth. Feel it with your hands and bare feet. Smell it, breathe it, feel the warmth it gives you. Contemplate its creation and be grateful for its wisdom. Its plants, flowers, roots that it gives us to heal us.

This is also how we connect with our grandmothers and our ancestors, through those

recipes that cured us and that many of us were taught as children.

Feel your body. Listen to your body.

Feel Pachamama and ask her. She will help you.

She will heal you.

Claudia Alanes Landa

### Heal yourself

*Heal yourself mijita, with the light of the sun and the rays of the moon. With the sound of the river and the waterfall. With the swaying of the sea and the fluttering of the birds. Heal yourself mijita, with the leaves of mint and peppermint, with neem and eucalyptus. Sweeten yourself with lavender, rosemary and chamomile. Embrace yourself with cocoa bean and a touch of cinnamon. Put love in your tea instead of sugar and drink it looking at the stars. Heal yourself mijita, with kisses from the wind and hugs from the rain. Become strong with your bare feet on the earth and with everything that comes from it. Become smarter every day, listening to your intuition, looking at the world through the eye of your forehead. Jump, dance, sing, so that you may live happier. Heal yourself mijita, with beautiful love, and always remember... you are the medicine. (Maria Sabina)*

## EL JARDIN DE MI ABUELA - My Grandmother's Garden

My grandmother's garden was the hub of the world for me until I was five years old.

It was the place where family members, friends and nature met.

Today I do not know when and how she came to this house with a huge garden and since she is not with us anymore, I will never know.

In it, my grandfather, had built a so-called winter garden and in the back part had put a roof of a train. This part served as a barn and in it my abuelita kept chickens, rabbits and all kinds of knickknacks.

The garden was used by my grandmother for self-supply. She had grown tomatoes, coriander, grapes, a lemon tree and many other things. It served me and my brother to dive into unknown worlds and it was also the place where my mother allowed us to play in the dirt and brought us back into the house, scraped up to the point of exhaustion, to eat or sleep.

It was here that I heard the first pistol shots that my uncle, the milico, would fire while drunk and I would hide under the table. My favorite uncle, who always lovingly called me 'mi negrita' and gave me presents.

That was when my father was already gone because my uncle had warned him that he was on the hit list. The same uncle who days before had participated in the biggest matanza since colonial times in Puente Alto. Indiscriminately they murdered Puente Altinos in a frenzy to show their power.

My father, who was never very politically active but whose circle of friends was classified as left-wing radicals because they stood up for human rights....

12 years later, at the age of 17 to be exact, I returned. When my abuelita was long gone and the house was still the family's property but there was hardly any furniture inside. The paint was peeling off the walls that I still remembered. Everything seemed so small and I couldn't explain how we all had room in it.

The garden was overgrown and everything my

grandfather had built had fallen into disrepair. The grapes, however, were still there. Just as sweet as they were then. I sat there for a long time and remembered the lives we lived here then.

Marisel Orellana Bongola



Photo: Marisel Orellana Bongola and her grandmother in the garden.

I thank Claudia for inviting me to this loving, rebellious, in solidarity, supportive, feminist community space of care.

When she invited me I could not help but think of linking "Recovering Life" as a proposal for the construction of a space that gives place to "us", from which to find ourselves in the possibility of a practice of gratitude, vindication and visibility. A place that, as the Chilean anarchist compas would say, allows us to enter the circle of the word. This garden, communitarian, with abortive plants, with feminist comrades, with migrant, lesbian, trans, non-binary, brown, racialized comrades, invites me, makes me feel and think cared for, supported, comforted. A circular living space that breathes, that feels, that gives meaning, that speaks, that struggles to give life. In this circle of feminist self-care, of diverse mothering, of vindication of life with plants that were demonized as well as those women who handled them powerfully to use them in their sexual and reproductive autonomy. From here, I claim that we can also recognize ourselves as mothers of ourselves.

Oppressed sexualities, imposed reproduction, criminalized abortion, sexual labor/exploitation, forced sterilizations, forced pregnancies, underpaid care work, all these experiences that we racialized South American compis carry. I vindicate from this loving space all those who resist from the South, the trans and lesbians who take care of each other, or took care even during the capitalist pandemic to those families that when they were children abandoned them, raped and expelled them leaving them in the streets, to my loving trans sex workers friends who during the pandemic made common pots to be able to continue... to the indigenous compañeras who are defending bodies, territories, seeds, water, who are fighting today for a great transformation of the meaning of life, to my queer friends with HIV who take care of other queer friends with HIV and who still die because in the hospital they don't even want to receive them, they are also

mothers! To all those who have migrated to prostitute themselves in the North because it is the only way to survive, to those who leave the South and come to the North and are called "illegal" although their dreams can never be illegitimate. What beautiful maternities these are, invisible, like their bodies, their dreams, their pains; those that do not appear on TV. Beautiful because of their courage, because they give life, because they give love, love without makeup, racialized love, brown love, black love, clandestine love.

This action of care, of mothering, also involves all those daily struggles of survival, non-hegemonic existences, exploited bodies, lives thrown into the abyss, precarious lives, migrant lives, black and brown lives that, in spite of everything, dare to fly. As the great Pedro Lemebel said when he spoke of queers, lesbians, trans and dissident bodies "There are so many children who will be born with a broken wing. And I want them to fly, comrade, I want their revolution to give them a piece of red sky so they can fly".

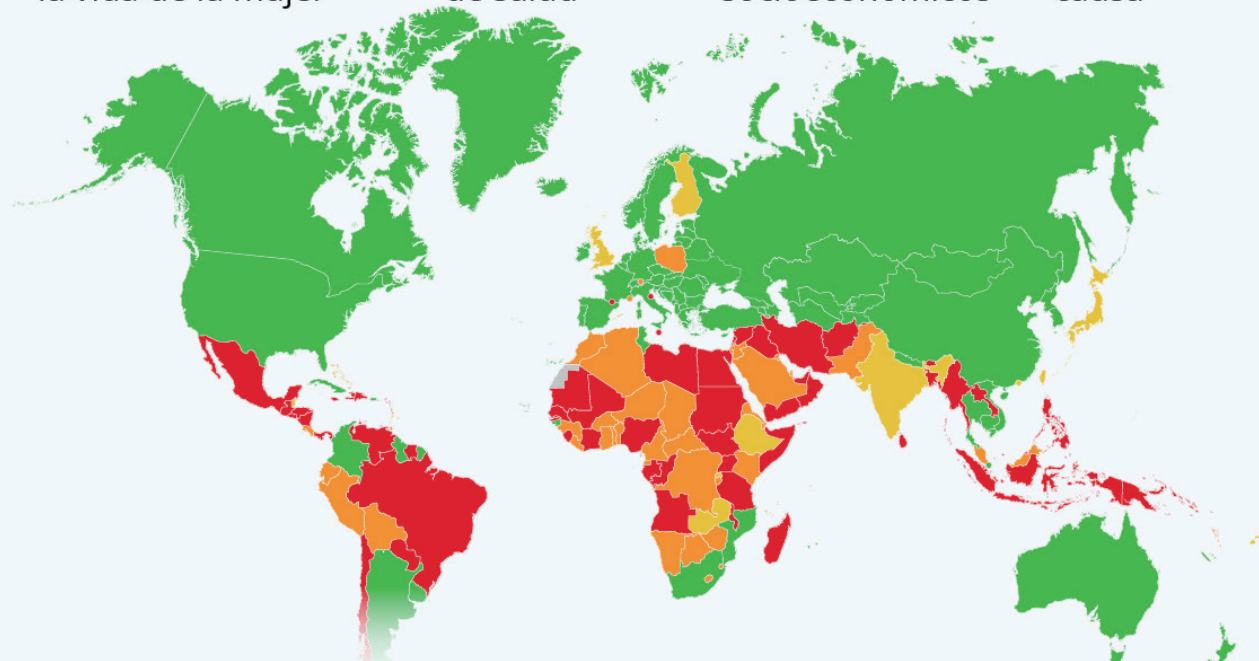
With this urban occupation, in this community garden full of knowledge and practices, I want to vindicate all those struggles, those there and those here; In this space of life, to continue fighting in the face of extermination is also an act of healing, of recognizing ourselves as powerful, just as the potato, coriander, beans, coca leaves, quinoa, plants whose powers have been hidden, so these struggles, these existences resist, feed us because we will always, always, always find ways to resist collectively wherever we go, because we are the earth that walks.

Marivel Saldaña Torres

# El estatus legal del aborto

Regulación sobre el aborto vigente en el mundo en 2022

- Prohibido/Solo permitido para salvar la vida de la mujer
- Permitido por motivos de salud
- Permitido por motivos socioeconómicos
- Permitido sin restricción de causa\*



La ley puede variar a nivel subnacional. Datos del 3 de mayo de 2022.

\* Muchos países establecen límites de tiempo para la interrupción del embarazo (promedio: 3 meses).

Fuente: Center For Reproductive Rights



statista

In which countries is abortion legal?  
(Statista 2022).

- Prohibited. only permitted to save the life of the woman.
- Permitted for health reasons.
- Permitted for socio-economic reasons.
- Permitted without restriction of cause.

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## IMAGE CREDITS

### Cover. Upper side.

**Image 1.** Carolus Linnaeus, his illustration of andromeda, illustration of Poinciana (Caesalpinia) pulcherrima and his publication "Systema Naturae".

**Image 2.** Embera indigenous women, photograph from the Botanical Garden of Vienna depicting the section "Amerika", coca leaves and frottage of coca leaf.

**Image 3.** Francisco Jose de Caldas, letter to the crown, map of the Botanical Expedition and illustration of the plant *Dasyphyllum argenteum*.

**Image 4.** Maria Sibylla Merian's image on the 500 Mark bill, an image of volcanoes from the Real Botanical Expedition in Abya Yala, her illustration of Poinciana (Caesalpinia) pulcherrima and plant *Caesalpinia brasiliensis* in the herbarium of the Linnean Society of London.

**Image 5.** Anna Atkins, an illustration of the volcanoes from the Caldas Botanical Expedition, her cyanotype of *Cystoseira fibrosa* and frottage of Quina (*Chinchona lanceifolia*) from the Caldas' herbarium.

**Image 6.** Elizabeth Blackwell, photograph of fields in Cauca, Colombia, her illustration of the "love apple" and the plant *Dasyphyllum argenteum* in the herbarium of the Caldas Botanical Expedition.

### Cover. Bottom.

**Image 1.** Seeds of abortifacient plants native to Abya Yala, around a k'intu, coca leaves.

**Image 2.** Herbarium of abortifacient plants and cyanotype of abortifacient plants *Artemisia*.

**Image 3.** K'intu, coca leaves arranged in gratitude.

**Image 4.** Mural on the facade of the Cabildo Indígena of Resguardo de Huellas.

This text was part of the project curated by Barbara Mahlkecht "Mothering Communités". Vienna, July 2023.