# Disrupting the Colonial Globe and Engaging in Border Thinking: An Art Educator's Critical Analysis and Reflection on (de)Colonial Discourses in Global Art Narratives

*Injeong Yoon*
*University of Arkansas*

## ABSTRACT

This essay attempts to problematize the fixed and bounded notion of culture in global narratives and deconstruct the practices of knowing the Other through the lens of border thinking. In order to challenge the colonial apparatus of classification, I first demystify the static notion of national identity through an example of the ideological formation of Koreanness in Dansaekhwa, the monochrome painting in Korea, in the context of global art. The first section includes my reflective narrative in light of the discussions of representation, Othering, and positionality. This section also addresses the issue of speaking about and for the Other, and how it contributes to the colonial discourse through the network of representation and interpretation. The second section addresses decolonial aspects of Lee Bul's works and their connection to decolonial aestheSis. In the last section, I make a few suggestions regarding what art educators might consider in order to move beyond the colonial discourse in global narratives. The suggestions include critical reflexivity in the works of representation and the importance of border thinking to imagine decoloniality and to claim for subaltern perspectives.

KEYWORDS: representation, Othering, de/coloniality in global narratives, border thinking

This essay started from a critical reflection on my own experience and through an understanding of my situation as an in-betweener who has been discussing culture and diversity in my teaching and work.[1] As Gramsci (1971) notes, I am a historical being and I cannot detach my senses and experiences from the complex chains of histories of my home country and the U.S.; the historical aspect of coloniality is the most significant dimension that has affected my perspectives, ideas, and identities. My experience of moving from one society to another not only reshaped my cultural and linguistic identities, but also challenged me to face the internalized colonial ways of knowing

1 I purposely use the term "in-betweener," introduced by Anzaldúa (2012), in order to indicate my cultural and linguistic identities which are constantly shaped and shifted by boundaries. It is also meant to resist any sort of fixed categorical identification since such labels cannot carry the complex layers of meanings in human experiences.

and relating to the world. Facing my own colonized mindset allowed me to reflect on my practices of teaching and researching in regard to cultural diversity and globalization (see Mutua & Swadener, 2004). It also prompted me to challenge the dominant discourses of the Other and the practices of knowing and writing about the Other under the banner of multicultural and global education.

Based on my reflection, this essay attempts to problematize the fixed and bounded notion of culture in global narratives and deconstruct the practices of knowing the Other through the lens of decoloniality (Anzaldúa, 2012; Mignolo, 2000). I challenge the assumptions and practices of teaching about cultural diversity that are mainly built upon classification and representation. Regardless of its intention, such practice of discussing different cultures through labeling and describing can lead to Othering. What I mean by Othering is specifically related to oppressive Othering (Schwalbe et al., 2000) and commodification of Otherness (hooks, 1992). The process of Othering includes the invention of categories to mark a certain group of people and attribute inferiority to the group (Schwalbe et al., 2000). Oppressive Othering can be also used to turn subordinates into commodities (Schewalbe et al., 2000). On the cultural level, the commodification of Otherness plays a role in promoting exploitation of Others and eradications of the Others' history for the pleasure and satisfaction of the dominant group (hooks, 1992).

In order to problematize Othering on multiple levels, I first demystify the static notion of ethnic and national culture through an example of the ideological formation of Koreanness in Dansaekhwa. In the first section, I weave my reflective narratives into the discussions of representation, Othering, and positionality. The section entails a critical reflection on my positionality, which is often invited to play the role of a native informant and represent my 'culture.' Through my own reflection, I attempt to address the issue of speaking *about* and *for* the Other, and how it perpetuates the colonial discourse through a network of representation and interpretation. Next, I look into the discourse of coloniality in terms of national/ethnic identity in global art with an example of Dansaekhwa. In order to demystify a fixed sense of national and ethnic identity embedded in art, I discuss how the emergence of Dansaekhwa was entangled with the discourse of Koreanness. Methodologically, I employ discourse analysis to analyze exhibition catalogues, interviews with the artists, and scholarly journals about Dansaekhwa. I consider discourse as "social practice," which is socially constitutive and conditioned (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). Discourses can sustain the existing power structure as well as contribute to transforming it; therefore, discursive practices have ideological effects in the ways in which they represent people (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). In this sense, discourse analysis is not just the linguistic analysis of texts, but also analysis of texts with their social effects (Fairclough, 1989). I choose key words and phrases regarding Koreanness in texts I collected; next, I analyze the situated meanings and their social effects in historical and sociocultural contexts. In this process, I demonstrate how Koreanness was discursively produced with respect to certain focal points of Dansaekhwa and its connection to ideologies that were upheld within the sociocultural context of South Korea.

The second section addresses decolonial aspects of Lee Bul's works and connects her artistic practices to decolonial aestheSis, or an effort to delink from the Western aesthetics (Vazquez & Mignolo, 2013). I highlight a few selected artworks that I view as closely linked to decolonial aestheSis. I introduce Lee Bul's work as one of many artists' decolonial attempts and efforts throughout contemporary Korean history. I finally suggest a few thoughts regarding what art educators should consider to move beyond the colonial discourse in global narratives. I argue for border thinking to imagine the global beyond the modern/colonial worldview. I specifically address the role of critical reflexivity in the art educators' works, including representation, the importance of border thinking, and the in-between place to claim for subaltern perspectives.

## The Myth of National Identity in Art: Dansaekhwa and its Koreanness

My experience of moving into a new boundary with different cultural and linguistic identities was a not simple transition, but rather a messy and a hurtful process of becoming. As Anzaldúa (2012) described, "living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an 'alien' element" (p. 19). I felt fragmented into different pieces that constantly provoked me to see what was happening from multiple angles and ultimately question my pre-existing views, ideas, and identities (Anzaldúa, 2012). On one hand, I could better understand how we, as individuals, are entangled with social and cultural conventions, values, and beliefs. I almost felt it was like gaining new insights, and it allowed my personal growth in some ways. On the other hand, moving to a society where I am a racially, culturally, and linguistic Other was a shattering experience of becoming someone else or even no one (He, 2006).

The very first and most frequent question I received from people I met was "where are you from?" I suddenly felt that I would never be more or less than my ethnicity. My ethnicity or nationality became who I am. Meanwhile, I also felt that I was automatically approved and qualified to play the role of a native informant who could bring comprehensible information about Korean culture. People often expected me to briefly explain "Korean culture" or wanted to confirm

their understanding of the Korean society from me. In both academic and non-academic settings, I was frequently invited to represent "my culture." At that time, I considered my different ethnic and cultural affiliations as a sort of advantage. I thought my cultural difference would make my works unique and outstanding in academia in the U.S. I willingly and unwillingly volunteered as a representative of Korean culture; I wrote and talked about people, culture, and issues in my home countries more often than not throughout graduate school. I sometimes felt this was a benefit or even a responsibility for me as an outsider to talk about my culture.

At one point, I started feeling deeply uncomfortable. I think this was the moment that I realized I might have been contributing to Othering and stereotyping unknowingly. Representation of my culture, regardless of my intentions, involves the process of the selection and description of a partial dimension of the society. If I am not extremely careful of contextualization and my positionality, my act of representation can simply reduce people and society into an object. This can ultimately lead to alienation and social distance (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). Specifically, I asked myself if I was discussing culture that might easily fit into the colonial discourse. Mignolo explains that coloniality is a process of inventing identification, which erases and devalues certain people, ways of thinking, doing, and living (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014). I was asking if my works attempted to challenge such colonial discourse of identification or produce knowledge in line with coloniality.

Additionally, I asked who might benefit from my works of representation. Which group of people has the most at stake regarding the issues, in and about Korea, which I discuss here in the American education system? If the issue matters most for people in Korea, what is my reason for discussing it mainly for an audience who is farther from the issue? The other significant question I had was my ethical and educational responsibilities of speaking *about* and *for* certain groups of people vis-à-vis my positionality as an in/outsider (Bell, 2001; Mutua & Swadener, 2004). Whom do I speak for and what might be an unintended impact for people who are described when I speak about the Other in a language which has hegemonic power in our current globalized world? Above all, the most unsettling question was the ideology of nation and cultural identity. How can I explain Korean culture in a few hour-long presentations or a semester-long class at most? Is it even possible to elaborate certain aspects of Korean culture as if they are stable and bounded? What are the internal and external forces that shape such an ideological notion of Koreanness?

As partial answers to these questions, I would like to discuss the ideological formation of authentic Koreanness in Dansaekhwa. The emergence of Dansaekhwa continues to have a significant meaning since it possesses a symbolic position of the very first contemporary Korean art movement, which gained significant popularity both in Korea and abroad (The Korea Arts Management Service, 2016). Numerous scholars have continued the discussion concerning the ideological formation of identity discourse in Dansaekhwa and its relation to Western Modern art, Mono-ha, and the socio-political situation in South Korea under the military regime in 1960s and 70s (see Kee, 2013; Kim, 2005; Kim, 2013). This section aims to reveal hidden ideologies embedded in the discursive practice of shaping the Korean identity in Dansaekhwa. Therefore, I will mainly focus on certain aesthetic qualities of Dansaekhwa that are frequently addressed in relation to its Koreanness. By doing so, I attempt to demystify the notion of a fixed national and/or ethnic identity argued in the discourse of art.

Dansaekhwa, which is a Korean word that literally translates to "monochrome painting," means "a loose constellation of mostly large abstract paintings done in white, black, brown, and other neutral colors made by Korean artists from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s (Kee, 2013, p. 1). Before the term "Dansaekhwa" was officially used by Yoon Jin Sup[2] in the 3rd Gwangju Biennale in 2000, people used many different terms to group Korean abstract paintings in neutral hues, such as monochrome painting, monotone painting, and solid-color painting (Yoon, 2016). As these different terms imply, the certain formal characteristics of Dansaekhwa, especially its natural and earth-toned colors, were considered the essence of Dansaekhwa in the earlier stage of its emergence. In addition to its unique formal qualities, Dansaekhwa artists share their interests in materiality, repetition, meditativeness, and spirituality (Yoon, 2016).

The monochrome paintings began to be intentionally grouped in the mid-1970s soon after the 1975 group exhibition *Five Korean Artists, Five Kinds of White* in Tokyo, Japan. This exhibition not only laid the cornerstone of the Dansaekhwa movement, but also provided interpretations highlighting the distinct Korean identity embedded in Dansaekhwa. The curation particularly shed a light on the dominance of white and the meaning of white color in relation to Korean ethnic identity and spirituality. According to Lee Yil (1975), who wrote the catalogue of the exhibition, white color has long been associated with Korean culture, and it not only represents Koreans' traditional aesthetic sensibility, but also symbolizes spiritual bearing. Lee (1975) highlights that white is almost a small cosmos and something spiritual before it is a color. In Dansaekhwa, white is not merely a color, but a foundation of all possible formations (Lee, 1975). His emphasis on white, as an esprit of nature, played a significant role

2 The family name comes first in Korean. The Korean names in this paper, including Cho Soonwoo, Lee Bul, Lee Yil, Park Chung-hee, Park Seo-bo, Yoon Jin Sup, are generally spelled according to this rule.

in shaping the discourse of Dansaekhwa, as well as its identity as "Korean art" later by critics and artists (Yoon, 2010). For instance, Choi Soonwoo argues that white color is a major characteristic of Korean beauty found in works of art, alongside with humor, implicitness, calmness, rationalism, and abstraction, to name a few (Sim, 2008).

Spirituality and meditativeness of Dansaekhwa are other attributes that are commonly emphasized. Yoon (2016) defines Dansaekhwa as an "art form of the mind," which transcends the materials (p. 25). Dansaekhwa artists create their artworks through repetitions of actions and/or pattern; accordingly, it can only be produced with the accumulation of time (Yoon, 2012, 2016). For this reason, Yoon (2016) compares the process of painting Dansaekhwa to the Korean culinary tradition of making a slow-cooked broth and Korean traditional paper, hanji. One of the prominent Dansaekhwa artists, Park Seo-bo, also illuminates the repetitive process of creating Dansaekhwa as its core value. He explains the process of making Dansaekhwa as a tool for moral training through repetitive actions without a purpose, which would eventually lead to the union between one's sprit, action, and material properties (Wee, 2015). For Park, Dansaekhwa is a way to clear the mind and move away from what is conceptual or political. In this vein, he compares the process of creating Dansaekhwa to a Buddhist monk's chanting, which will eventually lead a state of nirvana (Wee, 2015).

Whether the central attributes of Dansaekhwa reside in the formal qualities or the process of creation, it is clear that artists, curators, and critics were heavily invested in finding Koreanness in this particular form of art. The discourse of Dansaekhwa developed in the sociocultural and political context where the ideology of Korean ethnic, national, and cultural identity was greatly promoted. There was a significant national endeavor to search for Korean identity after Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945) and after the Korean War (1950-1953). It was a yearning for a unified Korean identity and an effort to reclaim Korean culture and traditions, which were significantly eradicated during the Japanese colonial era (Bardaouil & Fellrath, 2014; Yoon, 2012). In order to define what constitutes Korean identity, Koreanness was frequently employed as "a convenient and superficially persuasive device used to distinguish the nation-space of Korea from other geopolitical entities" (Kee, 2003, p. 143). In conclusion, the discourse of contemporary art in Korea has primarily evolved around the question of what type of art can reflect the Korean identity (Kim, 2012).

Furthermore, Dansaekhwa was strategically promoted by the Korean government during the military regime in the 1960s and 1970s. The major criticism of Dansaekhwa was the artists' apolitical practices under the oppressive regime (Hong, 2014; Kim, 2013). On the other hand, the artist Lee Ufan argues that Dansaekhwa painters' use of abstraction was a silent gesture to resist Park Chung-hee's totalitarian rule[3] (Jang, 2014). Ironically, the Korean government at that time promoted monochrome paintings as a tool for cultural diplomacy due to its contemporary art form carrying unique Koreanness (Bardaouil & Fellrath, 2014). In its turn, Dansaekhwa played a role in locating the Korean identity in the context of global art.

What I found problematic is not necessarily about Koreanness that is intentionally highlighted in the discourse, but rather the process of exclusion and selection as a means to conveniently promote Koreanness in Dansaekhwa. With heightened national interest in seeking Korean identity, characteristics of Dansaekhwa are mainly tied to a few selected dimensions of Korean traditions and culture. Those Korean characteristics should be typical and oriental enough to gain international popularity. For example, immateriality and spirituality were intentionally linked to the discourse of Koreanness and orientalism in favor of its authenticity, which enables Dansaekhwa to be distinguished from Western minimalism and Mono-ha in Japan (Hong, 2014). In order to demarcate "Korean art" in the international art market, the discourse was strategically developed to illuminate Koreanness that can be easily digested with orientalism.[4]

As Yoon (2012) argues, characteristics that make Dansaekhwa uniquely Korean, such as white color, calmness, and spiritual transcendence, were born out of the perspectives of Westerners. The meaning of white color drew critical attention because it was outsiders' impression and viewpoint of Korea (Yoon, 2012). Contradicting the effort to define autonomous and pure Koreanness in art, the Korean identity of Dansaekhwa was formed based on the Western-European and North American aesthetic theories and discourses. An example is that the curators and critics employ Clement Greenberg's concept of flatness in order to internationalize the Dansaekhwa movement and simultaneously highlight Asianness when it needs to be differentiated from Western minimalism (Yoon, 2010). This contradiction embedded in the formation of Korean identity in Dansaekhwa reveals that Koreanness was not something innately embodied by artists; rather, it was an expedient tool to

3 Park Chung-hee served as the president of South Korea from 1963 until his assassination in 1979. During his 18-year regime, South Korea established enormous economic expansion at the expense of political freedom and civil liberties.

4 For example, the meditativeness of Dansaekhwa is similar to Japanese Zen Buddhism, which became popular in the 1960s in the U.S. Park Seo-bo explicitly argues for the aspect of Zen in Dansaekhwa in his interview with Wee (2015).

gain popularity in the global art world as well as promote cultural nationalism.

The other danger of the ideological concept of Koreanness is that it can blind the multiplicity of identities of people and values of art, which are loosely associated with the space of Korea. As Kee (2003) mentions, Koreanness is an unstable paradigm embedded in a fictitious conception of ethnic purity. Moon (1998) reveals that the image of a timeless Korean nation, which was constructed through representations of its history and tradition, is incongruous "because this very discursive practice masks the marginalization of women and their exclusion from the putatively homogeneous and egalitarian community" (p. 34). Moon's (1998) major point is that Korean national identity is the discursive product of ideologies built upon the entanglement of the U.S. military domination, the dictatorship during the military regime, and neo-Confucian patriarchy. More importantly, the "homogenous" nation identity was constructed through the denial and exclusion of certain groups of people and historical events (for example, Comfort Women, who were the military sex slaves during the Japanese colonization in Korea) for the sake of the colonial image of masculinity (Moon, 1998). Thus, Koreanness is inherently an incomplete and misleading paradigm. Going back to the discussions of art, the promotion of Koreanness in art is precarious since it imposes on artists the burden of representing "the entire psychic, geographic, and political ramifications encompassed by what is too casually labeled as Korea" (Kee, 2003, p. 142). This is more problematic in the context of global art where one is inclined to second-guess artworks with ethnic-specific elements and categorize them based on the artists' nationality and ethnicity (Kee, 2003). In this context, such a notion of Koreanness is used to offer commodifiable differences and prejudices that result in bypassing formal analysis to the ethnic-specific elements (Kee, 2003).

As Koreanness has been constructed through the ideological discursive practices, the current prevalent worldview, such as East and West and the Third world, is also constructed through modernity/coloniality (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014; Mignolo, 2000; Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006; Quijano, 2007). Mignolo (2000) explains that the coloniality of power becomes articulated in the classificatory apparatus. Drawn upon Quijano's insights, Mignolo (2000) explains that coloniality of power constitutes itself through 1) the classification of human populations, 2) an institutional structure which functions to articulate such classifications, 3) "the definition of spaces appropriate to such goals," and 4) "an epistemological perspective from which to articulate the meaning and profile of the new matrix of power and from which the new production of knowledge could be channeled" (p. 17). The important point Mignolo (2000) brings up is that the concept of culture becomes essential in classification and reclassification. Wolf (1982) makes a similar point that we create a false model of the world with different fixed entities by "endowing nations, societies, or cultures with the qualities of internally homogeneous and externally distinctive and bounded objects" (p. 6). Such a habit of treating named entities as fixed entities opposed to one another "interferes with our ability to understand their mutual encounters and confrontations" (Wolf, 1982, p. 7).

If this is the case, the task of educators and researchers is not to enhance the pre-existing classification apparatus in global narratives, but rather to challenge the colonial discourses of cultural and racial classification, which stratify the human populations and justify the inferiority of the Other (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006). Decolonial thinking, doing, and sensing emerged as a response to this violent epistemology and rhetoric of coloniality. Thus, I discuss decolonial thinking with an example of contemporary art in the next section.

## Disobedience, Juxtaposition, and Subversion: Lee Bul's Decolonial AestheSis

I cannot recall when I found the artist, Lee Bul for the first time; however, I remember I saw one of the pictures of her performance wearing a monster costume and walking around the street in Seoul. I was, in a way, shocked and thrilled to find a female artist who showed the explicit gesture of resistance by using her own body almost three decades ago, when women's voices were greatly silenced. The 1980s and 1990s were also a politically chaotic time of transition from the military dictatorship to democracy in Korea. Later, I realized that it was her performance *Sorry for suffering - You think I'm a puppy on a picnic?* in 1990.

I was fascinated by Lee Bul's trajectories not only because of her audacity in challenging social conventions through her body, but also personal histories that led to the directions of her works. She was born in 1964, during the military regime, to parents who led fugitive lives as political dissidents. Due to the guilt-by-association system at that time, her whole family was restricted to participating in social activities involving no more than ten people. This oppressive experience taught her numerous strategies of survival and resistance through artistic expression (Lee, 1995). Lee Bul created a wide range of artworks, including performance, installations, and sculptures, and the subject matters of her works are broad and included topics such as femininity, monsters, cyborgs, machines, and (dis)utopia. The common grounds of her works explore otherness and attempt to destabilize the system of oppression (Amy, 2011). Lee's works, beginning with performances like *Abortion*, 1989, are her effort to disrupt social conventions and address taboo issues, particularly the issues of gender and embodied sexism in patriarchal society.

Furthermore, Lee Bul's works deconstruct the dichotomy and the hierarchy of senses. *Majestic Splendor*, 1993, for example, questions the stability of categorical concepts, such as artificiality/neutrality and feminine purity/impurity, in relation to the social and cultural ideal (Lee, 1995). In this ten-day long exhibition, Lee Bul installed raw red snappers adorned with sequins and beads in translucent plastic bags. The juxtaposition of decaying fish and colorful and glittering decorations with beads and pins in addition to its stench effectively questions the prevailing assumption of aesthetic experience within the space of a gallery. Lee mentioned during her interview that she tried to examine "the idea of representation and its relationship to the privileging of vision as the dominant aesthetic principle, and how this privileging of vision came about" (Obrist, 2003, p. 535). She brings up the significant point of how all of the senses except for vision are downgraded and excluded from high art. Lee continues,

> While the fish can be seen as a representation, it also evokes - because of this other element of smell, which doesn't fit in to the traditional categories of representational strategies - a sense of the real, of object immediacy, of something that is prior to, or beyond, representation….In a sense, I'm trying to reverse the traditional strategies of art, to disturb the supreme position of the image, or the privileging of image and visual experience in the traditional hierarchies of art apparatus. (Obrist, 2003, p. 535)

What Lee Bul mentioned about representation and hierarchy of senses is tied to decolonial aestheSis, the term introduced by Vazquez and Mignolo (2013). Decolonial aestheSis questions the reasons why Western aesthetic categories, such as "beauty" and "representation," have come to be dominant in the discussion of art and organize the way of understanding the value of art and people who make it (Vazquez & Mignolo, 2013). During an interview with Gaztambide-Fernández (2014), Mignolo describes decolonial aestheSis as an effort of decolonial thinkers to delink from "the legacy of modern aesthetics and its Greek and Roman legacies" (p. 201). The concept of aesthetics concerns a set of principles in matters of artistic beauty, taste, and sensitivity, and aesthetics has functioned to configure a canon and normativity; it leads to the practice of rejection and exclusion of other forms of aesthetic practices, specially sensing and perceiving (Vazquez & Mignolo, 2013). Although Rancière (2013) discusses sensing in his current book, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, Mignolo argues that Rancière's discussion is only limited to the sensing of the Western epistemology (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014). What decolonial aestheSis proposes is not to abandon the Western aesthetics, but to start from them in order to delink from them (Mignolo, 2000). It is considered as an option along with modern, postmodern, and altermodern aesthetics (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014; Mignolo, 2000).

In this regard, Lee Bul's works use the strategies of decolonial aestheSis, including parody, juxtaposition, and disobedience, to name a few. For example, *Alibi*, 1994, shows the juxtaposition of the natural and the artificial as it draws the audience's eyes to a butterfly piercing through silicon hands that are from a mold of her own hands. According to Lee (1995), the image of the butterfly is a satiric metaphor of the western fetish of Asian women. This contradictive juxtaposition of the images of the Korean traditional hairpin, hands, and the butterfly enables us to see the rupture of cultural inventions of sexuality (Lee, 1995). The Transnational Decolonial Institute (2013) notes that

> the goal of decolonial thinking and doing is to continue re-inscribing, embodying and dignifying those ways of living, thinking and sensing that were violently devalued or demonized by colonial, imperial and interventionist agendas as well as by postmodern and altermodern internal critiques. (p. 10)

Lee Bul's works, from this perspective, entail decolonial aestheSis since they constantly intervene fragmented and contradictory dimensions of the oppressive society, whether it is about the patriarchy, cultural imperialism, or neocolonialism.

## Suggestions: The Globe Beyond the Colonial Image

Based on the discussions of representation, Othering, the ideological formation of national/ethnic identity, and decolonial aestheSis, I propose several suggestions for educators who would like to incorporate global narratives in their teaching and research practice. The suggestions are from my own critical reflection; therefore, my intent is certainly not to provide the solution to the colonial discourse nor to negate other ways of incorporating global narratives in the educational context. Rather, I intend to share my thoughts as an option to consider, especially when educators and students engage in the discourse of globalization and cultural diversity.

The first suggestion is critical reflexivity as a way to resist Othering. In order to reduce any unintended possibility of Othering, I consider the educator's critical reflection on her or his positionality as a primary step toward any sort of works that touch on the discourses of culture, identity, and representation of Others. Desai (2000) insists that teachers should address a politics of location and positionality when teaching about cultures other than one's own. Moreoever, reflexivity

is one strategy of resisting Othering according to Krumer-Nevo and Sidi (2012). Reflexivity reveals the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises as well as ideological agendas (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). I personally consider critical reflexivity as a process of examining one's social positionality in relation to the dominant group (Bell, 2001), situating the researcher's position regarding the group of the researched, deconstructing the power relations in the act of researching, and most importantly, acknowledging the researcher's presence and experiences within the text through weaving narratives and theories. This is an active process of looking inward (the researcher) and looking outward (the power relations between different groups of people on the structural level).

This critical reflexivity is particularly significant in global narratives and intercultural education when the discussions contain representation of the Other, since "intercultural communication is situated in the context of imbalance in power and inequality in resources" (Shi-xu, 2001, p. 286). As Vila (2003) argues, "any representation is fundamentally the product of asymmetrical power relations" (p. xii). Although the intention of representing the Other is to challenge the dominant discourse, such a representation can contribute to solidifying the pre-existing colonial discourse if one does not take a critical stance on the issue addressed. Furthermore, "the desire to know the Other can be a potential source of dominance" when the act of knowing reduces the Other in the network of interpretations and representations (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012, p. 299). Similarly, Desai (2000) contends that art educators can possibly reduce the epistemic violence toward the Other only when we emphasize the relationship between power and representation. Therefore, educators who attempt to know, teach, and write about the cultural Other should reflect on their own position in the colonial matrix of power and seriously consider possible consequences of representation.

The second suggestion follows the decolonial concerns in education. As De Lessovoy (2010) states, education concerning an ethical and democratic globality is only possible in the context of a recognition of power relations, which shaped the political, cultural, economic, and epistemological processes of domination. "Imagining an ethics of the global in this context means articulating a decolonial perspective" (De Lessovoy, 2010, p. 279). The decolonial perspective starts from the critique on modernity/coloniality. As I discussed earlier, the notion of culture was the major tool of the classification apparatus of coloniality (Mignolo, 2000). If global narratives circulate based on the fixed and bounded concepts of culture, they will never overcome the paradigm of coloniality. Likewise, descriptive cultural knowledge that rests upon a discourse of categorization functions based on the identified norms, and accordingly, it obstructs the recognition of the singular



individual and heterogeneity (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006). As a result, the abstract and globalizing knowledge of cultures does not enhance the cultural understanding and social relationship; rather, it acts as a screen or filter (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006). This is why decolonial educators, such as Shi-xu (2001), argue for the alternative discourse of pedagogy that addresses the unequal power structures in the global context and pays attention to hybridity within cultures, instead of focusing on differences between cultures. In other words, educators should think of cultural knowledge in heterogeneous contexts and promote "hybrid, segmentary and heterogeneous thinking" (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006, p. 483).

In this respect, I argue for border thinking to imagine knowledge and learning beyond "hegemonic epistemology and the monoculture of the mind in its Western diversity" (Mignolo, 2000, p. xvii). Border thinking[5] was first discussed in Gloria Anzaldúa's book, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. According to Anzaldúa's (2012) multidimensional concept of borderlands, the borderlands exist not only geopolitically, but also in the realms of ideology and epistemology. Anzaldúa (2012) expands the concept of borderlands from the physical (for example, Texas-U.S. Southwest/Mexican border) to the psychological, sexual, and spiritual borderlands. She states that a borderland is an ambiguous place created by "the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 25). It physically presents "wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 19). Therefore, the borderlands are "in a constant state of transition" and those who cross over "the confines of the normal" are inhabitants of the borderlands (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 25).

Drawing upon Anzaldúa's conceptualization of borderlands, Mignolo (2000) argues that engaging in border thinking is equivalent to thinking and doing decolonially. This is because the main thrust of border thinking aims at eliminating modernity/coloniality. Border thinking emerged as a response to the violent imperial/territorial epistemology and the discourses of modernity and globalization, which perpetuate the idea of the inferior Other and justify oppression (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006). In order to subvert coloniality, border thinking uses the modern and postmodern thinking as a tool to locate

5 Border thinking is closely related to the field of borderlands studies, which is significantly shaped based on the theoretical insights of Gloria Anzaldúa, Renato Rosaldo, D. Emily Hicks, and Hector Calderon and José David Saldívar (Vila, 2003). Its body of scholarship has diverse interdisciplinary, social, and academic origins (Naples, 2010), and decolonial scholars, such as Walter Mignolo, also advanced the discussion of border thinking (see Mignolo, 2000; Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006).

the subaltern perspective and find where modernity/coloniality cracks (Mignolo, 2000).

When it comes to global narratives, educators should contemplate how we imagine the globe and how we are going to see ourselves and our students in relation to the globe (Andreotti, 2011). I consider border thinking as a possible answer to these questions since it enables us to move beyond the modern/colonial world imaginary, such as the world of civilization (Mignolo, 2000), and the binary of local/global. Border thinking is possible when one posits oneself in "Nepantla," which means "in-between space" in Nhuatl. Anzaldúa adopted this term to represent psychic, spiritual, and material points of possible transformation (Keating, 2006). Nepantla is "the place where different perspectives come into conflict" and "the zone between changes where you struggle to find equilibrium between the outer expression of change and your inner relationship to it" (Anzaldúa, 2002, pp. 548-549). This in-between space facilitates transformation by breaking down boundaries and identity categories that were deemed natural and comfortable (Keating, 2000). In pedagogical works concerning border thinking, it is crucial to embrace uncertainties and conflicts that we face in this space. Hence, the role of educators should be encouraging students to critically re-think bodies, identities, and experiences that are colonized, and to cradle ambiguity and uneasiness in the process.

This is not to say that pedagogical implications of border thinking and sensing can be a mere embracement of hybridity (Cervantes-Soon & Garrillo, 2016) and ambiguity. Although border thinking calls forth decolonial pedagogical projects through envisioning a heterogeneous transnational space of identity (Castillo & Tabuenca Córdoba, 2002), the metaphorical and abstract concept of the border can be misleading, especially when it fails to address complicated power relations and racial hierarchies entrenched along the specific borders.[6]

6 There are several critiques of metaphorical and abstract concepts of borders that Anzaldúa (2012) and Mignolo (2000) theorize. Fox (1999), for example, raises a concern that the works employing this metaphorical concept of a border are rarely site-specific; accordingly, it fails to engage material and geopolitical issues occurring in borders. Castillo and Tabuenca Córdoba (2002) also provide a critique on Anzaldúa's borderlands by pointing out that her concept of the border experience is "defined and narrated from a First World perspective" (p. 15). Their major criticism is that Anzaldúa's analysis does not consider "many other otherenesses related to a border existence" (Castillo & Tabuenca Córdoba, 2002, p. 15). In the context of the Mexico-United States border, those involved in border studies from the Mexican side find it difficult to consider the border simply as a metaphor due to the fact that the borderline retains a strong materiality (Castillo & Tabuenca Córdoba, 2002). Howard (2011) similarly warns that the politics of ambiguity, which is widely addressed in the multiracial discourses, can hardly transform hierarchical relations of power.



As Ortega (2016) states, "liminality is not a sufficient condition for liberation" (p. 34). Decolonial attempts can never be effective if we naively romanticize the border experiences or disregard material and geopolitical issues involved in actual borders.

With these concerns in mind, I consider that we, art educators, need to openly acknowledge the equivocal character of the border and border experiences while critically examining materiality and power structures upholding the physical, psychological, and cultural borders. We need to change the way we think about borders to imagine alternative political and sociocultural possibilities (Agnew, 2008). Furthermore, we need to create more space of in-betweenness where multiple and heterogeneous local narratives and imaginations of the globe conflict with each other and eventually expose the contradictions of coloniality. What we need to seek in global narratives is not a unified image of named entities nor the globality, but rather compound voices from the subaltern perspectives. This includes our educational effort to raise awareness to delink from the Eurocentric aesthetics and beliefs on art and its value (Transnational Decolonial Institute, 2013). Our goal in global narratives should not be to bring the refined beauty of the exotic Other, but to produce feelings of sadness, anger, hope, and determination that arise from the deconstruction of coloniality (Vazquez & Mignolo, 2013). Again, that can happen in the liminal space of nepantla, which is "a time of self-reflection, choice, and potential growth" to disidentify existing beliefs, social structures, and identities for transformation of the existing conditions (Keating, 2006, p. 9).

Again, our decolonial attempt through border thinking should be more than affirming diverse students' linguistic, racial, and sociocultural identities and experiences. As Giroux (1991) warns us, one thing we should never overlook in this kind of critical work is the relationship between power and knowledge and how this relationship is involved in the practice of representation to maintain the existing power structures. It is crucial to situate border experiences and ways of knowing at the center of our pedagogical discourse, as well as to engage students in the discussions of the linkage between power, representation, and differences. By doing so, we ultimately want our students to move in and out of borders (Hicks, 1988) to remap and reimagine the cultural, physical, and psychological borders. The first step of this pedagogical work could be the attempt to demystify the colonial concepts and images as I demonstrated in this essay, or personal reflections could be implemented to deconstruct the colonial image of oneself. Regardless of our first steps, our goal of decolonial works should be toward sociocultural transformation and emancipation from colonized identities and experiences.

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