Prolegomena to Any Future Decolonial Ethics¹: Colonality, Poetics and ‘Being Human as Praxis’

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Abstract:
Decolonial thought has wrought a devastating critique on the academy and wide-ranging fields within it. Decolonial critique entails undeniable and multiple ethico-political orientations arising from concrete struggles within the ‘unfinished project of decolonization’ (Maldonado-Torres), as well as recent articulations of decolonial ethics. This article argues that, as decolonial critique, and calls for decolonial ethics, begin to find their way into broader theoretical discussions in the social sciences and humanities, it may be more fruitful to insist on the question of decolonial ethics. It encourages retaining the disruptive potential of decolonial critique by resisting its immediate translations into available ethical registers and traditions that unwittingly reassert, and remain bound to, forms of ethical expression dependent on generalized narratives, which occlude their histories of violent and racialized exclusion and masterful figurations of ethical subjectivity. Outlining Sylvia Wynter’s excavation of prominent figurations of the human as ‘Man’, I argue that our conceptions of ethical subjects too rest on such figurations. The article, therefore, discusses three prolegomena to any future decolonial ethics: the decolonial critique and displacement of the figure of Man as ethical subject within racialized coloniality; the development of a decolonizing poetics, whose ethos of irreverence seeks forms of poetic revolt that draw on struggles to question systems of ethical thought and knowledge; finally, a discussion of the contours of a praxis of being hybridly human through the development of ‘education’ as an incessant and ‘unfinished’ project.

The Question of a Decolonial Ethics

The multiple and intersecting strands of decolonial thought have wrought a devastating critique on the academy and wide-ranging fields within: historical and contemporary political economy, history and historiography, epistemology and orders of knowledge, and aesthetics. Decolonial critique entails undeniable and multiple ethico-political orientations arising from concrete struggles within the ‘unfinished project of decolonization’ and evincing the desire for new forms of relationality. Decolonial scholars such as Nelson Maldonado-Torres have already begun the task of developing a decolonial ethics. He critically develops Fanon’s thought to reflect on the ‘forms of critique and practices’ that are needed to enable the unworking of the ‘anti-ethical’ system that is colonialism, whilst also mobilizing Enrique Dussel’s earlier development of the notion of ‘transmodernity’, which ‘transgresses’ the ‘abstract universals’ of colonial modernity. Indeed, his mapping of what he calls the ‘non-ethics of war’ that distinguish modernity as an epoche, and as a set of colonial practices of violence and dehumanization, informs the engagement with the decolonial critique offered below.

Dussel’s newly translated Ethics of Liberation in the Age of Globalization and Exclusion builds on his earlier philosophy of liberation to articulate an ethics on behalf of ‘the victims’ and ‘the poor’. Informed by his own broader contributions to decolonial thinking, Ethics is an encompassing and broadly conceived work that attempts a remarkable synthesis of normative ethics and formal morality. Engaging and incorporating insights from a vastly diverse range of ethical approaches, ranging from the ‘formal morality’ of discourse ethics all the way to the varied contributions of utilitarianism, communitarianism and American pragmatism, as well as scientific accounts of affective desires shaping activist praxis, it eclectically combines elements from each to offer a foundation for an ethics of

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4 Maldonado-Torres, Against War, 100 and 12.

5 Maldonado-Torres, ‘On the Coloniality of Being’.
‘life... grounded in factual, empirical, and descriptive judgments’. Dussel is aware that his synthetic approach opens him up to a range of criticisms, including that he collapses back onto the canon of Western modernity – onto the ‘master’s tools’, so to speak. He is less concerned with ‘this ethics’ explicit theoretical normative capacity’ than he is with enabling their strategic mobilization ‘in another dimension, which is especially important in collective learning processes where critical consciousness can be developed as part of the political, economic, and social organizing efforts of new emerging social movements in civil society’. It is for this reason that, in the confines of this article, I do not rehearse the varied critiques against Dussel’s approach nor seek to improve on the defenses of his work, some of them masterful. I pursue a different trajectory.

I argue that, as decolonial critique, and calls for decolonial ethics, begin to find their way into broader theoretical discussions in the social sciences and humanities, it may be more fruitful to insist on the question of decolonial ethics. Rather than incorporating elements of decolonial critique or ‘translating’ these important attempts at decolonial ethics into our familiar ethical theories, I urge that we retain decolonial thought’s disruption of prevalent figurations, languages and ways of thinking about ‘ethics’, which remain bound to forms of ethical expression that are themselves dependent on generalized narratives of who we are as ethical subjects. As decolonial thought has shown, narratives of ethical subjectivity tend to occlude their histories of violent and racialized exclusion of multiplicity and, at times, legitimate colonial structures and their imbrication in the ‘differential allocation of humanness’. Dussel too recognizes the danger of such translations into our familiar languages of ethics: ‘the philosophical ethics most in fashion, the standard ones, and even those that have a critical orientation with a claim to being postconventional in character, are in fact themselves the ethics of minorities (most

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6 Dussel, Ethics of Liberation, xvi–xvii.
8 Dussel, Ethics of Liberation, xix.
emphatically of hegemonic, dominating minorities; those that own the resources, the words, the arguments, the capital, the armies').

Instead, I offer here a discussion of what we might call the prolegomena to any future decolonial ethics: the preceding, insufficient but necessary, orientations that call for new ways of narrating, world-disclosure and praxis in the world with others. The prolegomena is not intended as a prohibitive move but, rather, as a caution to ‘hasty’ translations of decolonial thought, including the important articulations of decolonial ethics noted above, through the traditions of ethical theorizing most familiar to us in political and international thought and cognate academic domains. The discussion of the prolegomena recognizes that conventional and critical – relational, situational, non-foundational -- approaches to ethics too, often depend on, or return to, the self-same figurations of ethical subjectivity that they genuinely seek to question, or even, annul.

Below I turn specifically to Sylvia Wynter’s excavation of historically prominent figurations of the human as ‘Man’, evolving within and naturalizing our still colonial structures and their attendant orders of knowledge. Wynter’s thought helps illuminate that the subject of ethics and moral thought similarly rests on such figurations and that moral philosophy tends to work within languages that have not been able to exceed, indeed remain enclosed within, colonial structures, their colonizing poetics and its ‘monolingual’ predicate of ‘Man’. The overarching aim, therefore, of discussing the prolegomena to any future decolonial ethics is to acknowledge both the difficulties in ‘attempt[ing] to construct a form of language through a language (or languages) which does not of itself permit such a thing’, and also the possibilities emerging from

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multifarious anti-colonial struggles, variously engaged in resistance, institutional reform and symbolic-poetic reconstitution. Such struggles integrally include decolonial attempts to resist the ‘ongoing reproduction of a western European concept of humanity’ that reduces the world’s many cosmogonies to a ‘specific kind of human’.15

In section one, I outline the contours of decolonial critique as the first element to the prolegomena of any future decolonial ethics, documenting its examination of the ‘idea of race’ as an organizing principle of the new division of labour in colonialism and noting its development of the concept of coloniality in the analysis of the ‘afterlife’ of historical colonialism. In this critique, the thought of Wynter offers one important avenue for un-working humanistic, biocentric and homo oeconomicus subjectivities as the very narrative vehicle of both colonial practices of dispossession and de-humanizing disposability and also of modern ethical thinking.16 This figure, whom Wynter calls ‘Man’, is incessantly established as the world’s ‘referent-we’ and is the preeminent subjectivity at the center of many conventional and critical constructions of ethics. Leaving in place and, in effect, naturalizing this subject reinforces our silence as to its ‘epistemic privilege’ and its epistemic and other forms of injustice in the global colonial era.17

The plural and intersecting decolonial critiques at the heart of our emerging discussions of decolonial ethics also call for, and enable, the search for a decolonizing and worldly poetics as the second element of the prolegomena. Emergent as forms of poetic revolt within multiple decolonizing projects and sites, such a poetics is marked by combat and an ethos of irreverence. It breaks with universalizing and monolingual predicates, such as the figure of Man, maintaining openness through multiple imaginaries and refusing to yield to ideological stabilization.18 A decolonizing poetics aims to ‘degeneralize’ (Édouard

16 See the important discussion of modernity’s ‘death ethic’ in Maldonado-Torres, Against War, xi, 4 and 218.
18 Glissant, The Poetics of Relation, 23–35.
Glissant’s term) and ‘relativize’ (Wynter’s term) the ‘colonial order of the world’, its order of knowledge and its sociogenic, that is, the subject-forming and instituting processes of its colonial social structures. As a second element of the prolegomena it signals the need for new ‘multilingual’ modes of renarration, which are central to processes of disrupting epistemic orders and the narratives through which we ‘auto-institute’ ourselves as ethical subjects. A decolonizing poetics seeks, after Aimé Césaire, non-impoverished access to the world and to forms of relation that combine irreverence with an openness to struggle and ‘combination’.

Finally, the third element of the prolegomena to any future decolonial ethics revolves around the question of how to grasp being human as a verb, or a praxis, rather than as a noun disclosing a descriptive statement and a normative standard. Returning to Wynter in section three, I critically engage her call for a newly recast, but still heretical, Studia Humanitatis – ‘studies of the human’ -- and for a humanism shed of Renaissance and subsequent inflections, more broadly. I explore the contours of a new Studia around ‘education’ as an ethical, ‘unfinished’ and incessant project connected to specific struggles for epistemic justice and to the forging of an ecumenically conceived order of knowledge, which ‘does not privilege European Man and its idiom’. I examine how it facilitates a praxis of self- and world-disclosure, which remains attuned to the concreteness and complexity of multiple sites and worlds within the ‘unfinished project of decolonization’. Moreover, such a Studia Humanitatis calls for the ‘obsolescence’ both of the narrowly conceived disciplines and also of the monopoly of knowledge production within the ‘Western Academy’.

20 Maldonado-Torres, Against War, 3.
22 See the lengthy discussion of such processes, most recently, in Wynter, ‘The Ceremony Found’.
23 Chela Sandoval, Methodology of the Oppressed (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 169; see the discussion in Maldonado-Torres, Against War, 244.
Decolonial thought consists of a plural and critical set of critiques of colonialism and its afterlife, which has long emerged in the fields of history, sociology, literary criticism and global political economy. It has questioned ahistorical modes of thinking and the very endeavor of historiography, whilst remaining wedded to political and ethical projects of decolonization in its multifarious forms. Importantly, decolonial critique’s development of the notion of ‘coloniality’ is attentive to the colonial conditions of possibility of contemporary racialized disposability. Decolonial thought’s engagement with existentialism is evident in the analyses of Fanon; while debts to Marx and Marxism are clear in the works of W. E. B. Dubois, Césaire, C. L. R. James, Cedric J. Robinson and, in South America, of Enrique Dussel and Aníbal Quijano, even where the analytical priority and specificity of colonialism as a system often overwrites such debts. This section could not capture the diversity and complexity of decolonial thinking; rather, it outlines the contours of these critiques around the question and figures of Man as subject and/of ethics.

Decolonial thought’s recent articulation of the concept of coloniality has developed extensively since the world system inflection initially given to it by Quijano’s sociological analyses. Arguing that the colonial model of power rested on ‘the social classification of the world’s population around the idea of race’, he understood race as a ‘mental’ construction or category that functioned to ‘codify the relations between conquered and conquering populations’. This idea of race generated sociologically new ‘forms of labor control’, ranging from ‘slavery, serfdom, petty-commodity production, reciprocity, and wages’, whose emergence enabled the production of ‘commodities for the world market’. Race and forms of labour control ‘remained structurally linked and mutually reinforcing’ and articulated a systematic ‘racial division of labor’. As such, race not only


28 Quijano, ‘Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America’, 216.


30 Ibid.
structured ‘the basic experience of colonial domination’, it also continued to permeate ‘the more important dimensions of global power, including its specific rationality: Eurocentrism’.\(^{31}\) This racial axis of colonialism, Quijano emphasized, was to prove ‘more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established’; he insisted therefore on analyzing how ‘the model of power that is globally hegemonic today presupposes an element of coloniality’.\(^{32}\) In highlighting the ‘coloniality of power’ – the afterlife, if you like, of colonial models of power ‘tied up to the concentration in Europe of capital, wages, the market of capital, and finally, the society and culture associated with those determinations’\(^{33}\) -- he opened a way for analyzing how claims of European cultural achievement were a naturalized aspect of the coloniality of power.

Thinkers like Walter Mignolo, Maldonado-Torres and Wynter later explored contemporary forms of coloniality as a logic and a ‘hidden agenda’ of modernity,\(^{34}\) which works to actively erase its role in colonialism through the production of knowledge and ‘culture’. Coloniality’s assumptions that the colonized were not ‘able to get by without Europe’s theoretical or cultural achievements’ became ‘one of the most definitive tenets of modernity’.\(^{35}\) Becoming aware of coloniality -- first of power (Quijano), then of Being (Mignolo, Torres) and, importantly with Wynter, the composite and inextricably constituted ‘Being/Power/Truth/Freedom’ -- demands that we acknowledge and analyze the sublimated workings of colonialism in all fields of life in the present. Maldonado-Torres’s definition is illuminating:

Coloniality…refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{31}\) Ibid., 534.

\(^{32}\) Ibid.; emphasis added.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 548; emphasis added.


Coloniality, to be clear, is not in any sense purely linguistic or symbolic. It works through systematic geopolitical-colonial dispossession of lands, enslavement and gendered violence done to racialized others, natuarized through its ‘non-ethics of war’. Wynter, too, emerges as an unrelenting critic of the cultural, poetic and ethico-political foundations of ‘Europe’ as a placeholder for modernity, herself engaged in critical conversation with, inter alia, Césaire, Fanon, Elsa Goveia and Glissant. A novelist, actress, polymath and critic of contemporary colonial modernity, she is relatively unknown in international thought, despite her systematic and trans-disciplinary examination of how the ‘coloniality of power’ works through the overrepresentation of one figure -- white European ‘Man’ as a rational, masterful and civilized being – indeed, ‘as if it were the human itself’. Below, I outline first Wynter’s historicization of the figurations of man and how this contests the universalization and stabilization of the Eurocentric order of knowledge; second, her ‘epistemic historicism’ that led her to engage with, and expand, Fanon’s insights on sociogeny: how, in other words, knowledge and mythic narratives become psychically internalized and ‘embodied’ by racialized others; third, how this leads her to a ‘revisioned’ humanism that necessitates the renarration of the ‘hybridly’ human. I conclude this section by reflecting on how Wynter’s critique problematizes the reliance of ethical thought on the overrepresented figure of ‘Man’ and reinstates the question of decolonial ethics as the first prolegomenon.

Sylvia Wynter: figurations of the human, sociogeny and humanism

In course of the past five decades Wynter has analyzed Europe’s serial figurations of ‘Man’ and their ‘monopoly of the human’, writing extensively on the master-narratives of Renaissance humanism, Christian missions, biocentric evolutionism and, today,  

42 Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 151.
neoliberalism. She highlighted how the organization of power and the material, territorial, and racist practices of conquest of colonial modernity entailed a mytho-poetic ‘incorporation of all forms of human being into a single homogenized descriptive statement that is based on the figure of the West’s liberal monohumanist Man’. Moreover, she showed that, since the secularizing humanism of the Renaissance, the ‘ordering principle of the discourse…[entailed] the figuration of an ontological order of value between the groups who were markers of “rationality” and those who were the markers of its Lack-state’.

She meticulously excavated the emergence of this ‘ontological order of value’ in multiple and evolving European colonial discourses, ranging from ‘scientific’, historical to philosophical analyses, showing how these worked with prominent social judgments on the achievements or failings of existing human – racial, sexual, religious, linguistic – communities to generate a discursive-material reality in which such communities live. She examined, second, how narratives and knowledges function within ‘epistemic’ formation and change; and, third, how epistemes, or knowledge orders, legitimize and naturalize the dehumanizing processes instituted by political, socio-economic, and military structures in colonial contexts. She draws on a wide range of thinkers and histories to reflect on how colonial and neo-colonial narrations have described and prescribed the negation of our co-humanity in evolving myths of origin: Christian justifications of colonial expropriations of native but ‘empty’ lands propter nos -- ‘for the sake of us’; later, secular narrations of the less-than-rational-natives contrasted to a ‘ratio-centric’ Man (1); and today, a bio-centric ‘(neo)Liberal-humanist Man(2)-as-homo-economicus conception’. Wynter’s work on the universalization of colonial knowledge orders documented how ‘liminal categories are marked by problems of systemic devaluation and minimalization in representation’.

Importantly, she has employed her rehistoricizing analysis in order to understand better the processes by which *mythoi* structure the narrative contexts in which human beings understand and self-form themselves. Wynter was inspired by Fanon’s insight that ‘beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny’.\(^{50}\) For Fanon, ‘sociogeny’ occurs within ‘the totality of social structures’, which consist of the inseparably linked ‘colonial administrations’ and the ‘colonial imaginary they produced’.\(^{51}\) The *mythoi* and narratives historically told about -- and consumed, though not uncritically, by – colonized and oppressed others interact with institutions and social structures to form the sociogenic parameters that construct and shape their self-perceptions, understandings and encounters. “‘Dirty nigger!’ Or simply, “Look, a Negro!’”: recall Fanon’s powerful description of how the encounter shapes the way the black man sees himself and W.E.B. Du Bois’ experience of how he saw himself as ‘bone of their [white folk] thought, flesh of their language’.\(^{52}\) *Mythoi* become internalized, not only at the psychic but also at the physiological level, generating a ‘reflex and autophobic’ response of individuals to themselves and shape the entire ‘socio-systemic organizing process’ this response brings about.\(^{53}\) Such ‘negative *mythic* content’ is tantamount to ‘an irrational praxis of violence’.\(^{54}\)

Wynter’s development of the ‘sociogenic code or principle’ connects biological human beings (ontogeny) to both the social-material structures and to the communally produced symbolic-material orders that envelop them and within which they have to exist.\(^{55}\) She insists on the continuing significance of ‘species-specific constraints’ through which our processes of ‘auto-institution’ at the narrative and symbolic level remain connected to the ‘genetic codes of phylogeny’,\(^{56}\) giving further specificity to Fanon’s understanding of how sociogeny does not replace, but is constitutive ‘beside’, phylogeny and ontogeny.\(^{57}\) In


\(^{53}\) Wynter, ‘1492: A New World View’, 45.


\(^{56}\) Henry, ‘Wynter and the Transcendental Spaces of Caribbean Thought’, 262.

\(^{57}\) Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xv.
other words, Wynter employs emerging scientific neuro-cognitive understandings of processes of ‘auto-institution’ in order to pursue multiple layers of sociogenic constitution that illuminate how ‘ideological hegemonies – race principal among them – come to be imprinted’ on the body, ‘such that we live their inscriptions as the historically varying modes of our truth’. 58 Emphasizing both narration and cognition and context and structure, Wynter’s ‘comprehensive’ view of sociogeny illuminates further the impact of mythic and epistemic devaluations that stabilize as natural, colonial structures of domination, and practices of dispossession and disposability, ‘which justif[y] continued serfdom, slavery, and rape’: 59 the ‘experience of imperialism’. 60

Whilst Wynter’s ‘epistemic historicism’ 61 informs her critique of humanism as an episteme, she invokes the same multiple and intersecting ‘registers’ -- biological, cognitive, physiological and neural -- to rework a ‘revisioned’ humanism, now operating with a ‘comprehensive’, rather than ‘partial’, conception of the human, whose renarrations should remain attentive to the complexity of human auto-institution and sociogeny and also to the plurality and multiplicity of ‘hybridly’ human others. 62

**Wynter’s critique and the subject of ethics**

The discussion of Wynter’s rehistoricization of our predominant order of knowledge, her critique of the figurations of Man, and her conception of sociogeny refocus us on why we should insist on the question of decolonial ethics rather than hasten to articulate such an ethics through the narratives of ethical subjectivity found in ‘European’ epistemes, which are reliant on overrepresented figurations of ‘Man’. Consumed by us, and reproduced in our discussions and constructions of ethics, such figurations render ethical construction a key contributor to contemporary racialized coloniality, despite assumptions that ethics can function as an antidote to socio-political and racialized exclusion. Moral discourses, narratives about moral agents, and judgements who can

‘dialogue’ with,\textsuperscript{63} are all narratives starring the ‘overrepresented’ figure of ‘Man’ as ethical subject. Hence, Wynter’s critique applies no less, and in fact more so, to the moral or ethical subject, as found in the disciplinary spaces of conventional moral philosophy and also in the interstices of critical continental traditions probing the realm of selfhood, humanness and ethics.

For example, her problematization of the myth of 1492, Columbus’s ‘discovery’ of America, excavates how white European man as ethical subject understands his \textit{propter nos} – his ‘for the sake of us’ prescriptions ‘as if this well-being were isomorphic with that of mankind’.\textsuperscript{64} The ethical subject evinces ‘generalized modes of altruism’, which are ‘induced by our symbolically coded, and therefore cultural, programs, together with the specific moral-ethical imperatives that these programs put into play’.\textsuperscript{65} Wynter charts how our identifications with others are tied to ‘helping those with whom we are languagingly (and therefore narratively) coidentified, through the mediation of each such program, their founding narratives, tropes of figuration and the symbolically coded order of consciousness to which they give rise’.\textsuperscript{66} ‘Ethical’ subjects, then, have no prior commitment, either \textit{a priori} empathetic or rationally deduced, to others. Rather, ‘co-identifiers’ can view others with a neutrality or disinterestedness which is ‘potentially amoral to those who are outside…the “common universe of obligation”’.\textsuperscript{67} At the same time, narrations of native/savage otherness have historically wrought violence and exclusion on racialized others, assessing their very existence according to their contribution to the wellbeing of ‘Man’. The included exclusion of the other \textit{into} Man masked the hierarchical and categorical division of humans into salvation-bound Christians and those others who were invented as ‘savages’\textsuperscript{68} and hence ‘legitimately enslavable’.\textsuperscript{69} Moreover, as Robbie Shilliam argues, colonial ‘pre-/yet-to-be-modern subjects’ have been historically regarded as ‘unable to adequately dialogue’ with modern

\textsuperscript{64} Wynter, ‘1492: A New World View’, 30, emphasis in original.
\textsuperscript{68} See the discussion of the invention of Savages in Wynter, ‘Ethno or Socio Poetics’, 83.
\textsuperscript{69} Wynter, ‘1492: A New World View’, 11.
interlocutor-colonizers. They are Fanon’s ‘les damnés’, relegated to a zone of non-being by colonial conquest, itself legitimated by their exclusion from ethical subjectivity within a range of moral and continental philosophical traditions, which in turn restricts and colonizes ethical inquiry itself. Wynter’s questioning of figurations of ‘Man’, alerts us to the role that this figure plays in the production and structuring of ethical inquiry and, indeed, knowledge in the broadest sense, such that ethics is a privileged site and a crucial component of our existing forms of generalizing/universalizing narrations. Recalling Glissant: ‘Alone among all civilizations, the Western one has known this propensity toward generalized expansion, toward conquest, of knowledge and of faith, inextricable, which required the Universal as a guarantor of its legitimacy.’

Hence, interrogating the subject of ethics, as ‘Man’, renews the question of ethics and shows that the modern colonial stabilization of knowledge about who we are as human cannot function as a foundation for a revisioned humanism or for decolonial ethics; such figurations, and the expropriative and dehumanizing relations they legitimate, need to be unsettled, an insight central to the first prolegomenon to any future decolonial ethics. Challenging this overrepresented figure, central to ethical inquiry and subjectivity, in situ at the multiple sites of contemporary coloniality is not only an intellectual question but one of social, political and ethical-relational importance for ongoing projects of decolonization.

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70 Shilliam, ‘Decolonising the Grounds of Ethical Inquiry’, 651; For Ciccariello-Maher, too, there is a ‘fundamental absence of reciprocity’ in ethical endeavour. See, Ciccariello-Maher, ‘Decolonial Realism’, 2.
71 Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004); see the discussion in Ciccariello-Maher, ‘Decolonial Realism’, 4ff; and also Maldonado-Torres, ‘On the Coloniality of Being’.
How do we, however, relativize existing universal narratives that simultaneously enclose and exclude colonized others, and renarrate the concrete self in recognition of the long and varied histories and evolving processes of the ‘abstraction of the self’? For decolonial thinkers like Wynter, Césaire and Glissant, a renarration of the concrete and always already embedded self, demands a change to the sociogenic colonial context: ‘hybridly’ human selves engage in multifarious forms of political struggle against colonial institutions and structures and in resistive renarration and auto-institution. Hence, this challenge involves two steps: first, de-generalizing the ‘human-in-general’ through the development of a decolonizing poetics, emergent from, and further participating in, ongoing struggles. I explore this below as the second prolegomenon of any future decolonial ethics. Second, it calls for a wide-ranging praxis of being ‘hybridly’ human as part of intersecting disclosive, educational, and political projects of decolonization, as the third prolegomenon, discussed in section three.

‘I build my language with rocks’: Striving for a Decolonizing Poetics

The first element of the prolegomena to any future decolonial ethics entailed the critical discussion of figurations of Man underpinning constructions of the ethical subject and overflowing the forms of ethical expression available to us for theorization and praxis. Renarrating the hybridly human, for Wynter, recalled Césaire’s questioning of the system of knowledge, on which the scientific edifice stood and wagered its existence. Césaire called for a poetic language that afforded us a whole and complex picture of the world and of our lives within it. Lamenting ‘the impersonality of scientific knowledge’ as an ‘impoverished knowledge’, he was concerned that science’s depersonalisation of mankind produced only, and had as its predicate, ‘an impoverished humanity’. His search for a ‘new science of the Word’ hoped to enable new modes of self- and world-disclosure, revealing ‘an entire experience’, rather than technocratic classification, of humanity, matter and things. Such a poetic search amounted to nothing short of ‘a declaration of war’…a total overthrow of a racist, colonialist system that would open the way to

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75 Wynter, ‘Ethno or Socio Poetics’, 83.
76 Ibid.
80 Ibid., xlix and xlvii.
imagine a whole new world.\textsuperscript{81} The possibilities for greater world-disclosure in the question of decolonial ethics is what ‘compels us’ today to seek to ‘un/write’ and rewrite our ‘present normative defining of the secular mode of the Subject’.\textsuperscript{82} Striving for a decolonizing poetics, then, is the second element in the prolegomena of any future decolonial ethics.

To go ‘beyond the word of Man’ Wynter turns to the literary work of Glissant, the Martinican poet, novelist and philosopher. Using Glissant’s 1958 novel \textit{La Lézarde} she meditates on his ‘root’ metaphor of blocking, which captures ‘the industrial model of human auto-domestication’.\textsuperscript{83} Wynter is interested in the novel’s attention to Maroons – those ‘runaway African slaves who took to the mountains in order to escape enslavement and to reestablish the ancestral cultures of Africa in syncretic variants there’ – and their new social formations and narrative self-formations; she is also interested, as the discussion of sociogeny anticipates, in Glissant’s poetic forms of revolt.\textsuperscript{84} For Wynter, his call for ‘the anti-Universal, the theme of the claim to specificity, of the claim to “rester au lieu” (the remaining-in-place) in the specific \textit{aikumene} of the Antilles’ is a call for ‘taking charge of the Word’, for poetic resistance.\textsuperscript{85}

Wynter reads Glissant’s thought as putting in operation ‘performativ acts of countermeaning directed against the semantic charter or behavior-regulating program, instituted by our present order of discourse and therefore by its related order of rationality or mode of “conventional” or cultural “reason”.’\textsuperscript{86} Hence, for Wynter, Glissant, and Fanon before him, continue ‘the act of poetic uprising against the role imposed on the black population groups of the New World as the embodied bearers of Ontological Lack to the secular model of being, Man, as the negative conceptual Other term to its instituting Word.’\textsuperscript{87} Mobilizing an ethos of irreverence, these poetic revolts work to reclaim ‘the specificity of the history, landscape, and historical-existential being of Antilleanit’ and fashion an irreverent, decolonilizing response in multiple sociogenic

\textsuperscript{82} Wynter, ‘The Ceremony Must Be Found’, 22.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 639.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 641.
registers, structures and textures. Such modes of uprising, the example of Maroons in *La Lézarde* and in Glissant’s broader meditations on Antilleanity, ‘all call into question and refute the premise of an acultural and absolute model of the human’, re-invoking the question of ‘how as humans we attain to human beingness … now in a profane or secular rather than sacred modality’.

Wynter shares Glissant’s poetic intention to diversify, pluralize and privilege hybrid/complex modes of renarrating and re-fashioning ourselves, concretely ‘disalienating’ our colonial selves whilst struggling for decolonization in society and knowledge. Glissant finds in Antilleanity and processes of creolization, an ethos of irreverence towards ‘our present mode of being, of subjectivity, the Self’ and the ‘very system of figuration’. He discusses the priority of ‘degeneralization’, comprising at a minimum an attentive attitude towards specificity and experience, for poetic revolt; ‘degeneralization’, Glissant insists, seeks to find both the specificities of our colonial experiences and also the ‘total (dreamed-of) freedom of the connections amongst them, cleared out of the very chaos of their confrontations’. Whereas generalization constructs and reinforces hierarchies, a ‘locally situated’, yet always worldly, poetics can participate in ‘a process of decipherment…within the context of an imperatively needed “rewriting” of the human’. Although this article could not convey the complexity and full itinerary of Glissant’s poetics, it may be worth recalling their pivotal aspects as they pertain to the second prolegomenon of a decolonizing poetics.

First, Glissant in the 1960s and 1970s argued for a poetics of specificity, drawn from ‘communities heavy with history and despoiled communities’; such a poetics ‘is not in effect a language of communication (abstract, flayed, “universal” as we know it)’ but might invoke ‘a possible community (and, if possible, regular) between mutually liberated

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88 Ibid., 645.
89 Ibid., 645 and 640.
91 Wynter, ‘Beyond the Word of Man’, 640.
opacities, differences, languages’. Such a poetics ‘authorizes a level of expression’ that ‘suspends the imperiousness of speech’, as part of a thoroughgoing critique of the colonial, historical and contemporary, poetics of ‘monolingual intent’ that marks the poetics of discovery and conquest.

Second, committed to errantry, his poetics is at once itinerant and nomadic whilst differentiating itself from the targeted nomadism of the conqueror’s settler colonialism. Errantry entails ‘a real change’ in direction, and remains wedded to multiplicities. As such, it suspends both the historical trajectories of arrowlike nomadism of colonial conquest from centre to periphery and also dreams of a ‘trip in the opposite direction’ from periphery to centre; and even anticipates the abolition of the trajectory itself, becoming ‘curved. The poet’s word leads from periphery to periphery’ in a ‘circular nomadism’ that ‘makes every periphery into a center’: indeed, it ‘abolishes the very notion of center and periphery’. Rather than charting trajectories, it ‘interweaves and no longer projects…it inscribes itself in a circularity’ which is a practice of ‘a self-break and reconnection’ that links to uprisings, poetic and political, of decolonization.

Third, Glissant charts his own path towards a poetics of relation attuned, following Césaire, to the totality and opacity of the world as relation, whose practice disavows the ‘arrowlike’ poetics of colonialism, based on the universalization / generalization of ‘root identities’. Such a poetics works ‘in stages, in obscure and extracted strata, opens the being onto his lived relativities…No, it doesn’t reveal; it unveils with gravity’. What does it unveil? ‘[T]he unique, the particular, the flash principle of each community to the patience of its soon to be declared relationship to the Other‘; as such it emerges out of the histories of colonization and creolization – ‘suffered in the drama of the world‘: ‘it is for us Poetics of the being that is finding itself’. Relation is an orientation and an ethos, it ‘functions somewhat like an intransitive verb’ such that it is invoked without the

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96 Glissant, Poetic Intention, 44.
97 Ibid., 42.
98 Glissant, The Poetics of Relation, 19.
99 Ibid., 12.
100 Ibid., 212; translator’s note.
101 Ibid., 29.
102 Ibid., 32 and 33.
103 Ibid., 11–21.
104 Glissant, Poetic Intention, 42.
105 Ibid., 42 and 44.
need to ask ‘relation between what and what?’ It is indebted to creolization and metissage in its understanding of ‘encounter’ as a ‘new and original dimension allowing each person to be there and elsewhere’.

Finally, in disclosing the opacity of languages, peoples and the world as its aim, Glissant’s poetics of relation ‘never culminates in some qualitative absolute’ rather it is the ‘accumulation of sediments’. Totality through errantry, one might say, allows Glissant to ‘conceive[s] of totality’ without trying to ‘to sum it up or to possess it’. Poetry could retain the opacity of our errant and hybridly human ‘worldliness’, any search for complexity and multiplicity should not reduce this to transparency and ‘Sameness’, which ‘required (had need of) the flesh of the world’.

In his contribution to a decolonizing poetics, discussed here as the second prolegomenon to decolonial ethics, Glissant develops in unanticipated ways the pathways initiated by Aimé Césaire and his collaborators in the literary journal Tropiques, published in Martinique in the early 1940s under Vichy France. They had placed great hope in the link between poetics and freedom, including the political freedom of decolonization, made thinkable by ‘a process of infinitesimal meaning making between the poet and the reader’. Aimé and Suzanne Césaire wrote tirelessly about the possibilities of surrealism’s poetic revolution, despite Tropiques’ prohibition by Vichy censors. Césaire’s influential essay, ‘Poetry and Knowledge’ noted above, appeared in Tropiques as a resounding proclamation of the impoverishment of scientific knowledge for world-disclosure and the revolutionary potential of poetry, because ‘poetic knowledge can conceive of the coexistence of opposites in the same term’, their hybridity and contiguity, at one and the same time. Glissant speaks of ‘the shock of elsewhere’, which ‘distinguishes the poet’ who defends against ‘assimilations’ desired by the perspective of the ‘European here’. Wynter herself calls for a more broadly conceived ‘deciphering practice…linked to an ongoing cultural revolution of an emergent global and popular imaginary for which the securing of the well-being of the concrete individual human

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106 Glissant, The Poetics of Relation, 27.
107 Ibid., 34.
108 Glissant, The Poetics of Relation, 35 and 33.
109 Ibid., 21.
113 Ibid., 504.
114 Glissant, The Poetics of Relation, 30, 31.
subject is the referent telos’.\footnote{Wynter, ‘Rethinking Aesthetics: Notes to a Deciphering Practice’, 239; also, see her discussion of the ‘lumpen poetics of the Blues’, Wynter, ‘The Ceremony Must Be Found’, 55.} Multiple forms of poetic specificity are needed to decentre the ‘systemic subject’ -- authored and authorized by the overrepresentation of Man.\footnote{Wynter, ‘The Ceremony Must Be Found’, 55.} Such a decolonizing poetics -- hybrid, locally situated -- must ensure that Western thought is ‘viewed “from another landscape” by its Western, and indeed in our case Westernized, bearer subjects’.\footnote{Sylvia Wynter, ‘On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Reimprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongsness of Being, of Desêtre: Black Studies Toward the Human Project’, in A Companion to African-American Studies, ed. Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 111.} In this sense, anti-colonial politics, like any politics, ‘is in the telling.’\footnote{Richa Nagar, Hungry Translations: Telling Stories, Disrupting ‘the Social,’ Relearning the World, Under Review (Forthcoming) (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2017).}

As Celia Britton notes, in encompassing multiple simultaneous meanings (polysemy) and occupying different forms and purposes at once (polyvalence), ‘poetics cannot therefore be readily accommodated within the boundaries of mainstream academic philosophy’.\footnote{Celia Britton, ‘Philosophy, Poetics, Politics’, Callaloo 36, no. 4 (8 November 2013): 845, doi:10.1353/cal.2013.0197.} Poetics not only resists, not only thinks anew, but charts paths away from (rational) thought as the only means of knowledge and disclosure: ‘The poem to retaliate in warrior fashion’.\footnote{In tribute to Gloria Anzaldúa, see Karen Gagne, ‘Fighting Amnesia as a Guerilla Activity: Poetics for a New Mode of Being Human’, Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge 4, no. 3 (21 June 2006): 250, http://scholarworks.umb.edu/humanarchitecture/vol4/iss3/24.} In this sense, Glissant’s Poetics fosters the turn to poetry that Césaire called for in the 1940s: ‘the poet’s truth is also the desired truth of the other’ because poetics ‘open into unpredictable and unheard of things…[as it] aims for the space of difference – not exclusion but, rather, where difference is realized in going beyond’.\footnote{Glissant, The Poetics of Relation, 82.} When Glissant insists that the poetics of relation must remain ‘forever conjectural’ to resist ‘ideological stability’, he invokes not only ‘the thought of the Other’ but poetry’s uncanny quest for the ‘other of Thought’.\footnote{Ibid., 32 and 154-155.} In so doing, his poetics punctuates the need to resist the immediate translations of decolonial critique into ‘ethics’, to prepare for radical change and destabilization of our ways of being narrated: ‘… thought of the Other is sterile without the other of Thought. Thought of the Other is the moral generosity disposing me to accept the principle of alterity, to conceive of the world as not simple and
straightforward, with only one truth.’ Moral generosity, integral to various accounts of ethics, leaves in place the subjectivity of the ethical subject and its centrality within ethical systems of inquiry. As Glissant argues, as the articulation of ‘an ethical principle, it is enough that I not violate it.’ Laudable as we have regarded such principles and impulses of hospitality and generosity to be, they can ‘dwell within me without making me alter course, without “prizing me open,” without changing me within myself’. This is why Glissant is loath to understand ‘recognition of the other as a moral obligation’ which retains the basis of ‘root’ identity; he understands this recognition as an ‘aesthetic constituent’ itself ‘produced in the chaotic network of Relation and not in the hidden violence of filiation’. A poetics of relation seeks to make possible a thinking of the ‘other of Thought’, which Césaire understood as a subversion of impoverished and exclusionary scientific knowledge as the only means of self- and world-disclosure. Because a decolonizing poetics aims at the ‘other of Thought’ as an intervention into ‘the very discursivity’ of the ethical project, it becomes ‘precisely this altering’ of oneself: ‘I change, and I exchange’ in an aesthetic commitment to turbulence ‘whose corresponding ethics is not provided in advance’.

The second element of the prolegomena to any future decolonial ethics, this section showed, emerges out of striving for a new poetics, emergent out of the many local contexts of struggles for decolonization. It seeks to both destabilize the figurations of Man as ethical subject and also to invoke a contestation and pluralization of ‘ratio-centric’ thinking -- the ‘other of Thought’ -- as a contestation of the order of knowledge that this figuration institutes. Next, I turn to the third prolegomenon, related to the above discussion, as a praxis of being hybridly human.

123 Ibid., 154.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
127 Glissant, The Poetics of Relation, 29 and 144.
Towards a Praxis of Being Hybridly Human: Relation, Education and World-disclosure

In this section I examine a third element of the prolegomena: what Wynter calls, and calls *for*: multiple struggles for the ‘hybridly human’. Future scholarship, in conversation with ongoing struggles for rehumanization and material decolonization, needs to think through the full repercussions – locations, practices, and boundaries -- of a praxis of being ‘ecumenically’ human. Here, I explore more narrowly how a radically humanist praxis of ‘the We-the-ecumenically-Human’ would entail efforts towards new forms of ‘education’ as an ethical, ‘unfinished’ and incessant project, for which Wynter’s new *Studia Humanitatis* may be a pertinent and at the same time, a woefully inadequate name.

Let us briefly recall that Wynter’s ‘autopoetic overturn’ aims to disrupt the hold of the current figuration of Man as a descriptive statement and a normative standard; as such it calls on us to move from the noun human being towards a critical consideration of being human as a verb or a praxis. Wynter’s call for a praxis of the hybridly human arose from her penetrating and yet nuanced critique of ‘humanism’. Penetrating because to it she traced the stages of an evolving ‘discursive negation of our co-humanity as a species’, an interrogation that illuminates the ‘inner lining of humanism, in which the degradation of man is part and parcel of the elevation of man’. Cognizant of the economic, social and political consequences of humanism -- ‘globally incorporated world-systemic division of labor’ and ‘military conquests of the majority of the world’s peoples’ -- she has documented how these forms of subjugation and negation were predicated on ‘missionary evangelization, religious Christianization and secular initiatory “epistemeologization”’ by the West. Yet, her engagement is nuanced because she acknowledged the radical impact of humanism’s ‘emancipatory and world transformative,

135 Ibid., 187; emphasis in original.
secularizing\textsuperscript{138} invention of a ‘de-godded’ human.\textsuperscript{139} Her rehistoricization of humanism’s evolution ‘attempts to illuminate the place of Man in Europe’s autobiography’ whilst aiming to provide ‘the ground for a different imagining of the human’.\textsuperscript{140} Such imaginings are possible because, as Wynter insists, there is ‘always something else besides the dominant cultural logic going on’ and out of this struggling ‘something else’, a ‘transgressive…ground of understanding’ may become ‘the site both of a form of life and of possible critical intervention’.\textsuperscript{141}

Inspired by the decolonial potential of the ‘original heresy’ of humanism, Wynter calls for to a ‘revisioned’ ‘dissonant, a non-identitarian, but nevertheless comprehensive and planetary humanism’ made, after Césaire, to the ‘measure of the world’.\textsuperscript{142} Wynter is attracted to the heretical potential of humanism’s ‘\textit{Studia Humanitatis}’ that ‘de-godded’ humanity and the order of knowledge itself. It is in the heresy of a new \textit{Studia} where she locates the autopoetic overturn of Man and the praxis of being hybridly human, in fuller recognition of humans as ‘\textit{hybridly} biological and symbolic beings’.\textsuperscript{143} The metaphor for the autopoetic overturn, and the impulse for the \textit{Studia} itself, is the ‘Ceremony’ that must be found to allow Othello to marry Desdemona, in other words, the resources with which we can intellectually breach the “‘Color Line’” divide’.\textsuperscript{144}

Revisiting her well-known 1984 ‘Ceremony Must Be Found’ essay, Wynter reorients both the answer to the question of who we are and the content of the new \textit{Studia} around the search for a newly understood humanist praxis of ‘the We-the-ecumenically-Human’, in which we acknowledge the ‘ontological unity of intra-human relations’; how we are ‘intimately involved with all other life on our shared planet’.\textsuperscript{145} Her recent concerns with climate change and neoliberalism foreground her comprehensive view of sociogeny.\textsuperscript{146}

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\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 187; emphasis in original. \\
\textsuperscript{139} On an fuller explanation of ‘de-godded’, see ibid., 191; See her own recounting of her excavations of humanism in Scott and Wynter, ‘The Re-Enchantment of Humanism’, 179–83. \\
\textsuperscript{140} Scott and Wynter, ‘The Re-Enchantment of Humanism’, 197. \\
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 164; see also Katherine McKittrick, \textit{Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle}, 1 edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 123. \\
\textsuperscript{142} See the extensive discussion in Scott and Wynter, ‘The Re-Enchantment of Humanism’, 121; Césaire, \textit{Discourse on Colonialism}, 73. \\
\textsuperscript{144} Wynter, ‘The Ceremony Found’, 189. \\
\textsuperscript{146} McKittrick and Wynter, ‘Unparalleled Catastrophe For Our Species?’, 20.
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and recast the hybrid and (post)humanist multiplicity of ‘the We-the-ecumenically-Human’, away from singular and privileged substance, and towards a recognition that ‘our being human as “always a doing” of our being human as praxis’. At a minimum, such a praxis, Wynter has shown, takes our human narrating and storytelling -- as homo narrans -- as an integral aspect of ‘the imperatively artificially co-identifying, eusocial species that we are’.

As noted above, a humanist praxis of ‘the We-the-ecumenically-Human’ would entail efforts towards new forms of ‘education’ as an ethical, ‘unfinished’ and incessant project. Open to dialogue as to its meanings, it calls for a more radical and democratic educational, political, and disclosive praxis. ‘Education’ begs, much like decolonial ethics, to be reinstated as a question: of what do we ‘teach’, how do we educate, in what languages, and in what systemic conditions? Moreover, how politically do we challenge knowledge orders that continue to do epistemic, and legitimate actual, violence?

Today, Wynter hopes that a new Studia Humanitatis ‘will function as one whose projected class of classes Origin Model of Autopoetic Institution will be able to contain the magma of all “local” origin stories / accounts’; revealing such plural multiplicity both has the potential to relativize current dominant and ‘homogenized’ narratives of the human and also to engender modes of co-identification of ourselves as hybridly and ecumenically human. I urge that we understand this as a Studia that decolonizes, encouraging us to ‘hybridly’, ‘ecumenically’ revolutionize our ‘orders of consciousness’ commensurate to ‘the empirical reality of our collective human Agency’: to be, as Nandita Sharma calls it, ‘cognitive revolutionaries’. But more than that, ‘education’ as an unfinished project is inextricably connected to specific struggles of epistemic justice. At the same time, it is underwritten by a broader commitment to pluralize, better locate, indeed relativize, Europe’s ‘autobiography’ of superiority, decentre its claims and the language in which they are made (and made predominant).

148 Ibid., 217; on ‘homo narrans’ see, 222.
149 Not to be conflated with calls for decolonizing the curriculum, Hussain, ‘Why Is My Curriculum White?’, Anievas, Manchanda, and Shilliam, Race and Racism in International Relations.
151 Ibid., 242.
152 Sharma, ‘Strategic Anti-Essentialism’, 179.
Epistemic justice often proceeds by excavations and counter-histories of erasures and dehumanizations; it emerges from contestations by those whose ‘critical-ethical consciousness’ is constituted in the process of their material and symbolic negations in colonialism and contemporary forms of disposability.\(^{153}\) It emerges, too, in the connections forged between and within groups who find commonalities in their multiple and different lived experiences of destitution and exclusion from knowledge-making.\(^{154}\) In other words, struggles towards epistemic justice are embedded in larger projects of decolonization and are far from a predominantly, let alone exclusively, academic or intellectual endeavour: their ‘seedbed’ is ‘the living knowledge traditions of colonized peoples’ which ‘retained a tenacious thread of vitality’ throughout their historical experiences.\(^{155}\) Epistemic justice struggles may provide partial histories that undo erasures from history or may even aim at ‘developing provisional meta-narratives of global history that can illuminate local conditions and relations’.\(^{156}\) In their plural approaches they evince the insight that ‘colonialism has not only immured native life but has immured the writing of history as well’ such that ‘the narratives, codes, genres, and genealogies of colonialism have tended to block the potentiality of the colonized’.\(^{157}\) It was, indeed, Fanon’s ‘radical humanistic insight’ that ‘the critical analysis of a world deprived of ethics needs to begin with an elucidation of the lived experience’ of those rendered ‘non-self/non-others’.\(^{158}\)

At the same time, undoing exclusion through rehistoricization is linked to the broader aim of questioning, reimagining and striving to forge an ecumenically conceived order of knowledge, or episteme, which ‘does not privilege European Man and its idiom’\(^{159}\), nor does it conceal ‘non-European questions, concerns, and proposals for change’.\(^{160}\) The idiom is one of separation and mastery which, as shown in section one, has historically


\(^{155}\) Ibid., 7, 3–12.

\(^{156}\) Alcoff, ‘Enrique Dussel’s Transmodernism’, 65; See for example, Dussel’s ‘history of ethical systems’, which rewrites into history the erasures of contributions to ethical thinking of regions and peoples, *Ethics of Liberation*, 1–52; And, for International Relations, see the exemplary counter-history of the discipline provided by Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).


\(^{158}\) Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 186.

\(^{159}\) Jackson, ‘Animal’, 673.

\(^{160}\) Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 229.
worked to render world and others as ‘legitimately enslavable’.\textsuperscript{161} For Dussel, forging a ecumenical order of knowledge – transmodernity\textsuperscript{162} -- involves a ‘plurilectic process in which European modernity is not left behind, but given a seat at the table as a part of the larger puzzle’.\textsuperscript{163} Yet as Linda Martín Alcoff, has argued, it is hard to see how an ecumenically conceived and plurally lectically created order of knowledge would not also require ‘a negation of the Eurocentric modern’.\textsuperscript{164} This debate is unlikely to abate soon, and nor should it. Here I want to insist that rehistoricization for epistemic justice – undoing erasure and exclusion within the predominant and Eurocentric order of knowledge -- is linked to yet broader aims towards non-masterful forms of self- and world disclosure.

‘Education’ as an incessant and unfinished project relies on the decolonizing poetics discussed in section two. Employing creolization and métissage practices of language it seeks to develop collectively forms of radical and transgressive praxis, to plunge us into the world as relation,\textsuperscript{165} which includes, and expands on, what Shilliam calls ‘binding’ and ‘material-and-spiritual relationality’\textsuperscript{166} Mobilizing a decolonizing poetics, the new Studia narrates not a fixed or secure human substance but rather a human praxis ‘whereby we embody, reflexively, an understanding of what we are, ontologically’:\textsuperscript{167} hybridly human in a shared world. In other words, a newly heretic Studia outlines the contours of an ‘education’ that ‘leads us back to ourselves’ to multiple ‘realm[s] of the human sojourn’\textsuperscript{168} in our opacity and errant playfulness, historically captured and reduced through ‘thingification’ by colonial modernity. This is related, I argue, to forms of access to the world, and others within it, which problematize masterful yet partial revealings of the world and ourselves according to the operability and use of others as

\textsuperscript{161} Wynter, ‘1492: A New World View’, 11.
\textsuperscript{162} Enrique D. Dussel, ‘Transmodernity and Interculturality: An Interpretation from the Perspective of Philosophy of Liberation’, TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World 1, no. 3 (1 January 2012): 28–59; see an extended discussion of the emergence and contours of this notion in Maldonado-Torres, Against War, 226–33.
\textsuperscript{163} Alcoff, ‘Enrique Dussel’s Transmodernism’, 64.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.; Robbie Shilliam has recently shown the limitations of subaltern studies in this regard, see Shilliam, The Black Pacific, 5–8.
\textsuperscript{165} Glissant, Caribbean Discourse.
\textsuperscript{166} Shilliam, The Black Pacific, 23 and 23-29.
\textsuperscript{167} Iain Thomson, ‘Heidegger on Ontological Education, or: How We Become What We Are’, Inquiry 44, no. 3 (1 September 2001): 253, doi:10.1080/002017401316922408.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., 254.
As discussed above, Wynter, like Glissant and Césaire, seeks a poetics for accessing and narrating human experience and realities in their totality and opacity. This search for non-masterful modes of self- and world-disclosure emerges from the world and seeks to access and disclose the world without reducing it to the ‘for-the-sake-of’ [propter non] selective human – white, European -- experience. Césaire’s search for non-impoverishing forms of knowledge and Glissant’s insistence on a poetics of relation join Wynter’s call for a praxis of being human, in which our belonging to totality grounds our ‘revisioned’ humanism which can encompass ‘all humans as a species’. Critical interventions of such praxis may both disclose and ‘create a world in which many worlds can fit’. And yet, this is not a ‘utopian’ intellectual view: recalling the discussion of sociogeny in Fanon and Wynter reminds us that self- and world-disclosure is connected politically and socially to the reconstitution of a different sociogenic context – material, structural, narrative and cognitive --which the Studia seeks to remake.

And what of education and our roles as educators in the more narrow sense we understand these today? Wynter’s new Studia Humanitatis recalls, but does not emulate, the Renaissance’s ‘studies of humanity’ that included ‘Classical studies … grammar, poetry, rhetoric, history, and moral philosophy’, the original Studia itself having originally been conceived as revitalizing Greek paideia. If Wynter’s own work teaches us anything is that Fanon’s sociogeny, alongside advances in the biology of knowledge and cognition, are essential in grasping the ‘hybridly’ human and can only result in the dissolution of disciplinary boundaries, an ‘obsolescence of the disciplines’ as narrowly

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171 Sharma, ‘Strategic Anti-essentialism’, 169; On the limits of this revisioned humanism for a broader posthumanist orientation that would encompass all species, see discussions to this end in Lisa Tilley, “Well, City Boy Rangoon, It’s Time to Stitch up the Evening”: Material, Meaning, and Man in the (Post)colonial City’, in Postcolonialism, Posthumanism and Political Ontology, ed. Mark Jackson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017, forthcoming); Jackson, ‘Animal’.
172 Citing Subcomandante Marcos, Maldonado-Torres, Against War, 230.
conceived domains of ‘knowledge’.\textsuperscript{174} ‘every discipline you’re practicing ceases to exist’, Wynter herself says simply.\textsuperscript{175}

Yet ‘obsolescence’ pertains to hierarchies too: it echoes calls to render equal, and equally valid, the knowledge production of the colonized and those engaged in struggles of decolonization. Shedding the colonial gaze and its ‘colonial division of knowledge’ is very much a work of the present, as what Shilliam calls the ‘Western Academy’ continues to authorize itself to decide who count as knowers and thinkers, enshrining itself as a ‘priestly caste’ with a monopoly of knowledge-making and education.\textsuperscript{176} What we regard to be knowledge, and who ‘makes’ it, should be horizontally and vertically expanded, neither grasping lived experiences as objects of enquiry – as ‘cultures’-- nor reducing the plural subjects in struggle to singular categories, which homogenize their diverse lived experience. A part of this self-critique of ‘the Western Academy’ occurs through the painful ‘retelling of its history, which will reincorporate the other who it has abolished to the periphery and downgraded epistemologically and politically’,\textsuperscript{177} whether by actually placing itself in the service of colonial and racial management or in the broader but, no less significant, sense of demoting others as mere ‘recipients’ and ‘consumers’ of knowledge.\textsuperscript{178}

Far from an activity hermetically enclosed in ivory towers, I suggest that such knowledge-making and educating be understood as participating in engendering ‘forms of critique and practices that aim to make possible and viable the existence of ethical relations’, where co-identification, so important to Wynter’s understanding of the struggles for hybridly human is but a first step.\textsuperscript{179} I say ‘participating in’ because the call for a new \textit{Studia}, I argue, refers to education, not in any formal setting or by those self-appointed educators, but in which academics and scholars are not privileged thinkers and speakers; they engage in but do not lead – read colonize -- ongoing struggles for

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\textsuperscript{176} Shilliam, ‘Living Knowledge Traditions’.
\textsuperscript{177} Alcoff is of course speaking of modernity’s broad intellectual enterprise, see Alcoff, ‘Enrique Dussel’s Transmodernism’, 63.
\textsuperscript{178} As in the case of IR, brought to the surface by Vitalis, \textit{White World Order, Black Power Politics}; on the colonized as recipients of knowledge, see Shilliam, ‘Living Knowledge Traditions’.
\textsuperscript{179} Maldonado-Torres is here reflecting on Fanon’s ethos and own praxis, \textit{Against War}, 100.
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decolonization. As Shilliam argues, this should not be understood as a role that privileges academic knowledge production as ‘more mobile and hence more universalizable than particular context-specific ‘lay’ interpretations’,\(^{180}\) whose ‘priestly caste’ of academics reduce ‘living knowledge traditions of the colonized’ to ‘cultures’, which ‘are pronounced dead on arrival in the present’.\(^{181}\) Resisting the Western academy’s ‘epistemic division between knowledge production and knowledge cultivation’,\(^{182}\) we might argue for a supporting, rather than a guiding, role for academics, which ‘supports spiritual, intellectual and political commitments’ as they gestate within the ‘global infrastructure of anti-colonial connectivity’.\(^{183}\) Dussell, too, has a cognate view of knowledge-making. He regards philosophers, scholars and academics to be but ‘analytical transcribers or rear-guard theorists, not inventors or originators so much as those who give philosophical articulation to the ideas embedded in the praxis and lived experience of the activist oppressed’.\(^{184}\) Obsolescence of knowledge-making hierarchies, then, is an aspect of a praxis of being ecumically human: it accepts as equal knowers, thinkers and knowledge-makers -- ‘co-creative or self-determining in this intellectual process’ -- those engaged in struggle and acknowledges the ‘contemporaneous and epistemically valid communities struggling other-wise to cultivate their living knowledge traditions while making a claim on humanity’.\(^{185}\) This democratizes who makes knowledge, but does not claim that ‘living knowledge traditions – even those of the oppressed’ are ‘good’ or ‘bad before the fact’; indeed, as Shilliam goes on to explain

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\text{they contain struggles and multiple tendencies that are regressive and progressive according to their own complex value systems that already weave outwards and spiral inwards so as to speak with and make claims on behalf of humanity. But this “complicating” or “troubling” fact is extraneous to the emphasis that I am placing, in principle, on a democratisation of knowledge cultivation instead of an extended critique of knowledge production.}\text{ }^{186}\]

Yet, as we insist on such democratization we need to remain attuned to three concerns. First, that ‘transcription’ can also be a circumscription and a power relation, but in desiring to militate against impulses to ‘fix’ and capture what is being transcribed, we should not delay, defer, or avoid democratization and pluralization of the ‘places of

\(^{180}\) Shilliam, \textit{The Black Pacific}, 8.
\(^{181}\) Shilliam, ‘Living Knowledge Traditions’.
\(^{182}\) Ibid., emphasis in original.
\(^{183}\) Shilliam, \textit{The Black Pacific}, 10–11.
\(^{184}\) Alcoff, ‘Enrique Dussel’s Transmodernism’, 62.
\(^{185}\) Shilliam, ‘Living Knowledge Traditions’.
\(^{186}\) Ibid.
enunciation'. Second, that to insist on democratization of knowledge-making is not a stand-in for concrete struggles and demands for material redistribution, institutional reform and reparations. Relatedly, third, that accepting such a democratization of knowledge-making is not a restoration of 'white innocence' which returns to veil and erase both the 'colonial division of knowledge' and really existing colonization.

Discussing the pluralization of knowledge-making and disciplinary obsolescence in its many forms has repercussions for disciplinary formations, including International Relations and its own production of ethical and 'decolonial' theorizing. It calls for its problematization, if not its outright displacement, as a privileged site of knowledge-making regarding 'international relations'. As calls emerge for a 'decolonial IR' we may choose to refuse these; or we might decide to strategically engage in the sort of pluralization of knowledge discussed above, as part of a broader *Studia*, in full recognition of the discipline's artificiality and its circumscription of what counts as knowledge about ethical international relations. We may do so in order to enrol it in struggles for epistemic justice and for a more ecumenical conception of knowledge and education. But as Shilliam has argued, engaging in 'decolonial IR' in such a strategic manner we 'would need to commit apostacy, disavow the colonial episteme, extinguish the flame of modern revelation, shake free the thin line of the white West's (co-opted) prophets and (even if just occasionally) stand at the crossroads rather than sit in the agora.' And such an ethos and activity 'may have few takers'.

**Conclusion**

Insisting on the question of decolonial ethics, this article cautioned against any immediate

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189 Shilliam, ‘Living Knowledge Traditions’.
190 cf. ibid.
192 Shilliam, ‘Living Knowledge Traditions’.
translations of decolonial critique, and of important early articulations of decolonial ethics, into our familiar ethical languages and approaches. Engaging with the disruptive destabilizations that decolonial thought brings to our understanding of the modern episteme’s monopolization of the human, it showed that ethical forms of expression remain, often unwittingly, reliant on figurations of ‘Man’. Insisting on the question of decolonial ethics is not a prohibitive move but one that encourages a fundamental decolonial questioning of the language, praxis and figures of ethics.

Following Fanon’s insight that ‘ethics’ could not function as ‘points of departure, but as points of arrival after and as a product of political struggle’, the article discussed the prolegomena to any future decolonial ethics, around three elements: first, the decolonial critique of the figures of Man, and the expropriative and dehumanizing relations they legitimate, which cannot function as a foundation for a revisioned humanism or for decolonial ethics; such figurations need to be unsettled and posed anew as a question to various systems of ethical thought and knowledge. Second, the development of a decolonizing poetics, which moves us to consider not only the thought of the Other but also the other of Thought. The deciphering practice of a decolonizing poetics urges us to subvert impoverished and exclusionary knowledge of the world and invokes the multilingual struggles within the world to ensure changes -- that are also ‘exchanges’ -- of relation. And, third, a praxis of being ‘hybridly’ and ‘ecumenically’ human, which takes our human narrating and storytelling as homo narrans as an integral aspect of a new Studia Humanitatis. Decolonial thought and projects of decolonization need to jointly continue to examine and pursue the full repercussions of a praxis of being human in a shared world, a praxis of the human, made after Césaire to the ‘measure of the world’. The article examined in a more limited fashion how a new Studia calls for forms of ‘education’ which enable non-masterful forms of self- and world-disclosure and are connected to projects of epistemic justice, as part of the wider reconstitution of an ecumenically conceived, non-Eurocentric, order of knowledge. Its attempt to ‘re-enchant the human in humanism’ hopes to aid ongoing attempts to challenge and transform the coloniality of institutions and structures. Insisting on the question of decolonial ethics, the prolegomena attest to the multiple registers of decolonial critique whilst illuminating at the same time its links to praxis.

194 Ciccariello-Maher, ‘Decolonial Realism’, 7, emphasis in original.
195 Césaire, Discourse on Colonialism, 73.