#### Man, or homo-oeconomicus is born from an auto-poesis obscured by the labor focus of the resolution. Instead of relationships to production, we need to focus on the means of signification which causes internalized oppression and unending colonial exploitation.

Demetrius L. **Eudell 16**

Demetrius L. Eudell, 3-1-2016, "From Mode of Production to Mode of Auto-Institution: Sylvia Wynter's Black Metamorphosis of the Labor Question," No Publication, https://read.dukeupress.edu/small-axe/article-abstract/20/1%20(49)/47/33398/From-Mode-of-Production-to-Mode-of-Auto

Yet despite acknowledging the inescapable, indeed interdependent, relation of the issues of slavery and race to those of labor and class formation, Wynter is nonetheless compelled to rethink the earlier assertion made in the monograph, in which she “accepted the theory that the economic tended to determine the ‘superstructure’ ” (430). In the latter part of the text, Wynter calls this analytic framework into question, as, for instance, with the instituting of the stereotyped image of the figure of Sambo. Whereas earlier Wynter describes the Sambo figuration as serving “in the last instance an economic function” (162), it would subsequently be interpreted as a mechanism “far more central to capitalism’s functioning as a mode of domination” and, thereby, “extracting surplus value” became “secondary to its functioning of permitting a mode of domination to be generalized at all levels of the system” (429). Wynter asserts that, **like capital, power can be “accumulated and redistributed, at different relative levels of gratification” (429–30), which implies that even the so-called disempowered exert power as it is asserted against them:** “By being allowed to terrorize the freed slave, the poor whites are induced to accept the relatively milder forms and modalities of social repression exercised by the bourgeois[ie] against them. The slave too used his vicarious identification with the rich masters to look down on the poor whites [511]. As Fanon says, the Negro too wants to be master. **The proletariat wants to be the bourgeoisie, as the middle class black wants to be the white master”** (430; page citation in original but not footnoted). This mode of argumentation, in which it becomes increasingly **challenging to invoke victims and oppressors**, reflects a shift toward a theorization of the psychic dimensions not only of being black but more fundamentally of being human. And the invocation of Frantz Fanon in this context is indeed pointed, since he illustrates in Black Skin, White Masks how the colonized often internalize the negative self-images disseminated by the dominant system of knowledge, a mechanism of mimetic aversion that, Wynter insists, necessarily accompanies the mimetic desire that René Girard has argued defines all human behavior.22  
Wynter ascribes Marxism’s inability to “account for the radically different quality of the black experience even in those areas where the parallels between the condition of the proletariat and the conditions of the Negro were clear” to its reliance on the “factory model of exploitation” as the explanatory key (562). Although Marx himself seemed to have contradicted his earlier formulation that consciousness was produced by the social conditions, this “materialist theory of the mind” would remain central to the theoretical framework on which labor politics and organizing were based (562). By minimizing, when not completely overlooking, the historical precedent of the slave plantation, “the first large scale site of the mass-production of man as interchangeable production units—i.e. pieza, labelled ‘negroes’ ” (564), the factory model of exploitation became “an analysis only of the core form of exploitation” (574; original emphasis in all caps). Thus, **this model of analysis disregards not only the colonial origins of capitalism but also its continued dependency on colonialism.** Indeed, Wynter asserts, **capitalism, when understood as a world system** rather than as “capitalist enclaves and tendencies within European society,” is only “made possible by the sudden acquisition by European countries of a **new frontier which psychologically transformed all Europeans into actual or potential settlers”** (563).

On the basis of the foundational conditions of settler colonialism and slavery in the Americas, Wynter proposes an alternative paradigm to counter the factory mode of explanation, which she terms “the nigger-breaking model.” Characterized as being “the more universal model,” this analytic framework “gives insights into what we can call the ideological niggerbreaking **mechanisms that produce the worker as always eternally proletariat, the woman as eternally female, the black as negro, the white as norm**” (566). Using the archetypal scene of Frederick Douglass’s slave narrative in which the slave driver and overseer Edward Covey has to devastate Douglass’s psyche in order to force him into accepting his subordinate status, Wynter offers a theory of the role of the plantation as site of convergence for the creation of the structure of identities that would institute and reproduce the societies of the Americas: “The secret of capitalism is to be found not in the factory but in the plantation” (582).

In this context, one could revise U. B. Phillips’s assertion that slavery “was less a business than a life” because it made “fewer fortunes than men.” By emphasizing that the plantation was “at once factory, family, and social site on which multilayered levels of identities confronted each other,” Wynter’s analysis suggests that the plantation was indeed a form of life that produced many fortunes (à la Capitalism and Slavery) as well as “men” (591). And, not only men but also women, in both the plantation mistress modality of a Lady Nugent throughout the Americas and that of working-class women of the US North.23 Indeed, in adopting the bourgeois “mode of symbolization” in which the prescribed gender roles entailed “cosy domesticity” for the woman in the private sphere and the male proletariat laboring in the public sphere of the factory, Marxism separated the family from the factory, an ironic move when we consider the role of the young women of the textile factories in Lowell, Massachusetts, the site of the first factory town and a central location of the birth of industrialization in the United States.24 Indeed, several decades before academic discourses of intersectionality became more common, Wynter had already insisted (though still somewhat within terms of political economy) that the “capitalist system can only be seized by and through its interrelationships” where “fixed coefficients of exchange need to be established” (591).

In such a frame, no issue should be singled out of a wider interacting context, since “the autonomization of the unit of analysis be it factory or the plantation, leads to ideology” (591). With the example of the phenomenon of race, Wynter notes that the Black Muslims “found the mechanism to de-nigger break the lumpen-outcasts of the society,” doing so “by constituting them as the new Norm.” Yet, like Garveyism, these “counter systems of symbolization” that delegitimated the hegemony of the dominant order could at the same time produce “the fascist temptation which resides in any system of exclusivity based on a Single Norm, its totalitarian nature which calls for subjection to the hegemonic Cause.” The contradiction, or logical consequence, of this mode of explanation led Malcolm X, in his challenge to the “narrow imprisoning recoding that institutionalized the Black Muslim movement,” to break with the group, just as in Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man (1952) the “fictional Narrator would break with the fictional representation of the Communist Party, the Brotherhood, for whom history had replaced manifest destiny; and for whom the destiny of the Symbolic Proletariat had replaced the Great/White and Single Race” (722–23).

Dissecting the intellectual strategy of the “Single Norm” explanatory principle goes to the heart of Wynter’s reconceptualization, her “black metamorphosis” of the labor question. Although the paradigms of Marxism and Cultural Nationalism began to delegitimize the economic and social power of the hegemonic bourgeoisie, by inverting “one, the Economic Norm, the other, the Racial Norm,” instead of “deconstructing the category of the Norm,” these models of analysis “translated the bourgeois law of value” that, in the end, would change only “who was to occupy the place of the norm” (723). Moreover, both these theoretical and political approaches reflected a deterministic understanding of culture, which Wynter asserts “is not a substance which has a fixed nature” (843). Consciousness, she then proposes, “emerges from interrelationships that constitute social life” with culture dialectically existing “as the expression both of these interrelationships and its negation” (562). Such an understanding implies that “the social constructs of Black and White groups” are categories “constituted not so much by their places of origin—Europe/Africa—as by the social interrelation between them” (821). It can therefore be argued that with respect to the question of **labor, class and racial consciousness are “not determined by one’s relationship to the means of production,** but rather [determined] by one’s relative placing in the global structures of production.” Just as Wynter demonstrates, with respect to the pieza classification, **that an underlying ontological structure assigns one’s place in the system, such a structure could be generalized to all subordinated peoples**: “It is the institution of a mode of social relations that marks, inscribes, the groups that are to be exploited by different attributes, attributes which then become the condition of possibility of the varying forms of exploitation” (564). In her seminal study of West Indian slave laws, Elsa Goveia notes that “before slave laws could be made, it was necessary for the opinion to be accepted that persons could be made slaves and held as slaves,” and thereby necessarily calling into question an understanding of the enslavement of peoples from the continent of Africa as having resulted from, in Winthrop Jordan’s somewhat naturalizing terms, “an unthinking decision.”25

Employing what she later defines as a “deciphering practice,” which examines literature in order to reveal “the dynamics of desire at the deep structural level of the order’s symbolic template,” Wynter forges an original analysis of the racial and class dynamics using the idea of inscription as a conceptual framework.26 Once again rethinking some earlier assertions in the manuscript, Wynter redefines the plantation system by noting that in Douglass’s example “nigger-breaking is not an exercise undertaken only for an economic purpose” (589) but as well “to get him to accept his prescribed ego-identity, and therefore getting him, freely, to stay in his place.” This equally compelling motivation leads Wynter to conclude, “Nigger-breaking reveals itself as an initiation rite in which the task of social inscription was at least as important as the task of economic extraction” (590).

Thus, the forced labor of the enslaved served in brutal terms not only to subordinate the population group physically and metaphysically but, in so doing, to produce, verify, and legitimate an understanding of being human that enables the realization of the society in culture-specific (in Wynter’s contemporary vernacular), auto-poetic, auto-instituting terms: “With theologization of material life, its production of the economic as its sole reality principle, its reduction of man to his productive capacity” (439), in which labor “is inscribed as a commodity” (620), remain the central strategies by means of which the bourgeoisie “controls and regiments the multiple layers of its world system” (439). Such control could not be effected without controlling the terms through which the social reality should be interpreted: “Political economy of our times has been produced as the reality principle of our society and as [Jean] Baudrillard points out, words like profit, surplus value, class struggle have been strung together to form a discourse of reference” (624).

In effect, “Black Metamorphosis” offers a productivist analysis of our present social order based on the metaphysics of production and within whose logic the division of labor must be inscribed as the factor that gives rise not only to the economic system but also to the wider social system as a whole. Without denying the centrality of labor to human orders, the particular form that it began to take during the industrial revolution cannot be separated from a completely new understanding of the self and world that occurred in the wake of the intellectual transformations of the late eighteenth century, most centrally the idea of the human as a purely natural organism that could be defined by labor. Such an understanding, while a progression of the specifically Western epistemology stemming from Renaissance/lay humanism (with its shift to politics and reasons of state against those of the church and its interpretations of nature), nonetheless began to break with all previous ideas that still sought explanation in supernatural/divine principles.

This new vision also called for a reconceptualization of the human past—one now represented as being defined according to modes of subsistence. Despite the changes it would undergo, this interpretation was paradigmatically expressed within the Scottish (and French) Enlightenment’s stadial theory of human societies progressing/evolving from nomadic huntergatherer modes of existence to pasturage, subsequently to agriculture, and finally to a commercial/industrial organization of society.27 Marx’s theory of the evolution of societies from primitive communism and slavery to feudalism, capitalism, and finally to socialism also presumes a similar progressive schema based on a history of modes of production, and notably so with a beginning not that distinct from Adam Smith’s “lowest and rudest state of society,” which also seemed to have existed prior to “any social organization of production.”28 The central consequence remains that in the contemporary context references to developed, developing, and underdeveloped societies are indeed generated from the matrix of thought surrounding the narrative of human origins initially asserted during the Scottish Enlightenment.

Such a thesis prompts Wynter to pose the question, “Is development a purely empirical concept or also teleological?” A clear instance of this problem occurs with **the utopian concept of ever-increasing economic growth, an idea that must be discursively produced in the most rigorous manner in order to give it empirical life**, which then enables it to “lay down the prescriptive behavioral pathways instituting of our present world system.”29 In other words, despite forging a profound rupture at the level of the human species, Wynter insists, at the same time, that the secular West has not broken from the process by means of which humans come to know and experience our narratively instituted worlds as reality. In such a frame, then, **capitalism forms a part of the governing symbolic code in which all human groups/societies must necessarily come to know their social reality in adaptively advantageous terms, which then enable the realization of specific modes or genres (to which gender role allocations remain central) of being human** and thereby the realization of our specific sociohuman orders as living systems—in our case, that **of Homo oeconomicus, Economic Man.**

As humans, **we cannot preexist our narratives of origins**, be they myths, legends, or, in the post-Enlightenment context, the disciplinary discourse of history (a secular reoccupation of the former two), **since the indispensable condition of our existence remains in what Wynter identifies as the laws of human auto-institution**. On the basis of Fanon’s redefinition of the human as a hybrid being, phylogenic and ontogenic, on the one hand, and sociogenic, on the other, Wynter argues that the sociogenic principle, as the analogue of the genomic principle that determines how organic forms of life adaptively perceive and classify their respective social worlds, remains **the explanatory key**, both to what David Chalmers has identified as “the puzzle of consciousness” as well as **to the laws that govern human behaviors.**

The implications here are indeed significant. Rather than the Marxian concept of modes of production, it is the modes of auto-institution, according to Wynter, that determine human behaviors. The specific mode of material provisioning, or in our present auto-instituting terms, economic production, is an indispensable but only proximate mechanism, since capitalism serves the central function of instituting our present specific (though globally hegemonic) genre of being human, of Homo oeconomicus. Although she does not fully articulate it in these terms, Wynter already broaches this line of thinking in “Black Metamorphosis” when she notes that what capitalism expropriates “is not merely labour power” but “far more comprehensively . . . social power,” which is effected through the control of “the means of socialization and signification” (394). In this regard, “the ritual of work” also “functions as a central means of socialization” (925). Hence, given that such “control can take the form of ownership,” it “allows the ruling class not only to legitimate its hegemony, but to appropriate the right to self-definition, and to self-expression by all other groups in the society, as well as to subordinate these groups to the purpose of its own self-expression and definition” (565).

For this reason, arguments that focus (especially to the exclusion of other aspects) on the transformation of the relations of production as the pathway toward emancipation remain incomplete: “The control over the means of production is a central factor, but only one factor, in [the ruling class’s] strategy of socialization.” This conclusion can also illustrate the limitations of “the factory model of exploitation” that “reveals the mechanism of one of the forms of exploitation” but “cannot extend into a revelation of the mode of socialization by which the ruling class—in this case, the bourgeoisie—carries out its strategies of domination” (565), and therefore cannot “extend into these other areas, to reveal the extent of the qualitative social and symbolic exploitation” (567). As was made clear by the incident with Pease and Reynolds in Richard Wright’s Black Boy, and in his Native Son (1940), in which criminal activities “are the only creative acts permitted Bigger by the social order, the only opportunity to actualize his human power,” the materialism of “official Marxism” remains “unable to comprehend the social claim for recognition.” For this reason, during the 1960s, the black social movements became “the first form of revolt directed explicitly not at the bourgeois mode of production, which is only a partial aspect—but at its cultural signification system” (914; italics in original).

#### Understandings of who a ‘worker’ is rely on dehumanization

Demetrius L. **Eudell 16**

Demetrius L. Eudell, 3-1-2016, "From Mode of Production to Mode of Auto-Institution: Sylvia Wynter's Black Metamorphosis of the Labor Question," No Publication, https://read.dukeupress.edu/small-axe/article-abstract/20/1%20(49)/47/33398/From-Mode-of-Production-to-Mode-of-Auto

Amplifying this point, and doing so before studies more systematically addressed the “wages of whiteness,” Wynter argues that not only were blacks during and after slavery the more “degraded form of labor” but the very realization of white working-class identity was made possible by the devaluation of the existence of blacks.14 Hence, the “race prejudice” expressed by the white worker toward the black “was not due to some inherent sickness” but rather constituted an “economically logical” response as “the existence of more devalued labor made the white worker more of a man. His being came to depend on the lesser being of black” (157–58; original emphasis in all caps). In such a structure of social relations, any measures of keeping the blacks in their socially and conceptually defined space assured the “relative superiority” of the white working classes, even “at the expense of accepting [their] own relative exploitation by the bourgeoisie” (158).

To illustrate this point, Wynter utilizes an evocative scene from Richard Wright’s Black Boy in which this dynamic is depicted in a most heartrending manner. Trying to find work so that he can move out of the suffocating social strictures of the South, Wright landed an opportunity, through his friend Griggs, to be an apprentice in an optical shop run by a Northerner, Mr. Crane. The employer instructed his two white workers, Pease and Reynolds, to train Wright in the necessary skills. But Pease and Reynolds had no intention of following the orders of their employer, and Wright was relegated to custodial work as well as subjected to verbal taunts, including commentary regarding the size and use of the sexual organs of blacks. Having the temerity to ask about the training that he was not receiving provoked the response that he was trying to “get smart” and that he was thinking and acting as though he were white. The situation rose to a climax “at noon one summer day,” when Reynolds accused Wright of calling Pease by only his last name, without using the epistemologically mandated, racially honorific title of “Mr.” As a consequence Wright was trapped in a classic Sartrean huis clos: “If I had said: No, sir, Mr. Pease, I never called you Pease, I would by inference have been calling Reynolds a liar; and if had said: Yes, sir, Mr. Pease, I called you Pease, I would have been pleading guilty to the worst insult that a Negro can offer to a southern white man.” In the end, Wright begged them not to hit him, since he knew exactly why they were intimidating and threatening him: “They wanted me to leave the job.”15

Explicating this scene, Wynter maintains that Pease and Reynolds wanted “above all, recognition of their absolute unquestioned mastery,” but that their “emotional terrorism” was equally “matched by their subservience to the Yankee employer” (406). By seeing themselves as master, they remained “unable to apprehend the reality of their own form of servitude” and would “feel no compulsion . . . to decode the cypher of social reality as Richard Wright was impelled to do” (422). It is precisely this dynamic, whereby the white workers could experience themselves as the norm as opposed to the conceptual other at the level of labor, that sets the black labor question apart from the white.

Indeed, such experiences certainly informed Wright’s disavowal of communism, which he openly declared in 1944 in his two-part essay in the Atlantic, “I Tried to Be a Communist.” Despite attempts like those of Wright and others, such as the valiant efforts of communists in Alabama so compellingly rendered by Robin D. G. Kelley, it often remained difficult, conceptually and, by extension, politically, to incorporate the experiences of blacks into the theoretical models and organizing efforts of the white-dominated labor movement.16 C. L. R. James, who remained committed throughout his life to the tenets of Marxism and socialism, acknowledged “this difficult relationship between the independent Negro movement and the revolutionary proletariat,” lamenting that in the past “and by some very good socialists too,” the black struggle was interpreted as having only “episodic value” and, moreover, could “constitute a great danger not only to the Negroes themselves, but to the organized labor movement.”17 Along these lines, Wright posed the following questions, after being warned by a black communist “comrade” against holding the incorrect ideological position: “Why was I a suspected man because I wanted to reveal the vast physical and spiritual ravages of Negro life, the profundity latent in these rejected people, the dramas as old as man and the sun and the mountains and the seas that were taking place in the poverty of black America? What was the danger in showing the kinship between the sufferings of the Negro and the sufferings of other people?”18

#### Discussions of just and inclusive governance through rights are incorporated into whitewashed multicultural narratives and leveraged to decry anti-colonial movements

Karishma **Desai et.al 15**

8-1-2015, "Towards decolonial praxis: reconfiguring the human and the curriculum," Taylor &amp; Francis, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09540253.2016.1221893?journalCode=cgee20

**A multicultural curricular approach framed by Eurocentrism fails to acknowledge the insidious presence of global capitalism**. Eurocentrism is ingrained in the European colonial project in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Americas, and is part of larger interrelated global processes, two of which are important for our argument: first the establishment of **capitalist accumulation through enslaved, free or cheap labour, leading to the control of economic markets**; and second, the **control of knowledge centres based on the ‘Western Idea of Man’ (Wynter 2003), by ascribing rationality/humanity to Westerners and irrationality/savagery to non-Westerners**. Consequently, Eurocentrism (implicitly read as superiority) is not simply historical, but rather **a sustained racial-economic ideology reinforced in modern and contemporary configurations of race and racism.** Wynter pushes for a humanism that is critically aware of these difficult histories, and centres Black ontologies. Wynter reminds us, that it is not that curriculum completely ignores colonialism and racial enslavement; rather the **inclusion interprets colonialism and slavery as processes that were left in a dark chapter**. The persistent violences and reverberations of these processes that were not shaken off with emancipation, or political independence are occluded. When **Native American dispossession or enslavement of Africans** is treated as a dark moment that **ends with the obtainment of legal citizenship**, continued structural violences are often obscured. Furthermore, textbooks confine these histories into small sections that fulfil the ‘multicultural lesson.’ Multicultural curriculum, in this form, conceals the knowledges, ideologies, and privileges that abide. These forms of **‘multicultural inclusion’ are treated as a solution to critiques of Eurocentric curriculum**

**This kind of multicultural approach distracts from the more important conversation**, one that moves from history depicted as marginalised groups demanding representation (Wynter 1992), towards clearer rubrics to understand globalisation when manifested in the imprisonment, suffering, and death of migrants at the hands of nation-states, and the internal strife witnessed in state force used against marginalised populations. For instance, Wynter describes how **the Civil Rights Movement was an example of a sustained push for reorganisation of systems of knowledge** (Wynter 1992, 11). However, this restructuring can be re-interrogated through the lens of the much-publicised state violence. While the Civil Rights Movement successfully demanded political rights (e.g. voting rights), and brought some reprieve from state violence, it also led to the rise of ideas about cultural difference. Also **elided in most curricula on ‘civil rights’ is that the limited conception of ‘rights’ fails to address:** **what are these rights? What epistemic foundation are these rights based on?** **who has these rights and who should be afforded them? What tension exists between the de facto and de jure allocation of these rights? These questions provide gaps that limit the significance of the movement and its representation in curriculum.**

During the 1930s and 1940s, African-American leaders collaborated with anticolonial allies in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America to pursue an expansive set of human rights.4 This turn to human rights provided a collaborative groundwork for the resistance to complex ‘global intimacies’ (Lowe 2006, 192) seen in the ‘sometimes overlapping, struggles for freedom, full citizenship, and self-determination’ that were galvanised at the 1955 Asian-African Conference of Nonaligned Nations held in Bandung, Indonesia. The 1950s saw a rise in transnational collaborations located at the interstices of political struggle articulated at Bandung, where ‘the so-called darker races of the world sought to attain juridical independence’ (Kelley 2002; Wilkins 2006, 192–193; Iton 2008). These actions had reverberating implications on the African and Asian continents. And as Lorraine Hansberry argued, ‘the sweep of national independence movements globally was inextricably linked to the political initiatives of Black Americans engaged in similar, and sometimes overlapping, struggles for freedom, full citizenship, and self-determination’ (Wilkins 2006, 192). The documented histories in textbooks and the mediated historical memories of the Civil Rights Movement represent a fraction of the broad organising principles that took decades to build, and were global in their reach. As such, **the broader conception of global ‘human rights’ was replaced by a limited conception of ‘civil rights,’** which **we read as a turning away from ‘the human’ in favour of an even more limited category: ‘American’ or the national citizen**. Furthermore, **the political solidarities cultivated between African-Americans and anticolonial struggles in the global South are hardly explored in curriculum about the Civil Rights Movement.**

This perspective represents an example of how ‘major conflicts and compromises among groups with **competing visions of “legitimate” knowledge and what is a “just” society inform curriculum’.** Curriculum theorist Apple continues, noting ‘ … such conflicts have deep roots in conflicting views of racial, class, and gender justice in education and the larger society … ’ (2000, 230). **These debates persist and are part of the whitewashed, inclusive, multicultural histories that pick and choose aspects of the Civil Rights Movements as tools to dismantle present movements for liberation that are of the same historical trajectory.** Aspects of historical liberation movements (such as what means and processes led to certain outcomes) get elided in these selective ‘civil rights’ curricula, and these histories are then **deployed in the service of either erasing or actually demonising contemporary movements.** One can only imagine how different civil rights curricula would if they started out with questions about what it means to be human and not as a moment in history, with a movement whose work is complete. However, multi-culturalism became the response and as Wynter explains,

Multiculturalism can seem to be an attractive answer to the particularism of the Euro-Immigrant perspective from which the present textbooks are written … Rather than seeking to reinvent our present cultural native model, **the multi-culturalism alternative seeks to ‘save’ the nation model by multiculturalizing it. It does not move outside the conceptual field of our present EuroAmerican cultural model.** (Wynter 1992, 16)

Scholars like Weheliye, following Wynter, see the reimagining of the terms of the human as a struggle against the way in which ‘structures, discourses, and institutions … detain black life and thought within the strictures of particularity’ (2008, 332). **This revisioning is neither a call not to include the excluded other from traditional universalising concepts of humanism** nor is it a call to dismantle humanism.

#### This current worldview dooms us to endless colonial exploitation and ecological catastrophe only a complete poetic reimagination can save us now

Ashish **Ghadiali 9-17** – Member of the coordinating committee of the COP26 civil society coalition, organizer of the Wretched of the Earth climate collective

Ashish Ghadiali, 9-17-2021, "Planetary Imagination" Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/805863 [Bracketed for ableist language]

Reparation, of course, is not on the agenda at COP26. The COP system, over which the UK presides this year, **is broken. It has failed, year on year, to deliver the necessary action within the time-frame that’s required**, pointing towards a wider system of **international governance that is unfit for purpose in this time of interconnected crises**. Successive climate summits have disregarded the needs of the world’s most vulnerable communities, and have **delivered control of the international climate conversation into the hands of global corporations including Blackrock and Shell** - corporate actors who, having proactively held back processes of decarbonisation for years, now position themselves as champions of a green capitalist transition, banking on new strategies for economic growth by making pledges based on commitments to deliver Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The Net Zero mechanism, on which much of the perceived progress of COP26 will be based, needs to be recognised, first and foremost, as a kind of dodgy accounting mechanism that allows **multinational corporations to justify continued investment in the exploitation of oil, gas and coal**, while **off-setting carbon emissions by buying up land deemed unproductive - predominantly, again, across the global south,** thereby reinforcing existing patterns of global productivity and power. It’s also an accounting system that remains linked to **speculation on technological fixes that are largely unproven and therefore unable to guarantee the results they imply** - while, in any case, the proposed time-frame of 2050 would see vast swathes of inhabited coastline submerged before the objective of carbon neutrality is achieved.

August 2021’s Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has underlined the urgent need for radical action: **atmospheric temperatures have already reached 1.1˚C higher than pre-industrial** **[1850-1900] levels**. **We are fast approaching the much discussed threshold of 1.5˚C**, which, at current rates of emissions and decarbonisation, we are set to reach or exceed within the next twenty years. Scientists are now observing changes in the Earth’s climate in every region and across the whole system, including intensification of **the water cycle, impact on rainfall patterns, melting ice sheets and warming oceans**. Ours, in other words, is already a climate-changed planetary environment. We are witnessing ever **more frequent and intense extreme weather events** - wildfires in California, the Amazon, Australia and Siberia, extraordinary hurricane seasons across the mid-Atlantic, super-cyclones over South and South-East Asia, **droughts and locust storms on every side of the Arabian Sea, glacial melting in the Arctic and the Andes, killer floods from Munich to Mumbai.**

These **changes in the climate are driving global inequality**. They are fuelling **water and food scarcity, forced migration, social and political instability, zoonotic disease**. They place a burden of cost on those with the least resources and the least developed infrastructures to withstand it. The great disruption of Covid-19 - characterised by outcomes such as vaccine apartheid and patterns of spiralling joblessness and debt at one end of the spectrum, and of massive, further accumulation of wealth by big tech corporations at the other - needs to be read, within this frame, as our initiation into a new era of ecological breakdown: **a warning against our collective unpreparedness and of our urgent need to reimagine the social and political structures that will nurture resilience, and support us in navigating the journey towards a sustainable ecology in the decades ahead.**

On the kind of pragmatic immediate and short-term targets that could put us on track to avoid the breach of 1.5˚C, expect nothing from COP26. On climate finance, we will hear great fanfare about proposals to come good on a 12-year-old (broken) commitment by the world’s wealthiest countries to deliver $100 billion a year in finance for mitigation against and adaptation to the effects of climate change. There will, however, be little recognition of the extent to which this **commitment is woefully short of what is needed**: in just the last two years, the **global costs of climate-related loss and damage alone have risen to in excess of $150 billion a year, creating a deficit that continues to impose the burden of cost on those with the least resources to mitigate against these impacts**, those who also bear the least historic responsibility for causing climate change.

The question of how we adequately and fairly resource these soaring costs of climate-induced loss and damage is now one of the crucial geopolitical questions of our time, as Saleem Huq, Mizan Khan and Md Fahad Hossain indicate (see ‘The intractability of loss and damage in climate negotiations’), writing from the International Centre for Climate Change and Development in Dhaka, Bangladesh. However, **the issue remains off the agenda altogether at COP26, as does any initiative to reckon with the social and ecological cost of the resource extraction** - the booming consumer demand for lithium, coltan, cobalt, copper, bauxite and rare earth minerals - on which this new era of transition now depends (see Sakshi’s ‘The many entanglements of capitalism, colonialism and Indigenous environmental justice’ for further discussion of the discontents of contemporary extractivism). Consideration of **the environmental disaster that the new space race is already perpetrating in our nearearth environments** (led by big tech giants including Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos) **remains the domain of science-fiction** (see Susmita Mohanty’s ‘Could future COP talks help to de-junk space?’).

Where **we see an international political system ~~paralysed~~ [frozen] by its inability to function beyond the logic of extractive economic growth and short-sighted nationalisms,** we have sought, in this issue, to evoke a vision of hope and environmental justice that is rooted (and routed) in the centuries’ old struggle for abolition from enslavement (see Matt Sandler’s ‘The necessity of abolition’), and in the imagination of our species position within a planetary frame (see my interview with Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘On the idea of the planetary’).

‘Planetarity’, a concept that has been used variously by writers besides Chakrabarty - including Paul Gilroy [in Against Race (2002)] and Gayatri Spivak [in Death of a Discipline (2003)] - has, since the early twenty-first century, been used to speak to the possibility of an earth-bound biophysical and geophysical sense of our human existence; one that **transcends the troubled, anthropocentric frame of our globalised capitalist modernity.**

Alexis Pauline Gumbs, for example, who writes of ‘the planet, wrapped in ocean breathing, breathing into sky’, reflects on **the interrelated experiences** of whale, seal, dolphin and Black human lives (see ‘Undrowned: Black feminist lessons from marine mammals’) **in a way that indicates the transcendent possibility of a planetary worldview**; while, in conversation with Femi Oriogun Williams (see ‘The possibility of a creolised planet’), Paul Gilroy reflects on stories of hybridity within the English folk music tradition that in turn suggest the role of **art and artists as essential agents of decoloniality, quietly dismantling the perceived certainties of empire and race** as they are embedded in the structures that surround us, and pointing us, instead, towards an experience of the planetary abundance that lies beyond.

Inspired, in part, by the reflections of political scientist Adom Getachew (interviewed in ‘World makers of the Black Atlantic’, Soundings 75) - who argues that it was through the artistic and literary inventions and interventions of the Harlem Renaissance and Pan-Africanism, in the early twentieth century, that a new world of **decolonial internationalism emerged on the political stage** of the mid to late twentieth century - we have sought to **respond to the imaginative void of COP26** by highlighting the diverse agency of frontline activists, artists and thinkers who are cultivating new forms, and re-cultivating time-honoured forms, of **‘planetary imagination’ the world over.**

#### These problems aren’t mistakes of our current system but constitutive of humanism itself – we need to become something more

Gumbs 19 (Alexis Pauline Gumbs is a self-described Queer Black Troublemaker and Black Feminist Love Evangelist and an aspirational cousin to all sentient beings and is currently in residence as a National Humanities Center Fellow.; Being Ocean as Praxis: Depth Humanisms and Dark Sciences. Qui Parle 1 December 2019; 28 (2): 335–352. mahintha)

Sylvia Wynter teaches us that what is commonly called the human is not a merely biological species. The exclusions and systems of scarcity we create in the name of survival are not impulses that come from a “natural” response to our “natural” circumstance. Wynter calls the species we are a part of (or excluded from, as the case may be) Homo narrans, meaning that we tell ourselves a story about being purely biological, governed by science, and then we believe that we are going to scientifically die if we don’t keep reproducing that story. So Wynter reminds us of Aimé Césaire’s call for something he calls sociogeny, “a new ‘science of the Word,’” a poetics of possibility based on the hope that we can tell ourselves (and believe) a story that allows our species to continue to live on this planet before it’s too late.2 I am inspired by Wynter’s critical hope, her ongoing conversations with Katherine McKittrick’s theorizations about science and their shared belief in the experiment of being human as praxis. This is a meditation, a poetic experiment on a new science of the word brought into my consciousness by some years spent writing in conversation with Wynter’s words, the writing of blood, the songs of whales, the outcry of coral, and the persistence of bacteria. It documents a species-unraveling encounter with the bottom of the ocean I experienced when I tried to listen to my ancestors. Drawing on Wynter’s invocation of Césaire; her interpretations of the idea of menstrual blood and the production of ocher paint in Africa; the work of McKittrick, Michelle M. Wright, and Kriti Sharma on science; and the persistent haunting of Jamaica Kincaid, this is a journey into a black scientia of depth and unnaming. A partial accounting of the story the transatlantic slave trade continues to tell. A reckoning with the story the ocean is telling us about climate change. An attempt to untheorize the global systems that lead to countless deaths and near-deaths at sea for migrants every day and night. A divestment in being human. An experiment in being ocean, as praxis. At bottom, this essay is an opportunity for me to explain some things that I have been thinking about that I had to push aside so they would not overcrowd my forthcoming book Dub: Finding Ceremony. I think of them as what the sea weed holds, what ends up with Dionne Brand’s Blue Clerk, the spirals I had to go through to release whatIletgoofonthosepages. Whatisunderneathwhathappened? At the bottom there is blackness. What do I mean by that? Wright opens her book Becoming Black with a passage from Kincaid’s At the Bottom of the River. The first sentence that Wright quotes is “The blackness is visible and yet it is invisible, for I see that I cannot see it.” The same could be said for my motivations for taking Wynter’s invitation to unpack and unlearn our origin stories so personally. This is why I want to dwell on the difference between being (dis) placed, or what I am calling being mistaken for an ocean, and being ocean as praxis. Being missed. Taken. An ocean away. For the length of an ocean intime. Taken the width of the ocean(if you live).Taken the depth of the ocean(if you die). Being mistaken is being part of the mistake, the tactical error that Wynter points out, the story that Kincaid reads again and again hoping for a different ending. To the extent that colonialism, the slave trade, the unsustainable extraction of resources, the leaching of natural environments, toxic emissions, the creation of whole islands of garbage, continual acts of displacement and war, the dominance of systems that impoverish people and communities could be understood as a mistake, a network of decisions based on a false narration of what it is to be (human), the kidnapping of my ancestors and the multiple forms of oppression I experience, and (among other violences) the drowning today of uncounted people fleeing persecution and extreme poverty are all mistakes. To the extent that **these systems and violences are doing exactly what they must do to construct the human and the nonhuman**, “man” and nature, as categories that make this state of things cohere, none of this is a mistake. These are simply cruel efficiencies occurring in consecutive models across time.

#### we focused on the ways we were not each other.

**so as not to feel redundant.**

**so as to feel only manageably accountable for each other.**

**we used tribal origins if we remembered and then we remembered that our beliefs said we were not separate.**

**we used surnames until those all tangled and the fathers had left.**

**we used skin tone and reach of hair, but it didn’t work.**

**we couldn’t stop reaching for each other.**

**what’s a pronoun after all of this.**

**after not drowning after being ripped away after centuries on a tiny island building boats and salting the region.**

**after all that could i really look you in your face and not be you?**

#### Thus, the 1AC advocates for kinship beyond taxonomy a symbolic strike refusing the categories imposed on us – our lives depend on it

Gumbs 19 (Alexis Pauline Gumbs is a self-described Queer Black Troublemaker and Black Feminist Love Evangelist and an aspirational cousin to all sentient beings and is currently in residence as a National Humanities Center Fellow.; Being Ocean as Praxis: Depth Humanisms and Dark Sciences. Qui Parle 1 December 2019; 28 (2): 335–352.)

What if we are on the edge of another leap, both like and different from the Copernican leap that Wynter examines in her work? As McKittrick explains in her essay “Axis, Bold as Love,” the transformation that took place in European thought during the colonial era also transformed the intellectual trajectory of the colonizers as they colonized.9 The encounter with indigenous cultures on the plane and the understanding that the earth itself was not the center around which other planets and the sun revolved were coterminous. And it is not only that European thought evolved to create a category of the human through which it could understand itself in opposition to the category of the less-than-human people they encountered all over the world through sciences; it is that the existence of indigenous and Black people all over the world and their knowledge practices and cosmologies pushed Europeans to think of themselves in a completely different way, and to create an evolutionary scientific narrative of humanness that would have been unnecessary in the absence of the challenges that indigenous knowledges offered and continue to offer. And we are still dealing with this destructive defensive universalized European definition of the human right now. But what if it is time for another leap? Right now, as ocean levels rise around the planet, those of us who are clinging to, resisting, or opposing the dominant definition of the human are under pressure. How does oceanic knowledge, combined with our increasingly impossible-to-ignore knowledge of our dependence on the ocean and its literally rising role in our lived experiences, shift our definitions of the world we are constructing and our place within it? While playing a key role in the development of Black studies and ethnic studies in the United States more broadly and at Stanford University in particular, Wynter laments how those fields of study that could be heretical because they ostensibly come from the position of the excluded, beyond humankind, ultimately reify the insidious definitions of humankind in their practices. Inclusion comes at the cost of the necessary alternative possibilities that we need to create so urgently. This is how McKittrick describes it: The left and other political positionalities, whether battling or embracing Man, often stage this within our present liberal humanist model as classed members of this social system, and thus actually profit from replicating this system, rather than being co-human and existentially with those who are logically excluded from this knowledge system (excluded because they inhabit spaces conceptually imperceptible from the point of origin, reside at the bottom of the barrel, are too alien to comprehend).10But I wonder, if Man is reified in what Wynter calls the insurgent studies in the humanities, is not human also reified even in the call to approach “being human as praxis”?11 Wynter finds the uniqueness in humans to be related to our poetic possibilities, but what if whales are equally if not more poetic? Isn’t coral cultural? What if the bottom of the barrel is the bottom of the ocean? How might we theorize and practice this idea of “being . . . existentially with” each oceanic other? If McKittrick asks for “what Sylvia Wynter describes as a ‘hybridly organic’ and ‘languaging existence,’” would we not need to be in collaboration with the stories being written and told by all life on the planet?12 I see coral as another narrating life-form, similar in some ways to the life-forms that tell themselves a story about being human, but with crucial revisions to that story. Coral, like us, build on a massive scale. Coral reefs become the size of cities in the ocean; they are the only other organisms that build on such a large scale. And their dead stay with them; they live atop the skeletons of their ancestors. Or their skeletons are their ancestors? And this is part of the poetic importance of coral, and their connection to the possibility of a new science of the word. Scientists can’t seem to describe coral. The collectivity of coral (corals) exceeds the language. Is there such a thing as one coral? Aren’t coral inherently collective? Would we think of them as multiple animals with one stomach? Or one animal with many many many many mouths? And what about us, living on the same matter, with multiple hungers and resources that we pretend are not shared, so many of us making cities that we pretend are not always built on the dead—is there such a thing as one person? To attempt to describe coral, scientists in English have used two telling strategies: they describe coral as either colonies or polyps. I’m not Sylvia Wynter, and I won’t offer here the first uses of the term colony in the Romance languages or in the intellectual history of marine biology. I think that would be interesting, and I hope someone does it. (Thank goodness Wynter is alive and writing right now.) I am just pointing out that the description of coral as colonial in its formation and multiplicity does a lot to repress the possible meanings of its intergenerational example. If coral, growing on top of its former generations, could be understood in the same terms as the work of an empire to extract resources from a place where it must displace, dominate, and subjugate the preexisting life in or on that place, then either coral begins to seem rather self-hating and divided from itself, or colonialism begins to seem more natural than it ever could be. Of course, coral, for the most part, has been described in the science literature by people who have been taught to say that colonialism is natural and who have an inescapably complex theory of ancestry, being self-understood humans, whose ideas about kinship, Wynter teaches us, are already shaped in the historical moment of colonialism and by the contours of its results. I simply want to assert that the word colony ultimately fails to describe the collectivity, oneness, interconnected being of coral. Or, if it succeeds, it succeeds in a way that is complicit with the human-compelled environmental relation that is causing the mass death of coral at this time. The use of the term polyp to describe coral—or, more directly, the conscription of the term polyp, used initially to describe coral, into the dominant narrative of human cancer—might tell on us as well. There is more to say, but here I just want us to think about how the impossible best chance for coral individuality, the polyp, is now mostly associated with the physical reaction we have most in common with the coral that are dying due to industrially caused climate changes: the ubiquity of cancer, the way our own bodies are writing protest exponentially, the ways the idea of our own individuality lies and kills, the way we are all realizing too late (like as soon as someone we love dies of cancer) that neither we nor they were as individual as we had been taught to think. Biologist, philosopher, and my dear friend Kriti Sharma offers some key challenges to biology and subjectivity in her book Interdependence. “What does life depend on?” Sharma asks.14 Can we imagine that we—and by we she means all life—are not individual units with the potential to collaborate? Can we imagine that we are not merely interconnected while our inherent difference stays intact? What if instead we co-constitute everything? That is her argument, that we do not exist separately but are so deeply cocreated by the complexity of perception that the idea that you, or I, or a flower, or a coral is actually you, or I, or still a flower or a coral from moment to moment is a fiction useful for some things but in other ways useless and even inhibitive to life. The argument is intricate, but that’s not why I can barely describe it here. The reason I struggle to find words for this is that it so deeply challenges what we’ve used language to do. Homo narrans. Who and how we say we are related. Why we cannot decide whether coral is one or many. So we say cancer, we say colony, we say what we know how to say. But Sylvia Wynter would love Kriti Sharma. Please let me be there when they meet each other. Wynter gets us to go right to why we know how to say only what we know how to say and asks for an unlearning and a new poetics conducive not to individuality, colonial kinship, reification of an idea of the human across time, but to life. What do we, coral, what do we, perceptive in chorus, know how to say right now? While watching the 2017 film Chasing Coral (dir. Jeff Orlowski), I was astounded as coral divers observed and documented the death of coral.15 And to their surprise, before bleaching white, losing all their color, and dying (in our species we call that gentrification), a huge swath of coral in the Great Barrier Reef somehow turned neon purple before it died. The many scientists in the film couldn’t explain it. Maybe coral has something to say, visible from the sky. Maybe it can describe itself better than we can. But what I know for sure is that if we can’t let go of the systems tied to the colonial reproduction of individuality, all the coral will die and so will we. There must be something else to say. What if coral are not only using their bodies to write on the planet but also using us? What if I am copoetic with coral, the material it uses to write beyond its breathing? What if I am listening? What if my actions in solidarity with the ocean are a writing of the future, a visible myth unfolding? What if we are not the only authors of this story? Might we become humble tools for the ocean that unleashed us? What if there is another meaning of writing on the wall? For example, the coral that the filmmakers in Chasing Coral saw turn neon purple before they, and/as great segments of the Great Barrier Reef, died makes me think about the planetary scale of a message visible from space. We are not the only beings sending messages from this planet. Are we the only ones receiving and believing them? I thought about what scientific historians of earth call “the rusting of the planet.”16 Two hundred fifty million years ago cyanobacteria (once called blue-green algae because we so often name other beings without grasping the complexity of their/our relations) made the world unbreathable for most of the organisms on the planet other than themselves. Do we feel a kinship with cyanobacteria, which used the ocean to create more oxygen than the beings that had evolved on the planet up to that point could bear? The cyanobacteria changed the lives of those old oxygen-allergic beings that now are found in deep sulfuric caves hiding from what we call fresh air. Are they like us, cyanobacteria, growing themselves at the scale of the ocean, breathing at a rate that changed the sky? Or are we a backlash, putting carbon back on top through corporate and vehicle emissions, never mind the lungs of our children? Make the planet hot again. Like the good old days when we were impossible. Are we angry about how oxygen decays our cells and everything we need? Are we outraged by the need itself? Do cyanobacteria register regret for all the species that they used to share the earth with? Are we their silly heirs, emulating everything but their self-preservation? What is the story we tell ourselves that lets us fill the air with something we ourselves do not know how to breathe? Or are we just that hungry for another life story? Are we angry that oxygen has made itself seem as necessary and inevitable as individuality, subjectivity, colonialism, capitalism? Do we intuit that we would tell a more useful story as fossils than we are telling right now? What if our bones are the necessary alphabet? How hungry are we for an original writing? Depth Relation. Who are our relatives? As I train myself to be with and breathe with depth, I have become obsessed with whales. With how fat they can be and how old they can get (bowhead). With how they’ve offered themselves to Shinnecock listeners (right whale). With how they trailed slave ships, were whaled to death by the same boats (right whales again and also the now-extinct North Atlantic gray whale). With how no one has seen them have sex (humpback). With how scientists have barely ever seen them at all (most beaked whales). With how they are caged and criminalized and called killers when they are black unless they can put on a show (orca). And how they live in an unbreathable world that they breach to find breath. I have been experimenting with a practice I call “Black feminist breathing,” inspired by Ntozake Shange’s interpretation of the combat breathing Frantz Fanon witnessed during the Algerian War.18 It is also inspired by Laurie Carlos, who created a language of breath and gesture to heal herself from a serious nerve disease caused by a car accident.19 What makes the world unbreathable for us? State violence; corporate air pollution; the vehicle emissions that are right now being loosed at federal and state levels by politicians who don’t believe we have changed the climate; a culture of sexual violence. Many factors make this world unbreathable for me. And yet. There are stories that say that whales once walked the land and then evolved to live in the ocean. There are other stories that say that we were once whales who grew feet and walked onto the shore. I tend to imagine whales (especially Atlantic right and gray whales) training captured Africans in the bottoms of ships how to breathe out the top of their heads.20 I am not finished learning about whales. In the past few years two competing origin stories for whales have captured my imagination. The first is the first. I began researching Akan spiritual cosmology because my father’s cousin Hutson Gumbs told me that our Anguillian ancestor who survived the Middle Passage was Ashanti and her name was Boda. Akan spiritual cosmology describes the practices and beliefs of the Ashanti people. And I wonder what the Middle Passage meant to her as someone impacted by the role of the whale, the huge living oceanic presence in the Akan origin story. Among other deities, Totorobonsu has a role in how the Ashanti and Akan practitioners in the New World imagine the origin of the planet. In the Akan language the word Totorobonsu, one of the multiple names of God, is its own small poem about power and blessings. Bonsu, meaning whale, is also used to refer to someone who has victory and power in the water. Totoro is meant to mimic the sound of the falling rain, the source of the water itself. Totorobonsu is a story about how God blesses or waters the lives of the living and flows through everything with majesty and power and size. In the horror of the Middle Passage, what might Boda or anyone else have thought about the blessing power of water? While moving through water on ships also used to hunt whales, accompanied on parts of the journey by whales and by sharks, kidnapped by people who used ships as a major tool of domination and control, what did she learn about power and water and torture and blessing and prayer and origin and her own life and possibility? How would this be connected to and different from the prayers in many languages of the people drowning today as they flee from persecution and find more and deeper dangers all around? Totorobonsu in a sea shaped by European markets sounds like torture. It sounds like everything. It is still a prayer. It is also an abyss. Akan practitioners today in the New World sometimes claim ties, as my family does, to ancestors who may have practiced an older version of the same religion. However, most Akan practitioners I have met more often note that those who were moved across the ocean from West Africa to the Americas most likely came through the area controlled by the Ashanti: the coast of present-day Ghana. Akan practice in the United States preceded the current possibility of genetic speculation, but it was used to reach for an alternate understanding of power, divinity, and being.22 However, that desire, like the desire for a genetic origin story, is shaped by the dominant system of commerce and trade. It is an unnaming that means most new names will do. Akan practice and its rigorous training has now been used for generations in the United States as alternate science, a reaching back, a reclaimed narration of who and also of how. In the meantime, another cosmology, proffered by leading evolutionary researchers at the Smithsonian and the Museum of Natural History, is that though most life started in the ocean, whales started out on land, as something like a cow that then evolved to eat fish out of the river and then evolved to have no limbs but fins and to live mostly in the ocean, though some cetaceans can still be found in rivers. Of course, this story of origin, like the stories of population genetics, betrays itself. Did whales start out on land? Did any living being? Wasn’t the evolution into the ocean a return? Any evolutionary story, like any narrative at all, requires a decision about when the beginning was. And it is always a lie. And it is always too late. Does the imagining of an origin for whales on earth reveal the land-animal bias of even the marine biologists? Is it impacted by the internalization of land relation as a property, leaking into their work on the descriptive properties of sea creature ancestors? Can we imagine beyond the binary between land and sea? Maybe we should, and soon. The ocean is rising. The complicated poetics of taxonomy offers not a new science of the word but some repeatable clues about old violences in the speakability of biology. How could so-called humans, so caught in a relation of domination to the living world, be trusted to name not only the life around us and within us but also our relationships to each other, our family lineages? Soap opera genealogists, sentimental and biased with kinship trauma and desperate agendas—how could any of us be trusted to name the life we pretend to be separate enough from to observe? As I pointed out earlier, for a significant amount of observational time cyanobacteria were blue-green algae. But now they are not algae; they are bacteria. We noticed that. But the noticing that takes place among marine biologists, who have fleeting opportunities to observe anything in the ocean at its depth in its effective hiding place, is contingent and often debated within the field. Speculative taxonomies come and go, especially when one of the largest segments of the planet is also the least observable by so-called humans. As I was researching the names of species of coral and bacteria and whales, I started to think that maybe these taxonomies were exactly as exact, fully as accurate, as the racial classifications and technologies governing our imagination of the human, the truly human, the subhuman, the other-than-human that Wynter accounts for in her intellectual histories of colonial thought. Which is to say, I began to think that these taxonomies were not demonstrative of anything but the human imagination of difference and relation, a deep dark place indeed. Here I will look specifically at what marine biologists call black coral because I am still interested (along with Wright and Kincaid and so many others) in what blackness is, and how it is imagined. I used the passive voice there. Let me say instead that I am interested in the excesses of what blackness can be and how a field of mostly white male scientists refer to it underwater. Black coral, the name of a group of multiple species of coral, has the scientific name Antipatharia. What these corals all have in common is their inner blackness, their black or dark brown skeletons. They are covered with tiny spines. They are among the oldest animals on the planet. They are traded. They are endangered. They are mentioned in the convention on the international trade of endangered species. Their order’s name literally means “remedy for suffering.” Or the antidote for suffering. Or against suffering. They have been used for healing by multiple coastal communities. Antipatharia. These corals are accompanying me right now in the ocean ceremonies I am creating for my own grief. I too want to use them for healing, if not physically then poetically. A blackness that protects itself with spines, that is black under everything. So old that it doesn’t need us, might not recognize us at all. Black coral that branches out like a tree and can heal what ails. That can end the suffering. Could there be as many species of black coral as there are genres of suffering in my life? Or, as McKittrick asks (citing Nas), could creative texts be “another system that poetically attends to the pain in the brain, the fact of blackness, the poems of illness and incarceration”?24 This is what I want to attend to. McKittrick again: “The science of the word feels and questions the unsurvival of the condemned, thus dislodging black diasporic denigration from its ‘natural’ place.”25 Yes. This is what I am trying to do. To participate with Sharma in what McKittrick is calling the “creative labor [of] recoding science.”26 For example, there is a species of black coral called Antipathes atlantica. The remedy for Atlantic suffering? Another multivocal Black Atlantic? Of course, the naming here becomes geographic. This is a black coral that they have noticed only in the Atlantic so far. It is also the favorite home of the black coral barnacle, black by association, or maybe by commitment. And Cirrhipathes contorta is a species of black coral also known as whip coral or wire coral because commonly it looks like a whip or like barbed wire, but to scientists it looks like wispy but twisted hair, so they name it a wispy suffering twisted, the curl of suffering contorted, the punishing problem of hair. Or the species they think is one of the very oldest black corals, Leiopathes glaberima, a smooth suffering bald rhyme. Etymologically related to Leiotrichy, a name for smooth hair in racist ethnology. Also etymologically related to Orzya glaberrima, a sacred rice used in ceremonies by the Diola priestesses in Senegal, and therefore not for sale. Or what about Abyssopathes, the depth of suffering, a species of coral in the family Schizopathidae (split suffering?). Abyssopathes, suffering at so great a depth it was identified only in 2002, because it lives so deep in the ocean that humans have barely developed the technology to notice it, let alone research its properties and behaviors. In 1985, in the fifteenth-anniversary issue of Essence, crafted by my aforementioned mentor, Cheryll Y. Greene, Toni Morrison writes about “a knowing so deep it’s like a secret.”27 That’s how I think of the black coral that hides in the deep. And what to make of the fact that as the taxonomy continues of black coral across scientific time, sometimes the root of suffering remains but the antidote disappears. The healing potential is no longer referenced, just the forms of the suffering. The paths. Should I admit now that not all suffering can be healed? That some of it is just too old, too deep, too well hidden to even name? The abyss? Wynter writes about the abyss with longing. In her talk at a conference on the future of “development” in the African context, she pointed out that development is teleological, a new religion, a taken-for-granted good of Homo economicus, the definition of the human that naturalizes a particular capitalist economic relation that, as she notes, is destroying the planet.28 The abyss, which she brings in from Hamidou Kane’s novel Ambiguous Adventure, is a name for all the else there is, beyond the enlightened march of capitalism, an opening where all the myriad forms of resource relationship and organization constructed by groups of people in different physical environments still exist as possibilities. Dangerous heresies threatening the evangelism of the new priests, the economists. Dangerously black. What aspects of that abyss can claim me if I acknowledge how poetic and strange so-called scientific language already is, how related to every form of bias and longing and mystery? And what if, instead of the posture of the objective observer, we practiced a deep black science of the word, shaped by grief and longing, attending to the histories of blackness and suffering, keyed into what we’ve noticed from here, and also what we don’t want to see? Under all of it. This is why I am still underwater. This is why I know that where I want to see an origin there is actually an abyss. A dangerous space. Black. Where something else is possible

#### Kinship beyond taxonomy inherently disrupts the dominant humanist worldview, and each iteration of the 1AC radically alters the way meaning is constructed by humanist boundaries of thought

Pasquette 18 (Elisabeth Paquette Is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of North Carolina; “Humanism at Its Limits: A Conversation between Alain Badiou and Sylvia Wynter”; 2018; mk)

The introduction of new objects of knowledge that can disrupt the dominant worldview as well as seek the emancipation of those who are marginalized by this dominant worldview is part of the poetic method Wynter employs. She states, It is poetry, the poem, that continues, with increasing difficulty, the general human power to create signs. For the poem constitutes each time that it happens—since a poem is an “event” rather than an object—a field force which reinterprets and reinvents anew the meaning of the sign; that is, the poem creates anew the sign. Each poem reinvents the nature of the sign as not arbitrary; but depends on the “openness” of the sign to be able to reinvent it. The market reality produced by the production process reifies the sign into a finite category. It is through its imperative to dereify the market-created signs that poetry finds itself poetically/politically, on the opposite side of the barricades, the rebel side of the battle lines. (Wynter 1976: 88) For Wynter, the poetic is thus not an object for thought but is that through which a worldview can be radically altered, thus altering the way in which meaning is constructed. The poetic is not chaotic, nor is it dependent upon the current worldview. As she states, poetry is the agent and product by which man names the world, and calling it into being, invents his human as opposed to his “natural” being. For to name the world is to conceptualize the world; and to conceptualize the world is an expression of an active relation. A poem is itself a sign of man’s creative relation to his world; in humanizing this world through the conceptual/ naming process (neither comes before the other like the chicken and the egg) he invents and reinvents himself as human. (Wynter 1976: 87) The poetic has a function that differs from the construction of culture, whereby culture is the perpetuation of a worldview. Poetry, on the other hand, signals the ability to create, to invent new signs, and most importantly to reconceive of relations. It is a process which is inherently human and as such engaging in this activity of reconception and naming is itself humanizing. It is in this way that the poetic has an openness as opposed to the closedness of the logic of a certain kind of culture. Inherent to its creative capacity and openness the poetic functions so as to reconceive of relations as no longer relegated to determinations of a dominant binary division, whereby the One serves to determine the Other. This negation highlights the political dimension of the poetic, insofar as it is constituted through its destabilizing of binary logics that order relations in a particular world. In addition, a negation of the dominant binary requires a reconception of the human that exists outside of this binary, in other words, the creation of a we without negation or founded upon the creation of an other or opposition. For instance, the black experience in the New World . . . constituted an existence which daily criticized the abstract consciousness of humanism; that the popular oral culture which the black created in response to an initial negation of this humanness, constitutes as culture, the heresy of humanism; and that is why black popular culture—spirituals, blues, jazz, Reggae, Afro-Cuban music—and its manifold variants have constituted an underground cultural experience as subversive of the status quo Western culture as was Christian- ity in the catacombs of the Roman Empire. For it was in this culture that the blacks reinvented themselves as a WE that needed no OTHER to constitute their Being; that laid down the cultural parameters of a concretely universal ethnos. (Wynter 1976: 92).

#### Debate has become regulated as a marketplace through neoliberalism to actively construct us as homo-oeconomus – including our scholarship in your model is performative and actively entrenches the human

Karishma **Desai et.al 15**

8-1-2015, "Towards decolonial praxis: reconfiguring the human and the curriculum," Taylor &amp; Francis, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09540253.2016.1221893?journalCode=cgee20

**What is deemed worthwhile curricular knowledge is rooted in how the human is conceptualised.** This normalised notion of the human rooted in legacies of colonialism has shaped curricula and the study of curriculum for the last century, informing what knowledge is considered valuable, this **teaching us what we should strive for**. Neoliberalism has saturated the world since 1970s, as a discourse, and practice, not only in economics, but in almost every aspect of social life (Ong 2006). Neoliberalism, takes in the forms of ‘deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many aspects of social provision’ (Harvey 2005, 3) to **enhance competition and innovation** in service of economic growth. According to neoliberal reasoning, **markets must be created in areas that ‘markets do not exist,’ including education** (Harvey 2005, 2).

Dominant curriculum is derived from, normalises, and preserves homo oeconomicus, an individualised, accumulation-oriented Western genre of human based on free-market capitalism. As Popkewitz and Brennan note, it is **essential to consider how power/knowledge dynamics inform educational spaces** because ‘knowledge [defined by power relationships] has a material element in social life’ (1997, 288). Specifically, Popkewitz emphasises that **curriculum is ‘particular, historically formed knowledge that inscribes rules and standards by which we “reason” about the world and our “self” as a productive member of that world**’ (1997, 132, emphasis added). Thereby **curricula are technologies of social regulation that discipline our ontological understandings of the Self and Other.**

The reasoning that directs the differential distribution of knowledge and how value is ascribed to different knowledges, Wynter would argue, is rooted in the epistemological order produced by colonialism and sustained in its legacies. **The homo oeconomicus genre is preserved by high-stakes testing and technically oriented pedagogy** (Pinar 2004). Educational philosopher Lewis (2009) names **these educative practices ‘necropedagogy,’ pedagogical processes governed by neoliberal human capital logics based on costbenefit analysis regarding the payoffs of educating certain bodies over others, and thereby excluding and neglecting certain bodies. Necropedagogy, then, has the tendency to instrumentalise students.**

Even efforts to represent and engage knowledge systems outside of the Western cultural model, such as multicultural education, have perpetuated racism and orientalism (McCarthy 1994). While educational scholarship has attended to colonial influences on ways of knowing and on school curriculum (Willinsky 1998; Andreotti 2006), Wynter’s intervention that considers how genres of human were developed and sustained adds an essential dimension to deconstructing and revisioning curriculum.

Wynter’s anticolonial analyses, which offer a fundamental revision of the category of ‘race’ in the construction of the human, illustrate and extend possibilities for liberatory learning through the quest for ontological sovereignty. Her scholarship offers invaluable resources to trouble efforts of inclusion, suggesting that they often produce exclusion. For example, in Do Not Call Us Negros (1992), Wynter questions the efficacy of **commonplace multicultural curricula**, raising questions about representation versus historical excavations that provide historical realities that **create ‘a total abjection of being’** (Scott 2000, 188) among minoritised students. She states,

**I** **knew nothing about my own historical reality**, except in negative terms that would have made it normal for me, as Fanon points out, both to **want to be a British subject** **and, in so wanting, to be anti-black, anti-everything I existentially was.** I knew what it was to experience a total abjection of being. (Scott 2000, 188)

Wynter pushes us to re-construct curricula, holding in tension our knowledge of how **education curricula construct subjects and shapes their differential relationships to the state based upon assumptions about their relative humanness.**

Multicultural curricula that fail to unsettle Eurocentricism centre the Western idea of Man and construct the ‘Other’ in contrast. Often, multicultural curricula are what Ahmed (2012) has called ‘a nonperformative commitment to diversity.’ That is, they have an impression of commitment to diversity without action. Citing Judith Butler, ‘performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate “act,” but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names’ (1993, 2, Ahmed’s emphasis), Ahmed argues that those who work toward institutional (we read curricular) diversity, are practitioners working ‘with as well as in the gap between words and deeds’ (Ahmed 2012, 116). However, the curriculum becomes a site that naturalises Eurocentric ontology. Multicultural curricula often work to reinvest learners in liberal humanism by **including violent colonial histories merely as symbolic representation, as opposed to encouraging inquiries that distill consequences of colonialism and imperialism** (Wynter 1992). Therein, Wynter’s decolonial ontology unsettles the multicultural call to solely integrate students lived realities into the curriculum or to examine the histories of pre-colonial societies in the global South.

A multicultural curricular approach framed by Eurocentrism fails to acknowledge the insidious presence of global capitalism. Eurocentrism is ingrained in the European colonial project in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Americas, and is part of larger interrelated global processes, two of which are important for our argument: first the establishment of capitalist accumulation through enslaved, free or cheap labour, leading to the control of economic markets; and second, the control of knowledge centres based on the ‘Western Idea of Man’ (Wynter 2003), by ascribing rationality/humanity to Westerners and irrationality/savagery to non-Westerners. Consequently, Eurocentrism (implicitly read as superiority) is not simply historical, but rather a sustained racial-economic ideology reinforced in modern and contemporary configurations of race and racism. Wynter pushes for a humanism that is critically aware of these difficult histories, and centres Black ontologies. Wynter reminds us, that it is not that curriculum completely ignores colonialism and racial enslavement; rather the inclusion interprets colonialism and slavery as processes that were left in a dark chapter. The persistent violences and reverberations of these processes that were not shaken off with emancipation, or political independence are occluded. When Native American dispossession or enslavement of Africans is treated as a dark moment that ends with the obtainment of legal citizenship, continued structural violences are often obscured. Furthermore, textbooks confine these histories into small sections that fulfil the ‘multicultural lesson.’ **Multicultural curriculum, in this form, conceals the knowledges, ideologies, and privileges that abide. These forms of ‘multicultural inclusion’ are treated as a solution to critiques of Eurocentric curriculum**

This kind of multicultural approach distracts from the more important conversation, one that moves from history depicted as marginalised groups demanding representation (Wynter 1992), towards clearer rubrics to understand globalisation when manifested in the imprisonment, suffering, and death of migrants at the hands of nation-states, and the internal strife witnessed in state force used against marginalised populations. For instance, Wynter describes how the Civil Rights Movement3 was an example of a sustained push for reorganisation of systems of knowledge (Wynter 1992, 11). However, this restructuring can be re-interrogated through the lens of the much-publicised state violence. While the Civil Rights Movement successfully demanded political rights (e.g. voting rights), and brought some reprieve from state violence, it also led to the rise of ideas about cultural difference. Also elided in most curricula on ‘civil rights’ is that the limited conception of ‘rights’ fails to address: what are these rights? What epistemic foundation are these rights based on? who has these rights and who should be afforded them? What tension exists between the de facto and de jure allocation of these rights? These questions provide gaps that limit the significance of the movement and its representation in curriculum.

During the 1930s and 1940s, African-American leaders collaborated with anticolonial allies in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America to pursue an expansive set of human rights.4 This turn to human rights provided a collaborative groundwork for the resistance to complex ‘global intimacies’ (Lowe 2006, 192) seen in the ‘sometimes overlapping, struggles for freedom, full citizenship, and self-determination’ that were galvanised at the 1955 Asian-African Conference of Nonaligned Nations held in Bandung, Indonesia. The 1950s saw a rise in transnational collaborations located at the interstices of political struggle articulated at Bandung, where ‘the so-called darker races of the world sought to attain juridical independence’ (Kelley 2002; Wilkins 2006, 192–193; Iton 2008). These actions had reverberating implications on the African and Asian continents. And as Lorraine Hansberry argued, ‘the sweep of national independence movements globally was inextricably linked to the political initiatives of Black Americans engaged in similar, and sometimes overlapping, struggles for freedom, full citizenship, and self-determination’ (Wilkins 2006, 192). The documented histories in textbooks and the mediated historical memories of the Civil Rights Movement represent a fraction of the broad organising principles that took decades to build, and were global in their reach. As such, the broader conception of global ‘human rights’ was replaced by a limited conception of ‘civil rights,’ which we read as a turning away from ‘the human’ in favour of an even more limited category: ‘American’ or the national citizen. Furthermore, the political solidarities cultivated between African-Americans and anticolonial struggles in the global South are hardly explored in curriculum about the Civil Rights Movement.

This perspective represents an example of how ‘major conflicts and compromises among groups with competing visions of “legitimate” knowledge and what is a “just” society inform curriculum’. Curriculum theorist Apple continues, noting ‘ … such conflicts have deep roots in conflicting views of racial, class, and gender justice in education and the larger society … ’ (2000, 230). These debates persist and are part of the whitewashed, inclusive, multicultural histories that pick and choose aspects of the Civil Rights Movements as tools to dismantle present movements for liberation that are of the same historical trajectory. Aspects of historical liberation movements (such as what means and processes led to certain outcomes) get elided in these selective ‘civil rights’ curricula, and these histories are then deployed in the service of either erasing or actually demonising contemporary movements. One can only imagine how different civil rights curricula would if they started out with questions about what it means to be human and not as a moment in history, with a movement whose work is complete. However, multi-culturalism became the response and as Wynter explains,

Multiculturalism can seem to be an attractive answer to the particularism of the Euro-Immigrant perspective from which the present textbooks are written … Rather than seeking to reinvent our present cultural native model, the multi-culturalism alternative seeks to ‘save’ the nation model by multiculturalizing it. It does not move outside the conceptual field of our present EuroAmerican cultural model. (Wynter 1992, 16)

Scholars like Weheliye, following Wynter, see the reimagining of the terms of the human as a struggle against the way in which ‘structures, discourses, and institutions … detain black life and thought within the strictures of particularity’ (2008, 332). This revisioning is neither a call not to include the excluded other from traditional universalising concepts of humanism nor is it a call to dismantle humanism.

Part 2. (the end of this is kinda good)

In every human order there are always going to be some groups for whom knowledge of the totality is necessary, seeing that it is only with knowledge of the totality that their dispossession can be brought to an end. – Sylvia Wynter. (Scott 2000, 188)

Curriculum is informed by how we understand what it means to be human and what we hope for our collective future. Therefore, employing Sylvia Wynter’s anticolonial theorising of the human also decolonises what counts as valuable and desirable knowledge. Therein, her intellectual project powerfully imagines new knowledge mappings that can imagine and sustain decolonial personhoods. In what follows, we provide examples of this etched in her work.

In addition to Fanon, Wynter draws on Aimé Césaire, to propose that we are hybrdily human as explicated in the previous section. She contends that this is empirically illustrated in the Blombos Cave in South Africa where archaeologists found ochre engravings made in what seems to be an art workshop and shells that evidence communal cooking, what she marks is the Third Event. Wynter suggests that the ochre symbolises menstrual blood; therefore, in this ritual, the first form, or biological life is translated into symbolic life, which she calls **homo narrans, the human being as mythmaker or storyteller,** and therefore the significance of telling our worlds. Through this example, what Wynter proposes, then, is that individually born **biological life is transformed into the ‘genre specific communal referent-we of symbolic life’** (Wynter and McKittrick 2015, 68). And, therefore the archaeological remains evoke the truth of solidarity, considering this initiation ritual illustrates that ‘**we are reborn of the same origin story rather than of the womb … therefore, each such genre-specific displacement/replacement origin narrative would have imperatively functioned … against their individual subjects, giving priority instead to the genetically encoded innate interests of one’s kin** … ’ (Wynter and McKittrick 2015, 68). This offering centres the truth of deep solidarity, one that recognises that human beings are inextricably bound to one another, to all planetary life, and to the cosmos

Revisioning curriculum drawing on Wynter engenders a pedagogy of solidarity that can **disturb and reject static cultural essentialisms and confront how White supremacy continues to informs what is worthwhile knowledge** (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012). We are reminded by the rendering of the Blombos Cave that European cosmogony that has been overly represented, and infused in curriculum around the world, is **only one of a multitude of human cosmogonies**. As Tuck (2011) reflects in respect to Indigenous epistemologies, non-Western cosmologies that have more interlinked explanations of human–human and human–Nature relationships as they depart from Darwinistic models of relational life based on fictions of natural scarcity that have shaped intimate and systemic dynamics, and thereby have the potential to dramatically redistribute power and knowledge. That is, our current mode of understanding relationships within our social and natural world is anthropocentric, is based on the assumption that the human is an autonomous individual, and supposes that only the fittest survive because there are scarce resources. In contrast to this, many Indigenous and global South cosmologies have embedded within them the notion that we exist in deeply interrelated cosmic circles. Several epistemological threads from the global South further assert that the notion of an autonomous being and human agency itself is a fallacy. Rather, we exist in and through what new materialists now call ‘intra-actions’ (Barad 2007) or the mutual constitution of entangled agencies amongst human and non-human worlds. Bodies intra-act in co-constitutive ways, and the ability to act, or agency, occurs from within the assemblages of these bodies. This ontological orientation presents new ways of seeing our relationships with each other, nature, and the material world. Wynter’s rendering compels understandings of solidarity at the inter-species level and in relation to our natural world. This act of rewriting what humanness means by deliberating attending to the Third Event that marked the recognition/formation of the human species as hybridly human has the potential to enable what Wynter calls the production of ‘self knowing subjects’ (Wynter 1992). This occurs through the act of what Joyce E. King (1992) calls repossessing ‘our story,’ and what is meant by human consciousness.

#### One-size-fits-all monotopical models are a myth used to perpetuate colonialism – prefer a plurotpic hermeneutics

Madina V. **Tlostanova et al., 09**

(Madina V. Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo, ‘On Plurotopic Hermeneutics, Trans-modern Thinking and Decolonial Philosophy, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Madina-Tlostanova/publication/273947745\_On\_Pluritopic\_Hermeneutics/links/551105620cf2a8dd79bf7f31/On-Pluritopic-Hermeneutics.pdf, 2009)//iLake-💣🍔

Let us elaborate some more on pluritopic hermeneutics. It starts and departs from the earlier proposed concept of diatopic hermeneutics offered by Raimundo Panikkar. He defines it as the art of understanding by means of crossing spaces or traditions (dia-topoi), which do not have common models of understanding and understandability. Under diatopic hermeneutics, we do not assume that the other has the same self-understanding as we do. Panikkar rethinks the mechanics of monotopic Western hermeneutics, according to which we can know something only if we acquire a certain degree of pre-understanding (Gadamer’s “horizon”) and anticipation of meaning. But in intercultural and inter-philosophical contexts, such an anticipation, as a basis for a hermeneutic circle, is not possible. Hence, the necessity of diatopic hermeneutics, which helps us understand something that does not belong to our horizon.

Diatopic hermeneutics begins with the realization of pain arising from alienation and radical difference. It becomes an answer to the challenge of an interpretation traversing the cultural and religious boundaries in case the hermeneutic circle has not been created yet. It refuses to colonize the other by its set of preexisting categories and values. In contrast to postmodernists, Panikkar does not think that it is impossible to understand the other. Such an understanding for him is inevitable and necessary. Hence, his method of im-parative (not com-parative) philosophy (from Latin imparare, to learn in the atmosphere of plurality), which is a way of dialogic and experiential (not interpretative as in Western hermeneutics) learning from the other, thus enriching our thinking by the other’s intuitions and revelations. What is important here is that Panikkar still clings to the subject/object and the same/ other division, although he takes a huge step in the direction of questioning this rule of modernity.

Last but not least, where is the epistemic location of the understanding subject who operates in a monotopically based hermeneutics (à la Gadamer)? The understanding subject of monotopic hermeneutics is not, and cannot be, the other, but is always the same. It is precisely the privilege of controlling knowledge and meaning that allows monotopic hermeneutics to secure the voice of humanitas and to define itself by inventing its exteriority, i.e., the other. While dia-topically (and pluritopically) based hermeneutics disobeys the totalitarianism of monotopic hermeneutics, the other speaks, reasons, argues, invents, and creates while looking into the eyes of humanitas. The difference between humanitas with its monotopic hermeneutics, on the one hand, and anthropos with its embracing and enacting diatopic and pluritopic hermeneutics, on the other hand, is that anthropos has the potential of thinking from his or her own body and experience, subsuming the imperial reason that makes an other, an anthropos out of him or her. In a way, the epistemic revolt of the anthropos, denouncing the non-human of the humanitas, enlarges and expands the ideals of the European Renaissance and the Enlightenment beyond their own horizons. The European Renaissance and Enlightenment men and postmodern neoliberal ideologues thought that they had the right to civilize and make the planet after their likeness. But all of a sudden, anthropos (the other) decided to take their destiny in their own hands. We are witnessing these reversals unfolding in two directions: dewesternization and the shift toward the Eastern Hemisphere (as compellingly argued by Kishore Mahbubani),12 and decoloniality and the shift from Marxism and Liberation Theology toward the global agencies of what Frantz Fanon called les damnés de la terre : 13 all those marked by the colonial wound,14 by being questioned in their/our humanity for their/our religion, skin color, sexual preference, gender, geo-political location, and language. In a nutshell, the other, the anthropos, is now on the march to decolonize humanitas and to build a world in which everyone participates instead of being participated, as the other was.

We have already mentioned the crucial meaning of colonial and imperial differentials for conceptualizing “encounters with otherness.” This problematic is closely linked with the genealogy of Western comparative studies from the Renaissance on, where the comparison has been always marked by the imperial epistemic and cultural dominance and framed within the false analogy paradigm: the European “apples” were continually compared with the non-European “oranges” and other such strange fruit, only to prove their deviation when opposed to “apples.” However, in the colonial space, the strangeness of the other constantly erodes the realm of the same, does not leave it impenetrable, and eventually finds its way to the metropolis, as Anne McClintock has persuasively argued in Imperial Leather. Thus, what we have in colonies or semi-colonies in modernity can be called a **colonial semiosis,** which is based on the interactive production of culture and knowledge by members of different traditions.

What is important here is that in this case, the act of understanding someone else’s philosophy, cosmology, ethics, culture, and language presupposes a self-conscious comparison, involving not only the two or more terms that are being compared but also **questioning the very act of comparison itself, its mechanisms, its ideologies, and the relativity of its points of view**. Instead of Gadamer’s monotopic hermeneutic, in which the point of enunciation is always inside the same Western tradition and its linear myth of modernity is invented by the very monotopic understanding and imposed onto the multicultural spaces, **in the case of pluritopic hermeneutics, we localize the understanding subject in the colonial periphery**, which automatically disturbs the easy and clear rendering of “tradition,” or point of reference. Indeed, pluritopic hermeneutics questions the position and the homogeneity of the understanding subject. It moves in the direction of interactive knowledge and understanding, **reflecting the very process of constructing the space that is being known**. The pluritopic approach does not accentuate relativism or cultural diversity. It stresses instead the social, political, and ontological dimensions of any theorizing and any understanding, questioning **the Western locus on enunciation masked as universal and out-of-concrete-space**. It strives to (**re)construct, more specifically, the difference in the loci of enunciation** and the politics of knowing beyond cultural relativism. We should not also forget the ethical dimension of pluritopic hermeneutics, which stresses the constant realization that **other truths also exist and have the right to exist, but their visibility is reduced by the continuing power asymmetry, which is based on the coloniality of knowledge, power, being, and gender.**