

Posthumanist Nomadisms across Non-Oedipal Spatiality

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The articles selected in this book have been double blind peer reviewed by a distinguished team of experts, some of whom are also our authors. We would like to thank all of them. We would also like to acknowledge colleagues who have helped us give the book its present shape, especially Prof. Didier Coste (Bordeaux, Montaigne), Prof. Debra Castillo (Corneille, New York) and Prof. Elena Losada Soler (Universidad de Barcelona).

Preface by Walter Dignolo

What does it mean to be human? Border thinking on racism and migrations

It is a rare occasion, and a welcome one, when the person receiving thankful appreciation from the authors is invited to preface their book, giving him the opportunity to express his dissenting opinion. I am pleased to return the appreciation and continue the conversations initiated at Hyderabad in December of 2019 and followed up via email since. Indeed, the friendly conversations started and unfolded on a divergent understanding of what is meant and understood when the word 'human' is articulated in a given modern European vernacular and imperial language (*humano* in Spanish; *humaine* in French; *Mensch* in Germany; *umano* in Italian; *humano* in Portuguese). The following reflections are neither intended to correct the summary of my words that Professors Indrani Mukherjee and Java Singh offer in the introduction, nor to comment on subsequent chapters. My reflections provide a background of what I thought and said during the conversations summarized in the introduction.

Since the volume underscores both the posthuman and nomadism, I divided this preface into two sections, one in conversation with the posthuman and the second with nomadism. Section three is a conclusion connecting the threads of parts one and two. My reflections on the posthuman are based on Sylvia Wynter's distinctive approach to the question. As a Black woman, scholar, and activist from the Caribbean, she pursued a basic question: what does it mean to be human? The question is engrained in the lived African diaspora in the Caribbean. She cast her argument in the expression "after man," a radical starting point away from the 'post-' and from the 'human'.¹ The second part is based on my own immigrant experience. All my grandparents migrated from Italy to Argentina. I then migrated from Argentina to France and later to the US. 'Nomadism' is a very alien word in my experience and my decolonial articulation of that experience. 'Immigrant consciousness' is a concept that I sense in my body, and immigration consciousness presupposes border dwelling and border thinking.¹

¹ Walter Dignolo, "Introduction. Immigrant Consciousness." » In Rodolfo Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in America* [1970]. Translated by María Lugones and Joshua M. Price. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, xiii-xl.

I

'Human' is a regional word to name one species of living organism that, among other features, walks on the two lower extremities and that, in so doing, liberates their hands to provide themselves with food and shelter. Once the mouth was liberated from the necessary task of providing nutrition, the organ began to be used to expand its capacity to emit sound and expand the coordination of activities with other organisms of the same species co-existing in the same space. Like any other mobile living organisms (what we call animals (including insects) and aquatic vertebrates, etc.) they group with members of the same species living in the same surroundings. Over time, millions of years, our ancestors expanded their ability to coordinate their activities through sounds and scratching symbols on flat surfaces (what is generally called writing).

To make the story short, languaging became a distinctive feature of one species of living organisms that allowed the members of said species to tell stories about the origination of the cosmos (to use a common word), of planet earth, of all living organisms, and about the conditions that makes living organisms on earth possible. The particular genus of the species telling the story of the origination of the universe (of planet earth, of all living organisms) were and are the genus of the particular species of living organisms walking on only the lower extremities, thereby liberating the mouth from the task of food provision and allowing them to engage in languaging. Furthermore, liberating the upper extremities from walking meant that they could be used to provide themselves with food, shelter, and to build instruments to extend the uses of the hands. Languaging and storytelling emerged to coordinate and reflect on the meaning of their actions, their memories, and, briefly, the constitution of the communal organization.

The point here is that, in modern vernacular European languages, the term 'human' and the meanings attached to the word, is neither the word nor the meaning common to the speaker of non-European languages. That is until colonial invaders came with their own image of themselves, their own storytelling that ignored, destituted and silenced the invaded people's ways of thinking of themselves as well as their own judgements of the invaders. For example, the word *Runa* in Quechua cannot be properly translated as 'human'. *Runa* implies the weaving of life in the planet and cosmos (all the living energies and water, sun, light, winds, and organisms and their constant flow), of which *Runa* are just one particular type of organism. 'Human', according to

Western vocabulary (Man1 in Wynter's argument),² separated itself from all the living which was, in turn, reduced to a single noun: *Nature*, an object as it were. Western civilisation is one populated with objects, not with relations and flows. Andean cosmology was destituted (I am using it as a verb, to enact destitution in the same movement of self-constitution). The intrusion and self-constitution of Western cosmology, and the concept of the 'human' did not destitute the concept of *Runa*. Both concepts co-exist in conflict and power differential. The same applies with the Chinese *Ren*. *Ren* cannot be translated as 'human' since *Ren* is integrated to *Tianxia* (*All under heaven*), while 'human' is localized in the frame of Western cosmology (theological and secular (e.g. the Big-Bang story replacing the Biblical narrative)).

The thousand years old Andean civilizations was not only dismantled in its current stage (e.g. the Inca Civilization) but it was conceptually destituted, ignored and demonized: contrary to the European missionaries who honored their own ancestry, Andean people needed to forget their own past and to be saved from the kingdom of the Devil, which was, of course, unknown in the Andes. The Devil was a Christian invention. The Renaissance Man1's storytelling conceived of itself as *Human* and relegated the Andean people to lesser, deficient humans, ignoring the Andean's self-conception based on their own cosmological storytelling. The rhetoric of the *Human* persisted and was the foundation of racism, sexism, and the objectification and commodification of Nature. Man2 appeared with secularization that 'de-godded' God and replaced it with Reason. Man3 emerged after World War Two with cybernetics and two of its consequences: the modelling of the life and deeds of the consumer by the invasion of advertising and, more recently, by the use of artificial intelligence to program our lives. Both consequences accentuate the separation, not only of the 'human' with living energies in the planet and the cosmos, but of the flow of life energies, replacing it with the sacralization of the *Instrumentality* of life. Man3, following Wynter's chronology, would be the *Posthuman*. Man1 and Man2 were tantamount to the invention of the *Individual*, a distinctive feature of Western civilization with its splendors and misery. Man3 is tantamount to the sanctification of the *Individual* and its elevation to the Ego as the the game of life: a model of *man* (Man3) that was developed by economists and the military which consisted in an egotistical being interested only in his own benefit and in duping his opponents to achieve

² Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument." *CR: The Ew Centennial Review*. 3/3, 2003, 257-337. Katherine McKittrick, editor. "Sylvia Winter: On Being Human as a Praxis. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

his ends: a modern homo oeconomicus.³ I am talking about two trajectories: the trajectory that leads to the post-human and the trajectory that lead to Man3, the consolidation of a game of life that prevents asking what does it mean to be human.

This is also, in my understanding, the territory of the posthuman. But, as the dictum goes, and as Jorge Luis Borges parodied, the map is not the territory. There are other territories. One of them is “After Man” irreducible to the genealogy of Man1 to Man3. “After Man” is the humanness reclaimed by the descendant of the long history of racialized and sexualized people, since the sixteenth century. Classified as ontologically (lesser humans) inferior and epistemologically deficient (irrational or not quite rational) who precisely because of their inferiority and their deficiencies were not supposed to think. They/we are now thinking and reducing the posthuman and Eurocentrism (Eurocentrism is an epistemological and aesthetic phenomenon whose enunciation is located in Western Europe but whose tentacles reached diverse points of the planet) to its own size. “After Man” emerge from the majority of non-European population who have been left out from the trajectories Human to post-Human and from Man1 to Man3. The post-Human is not universal. Is the eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism while Wynter’s Man1 to Man3 outlines a decolonial critique of eurocentrism. The decolonial option illuminate the paths toward the humanness of the After Human, co-existing with the post-Human.

I am aware that promoters of the ‘post-human’ are driving towards escaping the trends of anthropocentrism. And I do not have a problem with that. It is one way to go. I am describing a different path to delink from anthropocentrism. I am not trying to supersede what, in a different frame, is conceived as ‘post-human’; I am not interested in disqualifying it. I am just saying that I do not and cannot fully accept it. And I am saying that there is one path to go and that path is to add a prefix ‘post-’ to whatever you would like to supersede. I am talking about co-existences in diversity (that is pluriversality). In a pluriversal ecumene, ‘post-’ means one temporal and conceptual line and the assumption that there is one, universal, time. It is generally assumed that all ‘after’ has to be ‘post-’, and that all dissension and attempts to supersede something in the prison of North Atlantic Universals (in the apt description offered by Michel Rolph-Trouillot)⁴ has to be referred to with ‘post-’. There is no way out of

³ Frank Shiffmacher, *Ego: The Game of Life*. London: Polity Press, 2015

⁴ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “North Atlantic Universals. Analytical Fictions 1492-1945.” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 2002, 101/4, 839-858/

capitalism - so the dictum goes - because there is no way out of Western Abstract Universals. Many of us disagree.

II

When I arrived in Paris (in mid 1969) to work on my *doctorat d'état*, I had a better grasp of what it might have meant to my grandparents to move to Argentina in adverse conditions, belonging to generations at the end of the nineteenth century when thousands of Italian migrants moved from Buenos Aires to New York. Now I was moving in the reverse direction, from the West (Indias Occidentales) to the East (Europe), but with the support of a fellowship granted by the University of Córdoba, Argentina.

When I migrated to the US in 1973, the feeling of being a foreigner had already settled. No complaints, no nostalgia. It was what I was. I accepted it and left with it. That lived experience took me where I am today, thinking the way I do and saying the things I say. Disciplines are secondary. They are just tools. I do not follow disciplinary regulations, although I have an academic title. I first studied philosophy and literature and I then got a PhD in semiology. On another day of the journey (metaphorically, since it has not been in one particular day and month and year), salvation came from an encounter with the LatinX population in the US (at that time referred generally as Hispanics, Chicanos and Latinos, no 'a' or 'X' was used at that time). A 'eureka' feeling and salvation came when I read Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderland/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). I understood what being Italo/Argentinian meant, although the particular meaning of being a heterosexual Italo/Argentinian male was quite different from that of being a homosexual Mexican/American female. I understood what dwelling in the borderland and borderline means. That experience nourishes border thinking and border gnoseology (a key concept in *Local Histories/Global Designs. Literacy, Territoriality and Border Thinking*, 2000). Nevertheless, I understood that there was something deeper, a deeper logic to common differences that are culturally perceived at the surface. Superficial differences, literally, hide the deeper logic: the colonial difference.

But let's go back to Anzaldúa. *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization* (1995) came from the gift that Anzaldúa's book offered. The book is really an autobiographical journey to account for the immigrant consciousness that was growing in me, and myself with it. It was making sense of the Italian Renaissance, the Italian migrants moving to Argentina, and the history of Spanish colonization of the Americas. Anzaldúa's local history (personal and geo-political) had to do with the place of Mexico in colonial history, first in the hands of Spaniards, and later in the hands of the US. The Mexican-American war of 1848 allowed the US to move the 'border' south

and leave inside the territorial States a significant number of Mexicans who lost their original nationality.

They did not move; they were not nomads. The frontier moved beyond them. The second connection with Anzaldúa was her signpost sentence: “The U.S-Mexican border es una herida abierta where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country — a border culture”.⁵ Despite different generations, different sexual preferences, and different geopolitical local histories (Mexico on the one hand, Argentina on the other), Anzaldúa and myself both lived the Third World experience. Paraphrasing Anzaldúa I would have said at that time that “The modern/colonial borderlines are heridas abiertas where the Third World grates against that first and bleeds” and these borders and wounds are today planetary. They are the territories where “border cultures” emerge, are formed and persist. Border thinking sprouts from lived experiences in the borderland and borderlines (racial, sexual, nacional, civilizational) It means that coloniality is everywhere, even when settler colonialism ended, coloniality persisted. ‘Border cultures’ are entangled in power differentials (they are not equal on both sides), and that power differentials are dictated by one of the border cultures. That dictation consisted in the invention of the ‘colonial difference’: cultural differences are never of equal weight, they are always entangled in power differentials.

I am telling you this story to make more explicit my thoughts on nomadism, migrations, immigrant consciousness, and border thinking. After I finished the manuscript of *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, I continued what I had started in writing that book but brought my reflections to the end of the twentieth century. Out of this research, teaching, workshops and published articles came *Local Histories/Global Designs*. During that process I was asked many times in graduate seminars, workshops and lectures, why I was not referring to or quoting Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of ‘nomadism’ since, in the understanding of the person asking the question, there were obvious similarities. I addressed the tenor of these questions in several pages of *Local Histories/Global Designs* (66-77). I explained there why Deleuze and Guattari’s nomadism was irrelevant to my own experience and thinking. Decolonially, we (those of us who follow the path opened by Aníbal Quijano and Gloria Anzaldúa, followed up by María Lugones at the crossroads of Quijano’s coloniality and Anzaldúa geopolitical (Mexico / US) and body-political borderlands (women / lesbians of color)), do not begin from ethereal concepts but from the grounding from where such and such concepts emerge. Concepts are connected to feelings

⁵ Gloria Anzaldúa. *Borderland/La Frontera. The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lutte, 1987, 25

and emotions, rather than floating in disciplinary clouds. That is why I (and others working on these assumptions) do not follow disciplinary regulations, even less any top-down orientation. Decoloniality is not deconstruction, it is alien to the postmodern and it is undisciplined.

We (the same as above) do not start from the enunciated but from the enunciation which presupposes lived experience rather than disciplinary regulations; the life-world if you wish (not Husserl's life-world in Freiburg, but Quijano's life-world in the South American Andes or Anzaldúa's on the border between the First and the Third Worlds), which I explained in countless occasions in public talks and writing. In this regard, Deleuze and Guattari's experience (like that of Husserl, there is no personalization here)⁶ is alien to us (the same as above and many others as well). Their thinking, rooted in their implicit geo-and body-political grounding in Western modernity, is not the experiential grounding of people dwelling in the borderland, borderline of modernity/coloniality. I am not saying that they are wrong or that we are superseding them, or critiquing them. I am just saying that they are irrelevant to our living and thinking and that they have the right to their own opinion and their ethical responsibility.

Migrations in the past two hundred years (since the creation of the nation-state, the territorial border of the state and the regulation of citizenship), disturb the homogeneity of one state/ one nation (e.g. the nation state) and reveal the power border differential. They reveal the colonial difference' (which is the concept that links to my entire argument in *Local Histories/Global Designs* and essays and speeches I delivered before the publication), the *irreducible difference* that divides and unites modernity/coloniality. Here is a paragraph which summarizes the point I made in *Local History* addressing the similarities perceived by readers or listener. I made the point by building my argument on that of Moroccan philosopher, writer, and thinker Abdelkebir Khatibi and Martinican writer, poet, and thinker Edouard Glissant (and Gloria Anzaldúa in the previous pages):

Glissant and Khatibi arrive, in fact at a similar view, but not from the local history of knowledge built from the perspective of modernity, as it is the case of Deleuze and Guattari, but from local histories of knowledge built from the perspective of coloniality. It is the coloniality of power and knowledge as articulated in languages that lead Khatibi and Glissant to a critique of Western epistemology and to the articulation of the irreducible difference with their "alias." European thinkers practicing

⁶ Walter D. Mignolo, "Decoloniality and Phenomenology. The Geopolitics of Knowing and the Epistemic/Ontological Difference." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. 32/3, 2018, 360-387.

monotopic critique of modern epistemology [while] Glissant version of “Creolization of the world” in this context moves along the lines of Khatibi “another thinking”, both complementary [clashing] and irreducible to a “nomadic” of “minor science.” (2000, pp. 77).

III

A significant sector of the population of the planet has been, for five hundred years, classified as lesser humans. It is meaningless to think of the *Posthuman* from the experience of people who are yet not considered human enough. Racism and sexism are intermingled with the language you speak, the nation-state you belong to (or do not belong to), the religion you have chosen. *Human* is a category that serves well to maintain classifications and hierarchies. Decolonially speaking, *Human* has to be called into question. Wynter’s “after human” does it. She is not proposing to supersede the *Human* with the *Posthuman*. It is in fact a different option, the option that is coming from those lesser humans that were not supposed to think and that, therefore, had to follow North Atlantic Abstract Universals.

Classifications are not a ‘representation’ of what there is, but are the framing that creates the illusion that what we see is what there is rather than simply what we see. The classification was an invention that ‘succeeded’ in making people believe in such hierarchies, including those who were ranked inferior. The principle of classification was the concept of ‘race.’⁷ And the concept of race was (and is?) supported and managed by institutions, actors, and languages. Today, people classified as lesser human are taking the field and revealing that the concept of race was an invention uttered, pronounced, and enunciated in modern vernacular European languages, and maintained by North Atlantic institutions and actors. Of course, there were hierarchies in co-existing languages and civilizations (say Chinese, Indian, Persian, Mayan, Incas) before the advent of racism, colonialism, and the historical foundation of capitalism in the sixteenth century, but not all hierarchies are equivalent to the modern/colonial concept of race and the ideological consequence, racism. Pre-existing sexism and patriarchies had acquired a new meaning in their intersection with racism. Racism is not ontic, but epistemological and ontological: He who controls and manages institutional knowledge and imperial languages, has the privilege to identify himself with the essence of the *Human* and relegates to lesser humans whomever does not conform with the

⁷ Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality.” [1992]. *Cultural Studies*, 21, 2/3, 168-178.

invention of the essence of the *Human*. That invention was a modern/colonial invention of the European Renaissance.⁸

Lesser humans were and still are (as we have been witnessing the increasing manifestations of racism in Western Europe and the US) ontologically inferior and epistemological deficient. Explicitly, during four hundred years more or less, and implicitly in recent times, the ingrained idea has been that non-Western people cannot think.⁹ No longer. However, the irreducible difference remains in place and will remain until the hegemony of Western epistemology is reduced to its own well-deserved, regional size. Works like that of Khabiti, Glissant, and many others since then, are not moving toward the 'post-human' (that is a modern/postmodern concern), but exploring the very concept of *Human*: what it means to be *Human* is the fundamental question. When was the concept of the *Human* put in place, where, by whom, why, and with what purpose? These questions lead us to a change of terrain: beyond the Eurocentric critique of the Eurocentrism of the *Human* (e.g. the post-human), emerge decolonial critiques, from the memories and praxis of living of former settler colonies, critiques of both Eurocentrism of the *Human* and its Eurocentric critiques (post-human). The implications are large: we on the planet are living and experiencing a change of era. The era of changes in which change could be understood by adding the prefix 'post-' to an abstract universal is ending. There is no *transition to the new era* but the *explosion of the edifice of unilinear time and of the time of history*.

In the change of era there is no room for the prefix 'post-'. Resurgence, re-existence, and self-governance imply the restitution of local temporalities. The idea of a universal time of history is reduced to its own size: a regional belief in abstract universals is integrated in the explosion of pluriversal temporalities and the temporalities of the "after human." The pluriversal that is emerging in the public spheres (independent from the states, the corporations and the official mass media), is one dimension of the change of era. The other is the explosion of the unipolar inter-state world order into the multipolar world order. The abstract universal category of the *Human* (and its sequel, the post-human, even in their cyborg and AI versions) is losing its grip in the explosion, the change of era in which pluriversality and multipolarity are not superseding the *Human* and the post-human but rather re-locating them, that is, recognizing

⁸ Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo and Maureen Quilligan, editors. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.

⁹ Kishore Mahbubani, *Can Asian Think? Understanding the Divide Between East and West*. London: Times Book, 1998. Hamid Dabashi, *Can Non-European Think?* London: Zed Books, 2015, Walter D. Mignolo, "Yes, We Can. (Introduction to Hamid Dabashi's book), *op.cit*, i-xxxvi.

their regional dimension. 'Nomadism' is caught in the co-existing turmoil and the political differential webs of the pluriversal and multipolar coming into being, and for the time co-existing with Western abstract universals.

Walter D Mignolo
Nov 2021

Introduction

In a casual conversation that we had with Prof. Walter Mignolo on the sidelines of an international conference in Hyderabad last year, we chanced upon a discussion of the posthuman in the context of our forthcoming book. This dialogue continued over email. He explained his main issue with the posthuman as, “I have difficulty in understanding that concept in general, beyond the concern of a small group of intellectuals in the North Atlantic. Therefore [it is] less clear what posthuman could mean in India. Or for that matter in South Africa or in Bolivia if there were conversations in those places on the posthuman.”¹ In another email on the same day, he continues his provocations against the concept of the posthuman where he says,

It was only relevant to some sectors of the Commonwealth [...] [e]specially [to] those who adhere to the postmodern ideological option or frame and believe that postmodernity is universal [...] But many, perhaps the majority of us, are out of that game, playing different ones. And that includes white feminists for white feminists never questioned humanity but wanted to be equal with white males. For the rest of the world, which are not yet human in different ways and scales, the posthuman seems to be another slap on the face.²

Our introduction begins, very significantly, in response to Mignolo’s *pretensions* of a *hominem indocte*, that is, the unskillful person. He was actually pushing us to *see* from our location as we had been reading the European and American schools of posthuman thinking. However, we had indeed also been reading others like Edouard Glissant, Hamid Dabashi, and Jasbir Puar. Our understanding of posthumanism springs from, among many others, Mignolo’s own critique of the enlightened human who is a white male, rational being suffering from colonial blindness, from the purity of blood syndrome, and from the civilizing mission.³ Further, Mignolo’s understanding of deep ecology in his conception of “*vincularidad*” (converging with the assemblage of Deleuze and Guattari, a poetics of relation of Edouard Glissant), splinters any scope of human

¹. In a personal communication with the editors, 08:04, May 16, 2020.

². In a personal communication with the editors, 19:43, May 16, 2020.

³. Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Duke University Press, 2000), 27, 49, 54.

privilege.⁴ Our stand on the posthuman, therefore, is distinctly de-centering of the human overall other non-human species and things. Indigenous cultural practices and episteme had already been living the organic multi-polar world view where the human and the non-human species and planetary forces are in a state of continuous pluri-vocal discursivity. Why, then, should we aspire to anything human from the tradition of enlightenment's humanism? Mignolo has seen it as the underside of modernity, which is dark, exploitative, and deeply violent. Our posthuman understanding is, therefore, not a slap on the face of our indigenous-cosmopolitan-postcolonial-feminist-mestiza-chicana-black-minoritarian thinking. Instead, it aims to problematize the human couched in the humanist tradition of their thinking. This other human is a new order of global posthuman that is not polite, not white, not rational, and surely not exploitative. It re-routes entanglements of the human and non-human into a non-European perspective on the human. This is another humanism, as one imagined by an Andean Indian, a Caribbean creole, and a Dalit Indian that highlights a nomadic ontology of spatiality, that is problematically hybrid, interstitial, or intersectional.

Mignolo's submission on *vincularidad* entails a relationship between all living beings with the land and the cosmos. He draws this concept from the Andean indigenous vision of the integral nature of all life forms and their material surroundings. Edouard Glissant's relation language is made of rocks; in which words, verb, noun, subject, object, are not fixed in their places, and "in Relation every subject is an object, and every object is subject."⁵ He also takes cognizance of the Deleuzean rhizome as "an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently. The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root."⁶

The present volume is an attempt to further the posthuman interrogations of nomad spatiality in general and explore especially the scope and ethics of an alternative way of thinking involved in a constant tussle with the institutional striations of the state, its so-called rationalism, its view of knowledge as universal truth and its monolithic thinking which normalizes any difference with its colonial blindness. It exposes that the non-human and the human other can be materially agency-laden and often non-governable in its potential

4. Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Duke University Press, 2018), 1.

Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Michigan University Press, 1997), xx and 11.

5. Glissant, *Poetics by Relation*, xx.

6. *Ibid.*, 11.

to territorialize through nomad space. Hence it is always a threat to the rational order of things and labeled as savage and barbaric. The non-human is about another way of being human/non-human in a relationality of “becoming” minoritarian, animal, woman, and marginal.⁷ This way of becoming is about horizontal networking of the non-human with its/his/her biodiversity and ecology in such a way that none is central, rather all are dots in a chain of processual sustainability which is not exploitative nor genocidal. It is how the indigenous peoples of the world continue to think today as they struggle against dire situations of dispossession, displacement, and modernization. In fact, it was modernity and coloniality that wrenched all humans out from any organic understanding of the planet in order to conquer, contain, and control other spatiality. Rigoberta Menchu, Vandana Shiva, and Gloria Anzaldúa, among many others, have invested their entire lives in bringing this world vision to the fore. The posthuman understanding is, therefore, not a dismissal nor a disapproval of the *humanitarian* rather a problematizing and contestation of *enlightened* humanism. Hence posthumanism is also decolonial from within the ethics of Mignolo’s concept of epistemic disobedience and Glissant’s right to opacity to build solidarities through different posthuman possibilities of another thinking.

Posthumanist Nomadisms affirms multiplicities, mutations, and materiality of human and non-human entanglements. It negates the privilege of fixity over mobility, of roots over routes, of tracings over maps, and of writing over memory.⁸ In addition to freeing itself of a binary bind, it also contests the vertical accumulations enabled by the neoliberal structures of global capitalism. Financial capital agglomerates in steep pyramids, factories are uprooted and re-rooted in a matter of days and, high-skilled individuals move up a professional conveyor belt as they repeatedly cross national frontiers at a meteoric pace. All movement is not nomadic. The hypermobility coded into the operative manuals of multinational entities or the mass mobilizations of colonial empires—multinational juggernauts from an earlier era—does not

⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 106.

⁸ Brian Massumi, “Translator’ Note,” in *A Thousand Plateaus* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xvi.

Rosi Braidotti, *The Nomadic Subject* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 14.

Massumi explains that “The French word tracer [...] has all the graphic connotations of “to draw” in English but can also mean to blaze a trail or open a road. “To trace” (d’ecalquer), on the other hand, is to copy something from a model.”

Rosi Braidotti evokes the sense of the French *tracer*-to draw, and not d’ecalquer, when she says, “the nomad stands for movable diversity, the nomad’s identity is an inventory of *traces*,” emphasis ours.

constitute a nomadic movement. The neo-nomadism of neoliberal global nomads lacks a nomadic consciousness because they never disavow their structural coordinates. The vertical movement of emigrants from the Global South to the Global North in search of better financial remuneration alone is not nomadic; it presents a vertical movement, not a vortical movement. Unlike a vortical movement, their relocation does not allow them to break away from the striated spaces where they remain at the bottom of the hierarchical socio-cultural-political pyramid.

The articles in the present volume examine the compositional multiplicities of nomadic movements. Collectively, they also foreground discursive traces of a system of ethical values that move away randomly from any steady and unified vision of the human and grapples instead with a non-unitary, nomadic view. Nomads include im - migrants - exiles - refugees - homeless - stateless-peoples, travelers - Voyagers - cartographers - mappers of counter-discourse, the dispossessed - displaced - disenfranchised, insiders-outsiders, border bearers, global - local dwellers, animals - birds - jungles - deserts - deltas - spaces-oceans, forgotten or reclaimed cultures - housekeeping manuals - languages - crops - paths, dacoits - criminals, and ever - increasing numbers of earth - others with whom we inhabit the planet. From the minoritarian nomadic perspective, a non-Oedipal relationship with space is implicit in such co-habitation. When we look closely, Oedipal semiotics are shot through with multiplicities and identity fracturing alterities. Non-Oedipal spatiality of margins, borders, and no-man's lands lies along the same plane as Oedipal territoriality. The nomad cannot inhabit the territory, and non-oedipal spatiality is unsuited to permanent occupation. Therefore, the nomad can / not remain, can/not locate, and can/not de/reterritorialize. As the unstable moorings of socio-political-economic structures elude them, the nomads slip in and out of interstices of unbelonging and schizophrenia. Their interstitial flights map a non-unitary discursivity wherein any structure sustaining verticalities and binaries collapse and wherefrom multi-directional lines of flight emerge.

The book contains fifteen articles that have gone through the process of double-blind peer review. The articles are organized into three sections called "Nomadic Assemblages," "Maps in Non-Oedipal Cartographies," and "Space-Time Montages." It was not a sheer coincidence that they could be organized thus. By making these sections, we put together a war machine that negates absorption into the interiority of sovereign territory. The sections are not an attempt at corralling the nomadic spirit into separate enclosures. Instead, the sections are bands of warriors that operate the violence of the hunted animal, dehumanized human others, and earth others. We struggle to sustain our nomadic sensibilities and sensitivities against forces considered to be of a normalizing order and consistency that threaten to condemn us to panoptical

imprisonments. The articles are in constant multi-vocal conversations with narratives that camp on the turbulent weathers of global transitory spaces. They charter real or intellectual turfs of interstitial/ rhizomatic nomadic epistemologies as political resistance to the exclusionary practices of a violently wired world.

The first section, “Nomadic Assemblages,” contains articles which conjure real nomad objects-as-subjects-as-objects which/who may be nomads—seeds, animals, and spaces as floating signifiers—open-ended and maze-like in the way they configure. Deleuzian assemblages are fundamentally territorial, but even as territoriality is configured through given assembled behaviors, amorphous assemblages emerge in chaotic, organized, escape passages.⁹ Birds generate assemblages with the territory they inhabit, through birdsong, mating dances, nests, and foraging expeditions.¹⁰ Similarly, other non-human and human inhabitants arrange themselves and other territorial elements in mutually specifying relations of assemblage. The articles in the first section examine some actualizations of such assemblages.

Didier Coste’s article tracks “ambiguous mobilities” across different disciplines, identities, and spatiality, either physically, metaphorically, or intellectually, through globalized or localized or anarchistic dispositions. He negotiates the exotic orientalist nomadism with its romanticism while also addressing the modern and contemporary notions of nomadism that hang between biographies, travel narratives, and real tales by nomads. His final aim is to read, especially the writing by Isabelle Eberhardt, a Russian Francophone expatriate in North Africa, through her continuous crossing over of religious, cultural, sexual, and linguistic borders. The uniqueness of this article lies in the blurring of imaginary and real frontiers of the state and the war machine, which are in a constant tussle in order to devour the other cannibalistically. Didier Coste’s article makes transversal connections with all the others as it carries out detailed excavations from anthropology, molding the excavated material by contemporary manoeuvrings of the concept of the nomad.

Java Singh, in her article, shows how amaranth, which was important in Aztec religious rituals, becomes and survives as a banned crop under Spanish colonization. The amaranth’s endurance helps it overcome and outlive colonization and the ensuing coloniality of power. However, any attempt at managing cultivation and promotion of the traditionally indigenous crop through modern technoscientific knowledge is the colonial mercantile equivalent of colonizing salvation missions. Amaranth has repeatedly refused to occupy the

⁹. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand*, 323.

¹⁰. *Ibid.*, 312.

time and space allocated to it, striking up new relationships instead, with the changing habits and habitats around it.

Olivia A. Kurajian tracks the Serengeti-Mara's ecosystem extensively to look at how animal routes crossing Tanzania and Kenya are affected by increasing human activity, such as erecting physical fences, drawing imaginary national borders, and deforestation. Conservation becomes a political ball in the courts of the pastoralists and capitalist farmers. The Serengeti-Mara ecosystem, however, cannot be managed without community-based local knowledge of sustainable co-habitation within the given milieu of that ecosystem.

Prantik Bannerjee configures the *adda* as a safe socio-political space for elite conversations among the upper caste Bengali *bhadrolok*, who were nonetheless colonized subjects. It allowed them to flaunt global and local knowledge in an identitarian fervor to aspire to belong so that they could be redeemed from their status of a colonized un-belonging. Decolonial thinking around modernity and the Bengal Renaissance sprung in this space. In postcolonial Bengal, the *adda* continued as a local marker of liberal thinking towards a global cosmopolitanism.

The last article in the section by Swagata Basu looks at the assemblage of language, profession, aspiration, and gender. The researcher, a native Bengali speaker, spent three months in Barcelona, conducting detailed interviews and focus group discussions with South Asian women immigrants, mainly from Bangladesh. The women who participated in the study reveal nomadic transversality as they attempt to reconcile traditional ways of living with the globalized spatiality into which they have been inserted.

The second section, entitled "Maps in Non-Oedipal Cartographies," takes cognizance of maps and their multiple entryways, as they work to move away from the anomalies of representation, thus allowing creative processes of perception and thinking. The map, as part of a rhizome, is detachable, reversible, and malleable, fostering exploration of unknown territories. Each article of this section deals with texts which overlap with real or imagined cartographies of travel narratives that lead the nomad in an outward or in an inward journey, though sometimes confusingly both.

Tonisha Guin's article on Atin Bandopadhyay's short story for children, "Atapurur Bagh," interrogates an elitist Bengali *bhadrolok* representation of the Sunderbans, through Radhamohon Babu's urban sensibilities. The story traverses the upper-caste widower's horrifying wanderings with a tiger and Bagharu, his domestic help's son, through the wilderness of the mangrove delta. Bagharu's opaque resistance to refuse to explain anything to an outsider completely dislodges Radhamohon Babu's pre-conceived notions of the indigenous peoples' habitat and their understanding of deep ecology. The story

maps the journey of Radhamohon Babu as an identitarian faux pas through nomad space.

Shelby Ward shows how Jean Arasanyagam's "Geography Lessons" and Ramya Chamalie Jirasinghe's "Sri Lankan Nights in L.A." become the very theoretical lens that serves to read the language and the geography of colonialism critically to reclaim authentic ethnic Sri Lankaness. The poems map the processes of authentic knowledge production, in relation to fluid identities and bodies, through myths and memories, as they write back to colonial geographies of the West during their travel.

A cartography of homelessness and errantry in the nomadic indulgences of the poetry of Nasir Kazmi is the theme of Hamza Iqbal's article. The unknown space is as much his home, as the new town across the border, which is becoming home through the transformative processes of memory. The article unravels the notions of homelessness through Harney and Moten and Edouard Glissant, as it leads them to join hands and converse with Nasir Kazmi.

Ruth Prakasam's article maps how, in an attempt to impress visiting travelers, a performance of colonial housekeeping was staged to showcase colonial standards of complete control of the domestic space. She examines the chinks in the authority of a Victorian housekeeping manual. Intending to evoke awe at domesticated compliance in the colonial home, the manual, instead, became the reason why many travelers left unimpressed by the domestic space. The article looks behind the veil of scripted performance to reveal the ways in which it diverged along rhizomatic lines under the gaze of adventurous women travelers.

Sushmita Sihwag reads Tsewang Yishey Pemba's novel, *White Crane, Lend Me Your Wings*, to dwell on the theme of exile both as a historical and real-life experience. Tibetan and Nyarong-Khampa identities in the face of a real or imaginary foreign remain a bone of contention for the self-critical mode of diasporic subjectivity. The article is continuously in conversation with Gilles Deleuze, Edward Said, and Dibyesh Anand on nomadic epistemologies, exile, and identity. This cartography of exile, diaspora, history, fiction, and identity negotiates with a deeply layered and complex model of self-critical subjectivity.

After dwelling on "Nomadic Assemblages" and "Maps in Non-Oedipal Cartographies," the third section takes stock of another kind of entanglement: a montage of narratives of journalism, tabloid, social media, television shows, and cinema. The concept of the montage is borrowed from the Deleuzean understanding of cinema, where he discusses the spacing of time and timing space, asserting that every image in space-time is interconnected to themselves as well as to the entire exteriority.

Significantly, the first article by Debra Castillo is about slow cinema where time is stretched through uneventful and trivial longshots. The article contends with the view that slow cinema only allows contemplation of beautiful shots to enable viewers to indulge in some quiet aesthetic pleasure. It argues, instead, that the slow cinema of Natalia Almada purposefully takes us back to the violence of killing time for boredom. The article deals with two filmic texts: a documentary, *El velador* (2011), and a feature film, *Todo lo demás* (2017). In both, long-drawn silences and slowness actually articulate characterizations of insignificant peoples whose stories otherwise, would not merit any attention.

Leigh McKagen interprets the television series of *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995-2001) as a reproductive tracing of the American imperial ideology. Hence the crew of the Voyager space refuses to “become” refugees and continue to call themselves castaways/ adventurers/ travelers/ explorers, only to colonize new territory and thereafter have the single agenda of going back home. The article holds that this pattern of storytelling has normalized the expansive ideologies of post-World War II American imperialism that presumes the superiority of the West.

The next article reads three texts alongside one another: a cover page of the travel magazine *Conde Nast*, an episode on black French footballers in a Trevor Noah television show, and a satirical cartoon by Pikaso on Indian migrants walking hundreds of kilometers back home after the lockdown due to the pandemic. Antara Mukherjee uses these three texts to take on cosmopolitanism as problematic and hypocritical. She dissects the use of selective codewords of universalism, charity, and political correctness by hegemonic forces for migrants and refugees or any other nomad to reveal the false empathy of elite cosmopolitanism.

The article by Nicole Crevar shows how the Chicana poet and activist Odilia Galván Rodríguez’s poem, “Poem 25 - Giving Voice” montages Gloria Anzaldúa’s conception of the politically charged mestiza consciousness on Facebook. Galván Rodríguez as a co-founder and contributor of marginalized groups such as “Poets Responding to SB 1070,” takes on the police enactment of Arizona Senate Bill 1070, which legitimizes discrimination against Mexican-Americans and immigrants living along the borderland. She uses the digital space to argue for solidarity and education through art as the solutions to combat these human rights violations.

Sanghita Sen and Indrani Mukherjee explore Tarun Bhaduri’s *The Cursed Chambal*, a journalistic narrative from 1960, Eduardo Galeano’s “Phoolan,” a vignette in *Mirrors* (2009), and Shekhar Kapur’s *Bandit Queen* (1995), a Bollywood film, in order to dwell on the deep ecology of the spatiality of the Chambal occupied by women dacoits, Putli and Phoolan. Deleuze and Guattari’s theorization of nomadism and Walter Mignolo’s agendas of location

of enunciation serve to expose the terror of the women-dacoit-infested Chambal as a War Machine performing its own nomadic maneuverings.

Visions of posthumanist nomadisms, which have emerged from this book, we hope, will serve as an exciting saddle-breaking experience for anyone who might want to ride (through) this wild nomadic terrain of the chaos of our times. Deep ecology, bioethics, technology studies, earth studies, and animal studies comprise the newer additions to the old disciplines of social sciences, the general sciences, and humanities of this machine-like assemblage of the war machine. Matters of literary aesthetics, fine arts, pure and applied sciences, critical theory, and even cultural studies have become wet with this Non-Oedipal spatiality of the global oceans and astronomical spaces, of local deltas, mountains, deserts, river valleys, and savannas, of nostalgic memories amidst a diasporic or exiled presence across continents, of ongoing nomadisms in media, in social media and in real territories, across unfathomable limits of borders, layers, and depths. The risk-taking agenda is, therefore, of paramount importance and implicates a dispensing with all old baggage of habits of language-based ideas and semiotic normals. Significantly, the outbreak of the pandemic has been an unexpected surprise attack from nomad space, so, as we cope with this new normal imposed upon us, we hope that most potential readers will be geared up to mount this war machine and dare to (un)learn the new.

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