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Special Issue: Symposium on Anti-racist and Anti-colonial Theorizing

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INTRODUCTION

The question of white supremacy in social theory, what counts as knowledge and methods, and who counts as a theorist has gained growing attention in the social sciences since the 1970s to in recent years. The aim has been to challenge the Western "epistemic structures" of social theory that disregard certain forms of knowledge and methodology (Christians, 2005; Go, 2020; Oakley, 1988; Lorde, 2015). In this special issue, in line with our anti-colonial praxis, we encouraged papers that criticized colonial representation, structure and knowledge systems, and we prioritized southern/marginalized/silenced perspectives for offering alternative methods to examine social issues. We invited contributions from academics, activists, and underrepresented scholars, including racialized, Indigenous, and disabled scholars from all world regions.

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The texts that have been curated in this issue closely examine the damages caused by Eurocentric systems of power, and seek to challenge them, while highlighting mechanisms of power that are arguably hidden within these systems. These mechanisms of power are sometimes portrayed as *benign* at surface level, but the harmful and treacherous undertones are soon exposed, upon a deeper analysis — as seen in the case of Hall's work, for example.

For example, Laura Hall, in her contribution, exposes the ways in which settler colonialism operates and seeks to normalize its dominance. Hall takes a critical look at how horror movies operate as metaphorical representations of settler colonialism and an attempted erasure of Indigenous peoples. Hall makes connections between horror movies that are typically produced as a form of entertainment for public consumption, and the literal horrific experiences that Indigenous peoples face as a result of settler colonialism and ongoing violence. Hall's work invites folks to think critically about what constitutes entertainment, as well as the implications of harmful stereotyping of Indigenous people through contemporary movies. Hall demonstrates that upon a deeper analysis of some of our so-called everyday forms of entertainment, colonialist structures are reinforced in a different medium. This is indicative of the urgency to disrupt settler

colonial storytelling, by re-visiting common entertainment. The genre of horror movies is one example, as it reveals that there is much more to these stories which are often consumed for viewing pleasure.

Representations of Canada continue to portray this settler colonial state as benevolent and celebrated for its multiculturalism. This idea is discussed in Annie Chau's contribution, which explores theorizations of citizenship and nationhood, through the lens of a Vietnamese refugee, who navigates her humanity through a racist and patriarchal climate, encouraging readers to re-think the concepts of citizenship and humanity in the West. Chau takes a critical look at the histories of Vietnamese folks in Canada, revealing that Canada is not as benevolent as it is often portrayed. For Chau, the defined rules for citizenship value some peoples' humanness while excluding others. The citizenship categorization places refugees in a precarious situation as they live within the margin of exclusion and inclusion. The influx of Vietnamese refugees in the 1980s is seen as a representation of Canada's humanitarianism. However, Chau reveals the complexities that exist and are often ignored.

In alignment with the theme of challenging Western structures and unsettling their dominance, authors Felipe Brito Macedo and Ana Beatriz Martins explore how Western knowledge systems perpetuate the exclusion of marginalized social theorists. This system functions to inhibit the valuable knowledge that non-Western scholars possess, thereby maintaining the structures of Western powers which have long sought to establish their dominance over "other" kinds of knowledge, or to borrow, Julian Go's (2020) question, who counts as theorists, and by which standards? In order to reveal how eurocentrism functions to stifle knowledge creation and theory that involves *all*, instead of a select few, Macedo and Martins present Guerreiro Ramos (Ramos, 1981) as an example of a social theorist who has

contributed immensely to social theory, yet has been dismissed as one whose work does not afford recognition as such. The authors contest this, arguing that the breadth and depth of Ramos' knowledge, as demonstrated through his work, is evidence of his impact in social theory. Thus, merely labelling his work as post-colonial reproduces epistemological hierarchies, which maintain the exclusion of underrepresented scholars from knowledge production.

Also offering a unique perspective that challenges Western knowledge systems, Stephanie Fearon, in her article, discusses her experiences as a Black woman in Canada, and resists the influences of Western knowledge systems which tend to downplay and discourage unique ways of knowing— in this case, Black motherhood as an art-informed research methodology and as an anticolonial tool to create space for new knowledge and to disrupt the dominance of Western-centric power. Embedded in Fearon's piece is ~~a~~ depiction of storytelling which explores the real-life experiences of Black folks through a dialogue between the research participants and herself, and the characters of a particular story—all of which are legitimate sources of knowledge. This encourages a re-think of the writing style and qualitative research methodologies of Western frameworks, promoting non-Western styles, knowledge, and distinct methodologies. Fearon claims that by redefining inquiry processes and representation, the method can enhance understanding of the human condition and produce knowledge that is more accessible to diverse audiences.

To end, each of the papers in this issue encourages one to question colonial structure, knowledge and representations, along with providing alternative ways of thinking and producing knowledge.

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WELCOME TO THE HORROR SHOW. SETTLER COLONIALISM, GENDER AND THE HORROR FILM.

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Settler colonialism is everyday violence, so immense and at times almost unfathomable, but so central to all that structures everyday life on Turtle Island (North America), that it demands our attention and social justice commitments. Intent on erasing Indigenous Peoples, settler colonialism is an intertwined system, dependent on gender and sexual violence (Finley, 2011). The real horrors of colonization are obscured but the horror film tells us that something is very wrong here. At the same time, horror films tend to reinforce settler colonialism, disappearing or appropriating Indigenous people and cultures, while critical theory dealing with the genre rarely deals with Indigenous Peoples.

The purpose of this short paper is to analyze horror as a series of stories that challenge, in some ways, but also uphold, in others, those colonial systems of power that expand like monstrous tendrils. The horror film, more than any other genre, provides a glimpse—an open window or attic door—into the horrors of settler colonial violence, but it also rests on a promise of white settler family and community survival, and the erasure of Indigenous Peoples from present and future worlds.

Certainly, horror has been deemed more progressive, in many ways, than other genres, disrupting as it does the everyday, providing opportunity for subversion of gender, sexual/heteronormative norms (Freeland, 2000). In stories of the cursed towns of Haddonfield

(*Halloween)* and Woodsboro (*Scream)*, where the Shape and Father Death, never leave, settlers are haunted—forever, it seems—by endless cycles of violence. In *Halloween Kills (2021)* the townspeople make fun of survivors of Myers' violence. They are killed for both memorializing (a form of denying the systemic nature of the haunting) and for denying. They literally drink while Michael Myers goes on a killing spree. A critique of the civilized becoming savage, comes up again in *Halloween Kills*, in which a group of townspeople take turns stabbing and shooting and beating Michael Myers. The town of Haddonfield, the town of Westboro, are not so civilized, it would seem. In Woodsboro, the settler town that *Scream (1996; 2022)* is set in, youth gather to drink and party and are picked off when they let their guard down. Their towns have no happy endings, which is to say, they are unsettled—almost. In some ways, this makes these films more interesting, but as with the survivors of *Zombieland (2009; 2019)* the commitment ultimately is to the continuance of white settler society, now fully actualized as victims of an apocalypse, readied to replace the Indigenous presence. However, the monsters of *Halloween* and *Scream* reinforce the gendered violence of settler colonialism, so any assessment of their role as disruptor is complicated. In some ways, horror can be seen to unsettle settler colonialism by revealing that the small settler town, the frontier-village, or the suburban street, are not really settled—not safely, not well—and never really will be.

Horror unsettles by making monsters who are both Other (Michael Myers brings reminders of pagan spirits to the settler town of Haddonfield) and core to the systems they disrupt (Myers is also a misogynist killer who was born in Haddonfield). The horror genre can be re-read as reflective of the violence of settler colonialism which encompasses gender/sexual violence as core to its workings. Horror disrupts, as Michael Myers brings an unexplained (and therefore terrifying) need to eradicate the safety of the white settler frontier-town of Haddonfield,

again and again. The structures of the town—policing, hospitals, even fire fighters—can do nothing to stop Myers. In *Halloween Kills*, Myers kills as many people as he can get his hands on, including the entire fire department. There is a moment of wondering if he is the ultimate disruptor, but the fact that Myers' first ever kill was his half-naked sister makes him a familiar monster, one rooted in settler colonial misogyny. Horror may disrupt, in some ways, but it is still produced and consumed by audiences who are mired in a colonial system that works by obscuring its many layers and workings. Indigenous people are disappeared from Haddonfield, and like so many horror films, the latest films seem intent on punishing Black women in particular. Black women do not survive the latest *Halloween* trilogy, or any of the series of films. The Final Girl is always Laurie, and in the end, she is also a paradox of adherence to law enforcement, then vigilantism, mental health struggles, then 'healing' arcs, non-heteronormativity, and then heteronormativity. Settler colonialism intertwined with anti-Black racism and misogyny is reinforced most strikingly it seems, when the Final Girls end up with their law enforcement male partners, as both *Scream 5 (2022)* and *Halloween Ends (2022)* elude to.

When reframed through a settler colonial studies lens, in which the disappearance of Indigenous Peoples is resisted, and the survival of white settler familial structures is disrupted, the genre takes on new meaning/s. The Civ/Sav construct of human development, (see *Green Inferno, 2013)* is still embedded in films like *Halloween Kills (2021)* as the audience is forced to ask if 'the mob' (survivors of Michael Myers' original 1978 massacre included) are 'just as bad as Michael himself' as they hunt and then attempt to kill him, rather than allow law enforcement to take him into custody. We can also revisit the Indian Burial Ground trope yet again as *Pet Sematary (2019)* kept it alive. Fulfilling similar objectives—to freeze Indigenous people in the

past, as a naturally disappearing race, intent on supporting the new owners of the land, the white settler families who they help (like the family of *Poltergeist* films)—the appearance of fake Indigenous totems in *IT Chapter 2 (2019)* used to defeat the shape-shifting Pennywise, is there to remind us that the survival of white settler towns and suburbs is the ultimate happy ending in horror. Even as daily life is disrupted, the frontier survives.

Ultimately, the survival of the white settler family, the village, suburban community, or small town, is central to American horror. Settler colonialism is about systemically eradicating Indigenous Peoples and land rights, in order to replace with white settler society (in a short summary of the concept) and it is also about upholding the heteropatriarchal family that gives body and form to its systemic nature—it is a "structure, not an event" (Wolfe, 2006). At the same time, cheering on the monster—the Michael Myers or Freddy Krueger or Ghostface figures—isn't all that subversive when the gendered and sexualized violence (Michael's first kill is of his sister while she sits half-naked in front of a mirror) are understood as pillars in settler colonial systems. Horror may be "preoccupied with issues of sexual difference and gender (Grant, 1996, p.1)" but this does not make it necessarily subversive. Settler society is shown its own poisoned, violent core, but on the other, we are ultimately made to cheer for its survival.

The power of the Indian Burial Ground trope lies in its ability to centre and make victim the white settler family. The Creed family of *Pet Sematary (2019)* is there to settle the land as a natural progression in the grand scheme of things, after the Indigenous people have run off. The land is frightening, the spirits of place are frightening. The story is about many aspects of settler colonial society, and the ways that its families are never quite safe, though they are also never quite undone. Still, the family is what we are convinced we must cheer for. The appropriation of

the Wendigo figure in the latest *Pet Sematary* pits the white settler family against the evil Indigenous (spirit) Other. Tuck and Ree (2013) argue that within mainstream American horror, there is a preoccupation "with the hero, who is perfectly innocent, but who is assaulted by monstering or haunting just the same" (p.640.").

In *Scream 5 (2022)* the killers are mocked by their own self-referential dialogue. It is a film that calls out the violence of online communities, who use forums like 4chan to organize (Ling, 2022). The killers, an older man and his (underage) online girlfriend, are written to be hated. He's a symbol of misogynist online life, attempting to kill Sidney for his terrible movie because 'nobody understands fans'. In *Halloween Kills,* Michael Myers returns as a patriarchal force, killing women, particularly Black women, in brutal ways, and murdering two gay men before displaying their bodies in mockery. Ghostface and Myers remind their towns that they are never safe, never quite right. In the end, though, Woodsboro always seems to survive its own violent underbelly. The Final Girl may survive, as Sidney does, again and again, but her survival comes in order to ensure that the town and the families therein, are constant.

At the very least, Michael Myers and Ghostface provide some rupture of the fabric of the safe little suburb or smalltown of the settler colonial imagination. It certainly feels like a moment to cheer when Melissa Barrera's Sam Carpenter stabs the main killer 20-something times (though the kind of cute reappearance of the original Billy Loomis character in a helpful dad moment undermines this moment of empowerment slightly). Another recent film reinforces the importance of settler colonial theory in horror analysis. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (2022)* presents the viewer with a white supremacist vision of Leatherface and his kin (a woman named Mrs. MC who lectures the viewer about the Confederate Flag and calls a doomed young Black

character ‘boy’ before dying). Leatherface even chainsaws his way through Sally Hardesty, who returns to hunt him down only to die in a mockery of an original Final Girl. Texas is redrawn emphatically as a landscape for white settlers when Leatherface mows down a busload of young people, mainly Black women, who perpetuate a kind of reverse invasion fantasy. As ‘gentrifiers’ these young, diverse people are the real colonizers, we are led to believe, before the chainsaws start whirring. This fear, of reverse colonization, is a particular trope of settler colonial horror writing, common in films like Dracula (see Arata, 1990) and apocalyptic zombie films. Stranger still, are the ways that the Leatherface and his family are constantly redrawn as a kind of ‘Indigenous’ presence in rural Texas. Codified as Indigenous, through stereotypical uses of animal skins, teeth, fur (Clover, 1992, p.156) and of course behaviour within the construct of the ‘savage’, namely killing and cannibalism. There are no actual Indigenous people left in the Texas landscape, so Leatherface is a stand-in, punishing as he does nosy, snobby urban people who are the real colonizers.

My argument is essentially that the horror film, and critical scholarship focused on the horror, are worth re-examining in order to disrupt settler colonial storytelling. Settler colonialism is the real nightmare, and while horror disrupts the fabric from time to time, the genre could do much more, to tear at the fabric of our storied world.

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CITIZEN, HUMAN, OTHER: WITNESSING AND REMEMBERING THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEE IN CANADA

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NATIONS

The western nation knows the human only as its citizen (Kalu, 2017). It decides who can be a citizen and is able to access the human rights it affords to its citizens alone (Kalu, 2017). Without this membership, a person can be refused these so-called 'universal' array of human rights, as national interests are prioritized over concerns regarding inclusion (Nguyen, 2020). Even with legal recognition, a person's belonging and inclusion to the nation can continue to be challenged. Under the racialized, gendered, and capitalist citizenship regime of the western nation, it is critical to ask both *who* counts as human and *when* does a person's humanness count.

With an anti-imperial and anti-colonial approach to citizenship and humanity, I begin this paper by examining the dominant conception of human-as-citizen to turn away from him and to turn towards the human-as-refugee, in particular the Vietnamese refugee in Canada. I argue that the ongoing struggle for her humanity requires a witnessing and remembering/forgetting of her beyond the nation, wrestling these acts of knowledge production away from national politics of recognition (Coulthard, 2014). Concluding with the provocative scholarship of Viet Thanh Nguyen (2016), I ask, what if to assert the refugee's humanity, we must assert her inhumanity too. How might recognizing human participation and complicity in 'inhumane' violence transform what we know about humanity altogether? This paper's very title "Citizen, Human, Other" is inspired by Trinh T. Minh-ha's (1989) *Woman, Native, Other*, a seminal text that challenged such constructed binaries of human identity.

THE CITIZEN-HUMAN

Citizenship exemplifies the "simultaneous individualization and totalization" of the modern nation-state" (Foucault, 1982, p. 785). There are ramifications for social justice especially in liberal democracies, as Kalu (2017) asserts "citizenship offers a placeholder for the ideal of justice for all" (p. 1). A citizen is understood as one who can claim rights through the nation because he is recognized by the nation as a citizen. This national recognition is so important, compelling people to fight and die for it (Nguyen, 2016). Citizenship, then, distributes justice firstly in the name and interest of the state, not of the citizen (FitzGerald, 2017). A nation's regime of citizenship reveals much about the relationships of power inside its borders. At the pinnacle of citizenship sits the national, "exalted above all others as the embodiment of the quintessential characteristics of the nation and the personification of its values, ethics, and civilizational mores" (Thobani, 2007, p. 3). He is entitled to all the discursive and material privileges of the state, for he most purely represents and is represented by the nation, embodying the tenets of (neo)liberal democracy, such as reason, competence, and autonomy. Despite the white supremacist patriarchy of Canada (Thobani, 2007), the immigrant presents Canada "as a torchbearer of rights, freedom, and democracy" against other nations (Nguyen, 2020, p. 85). Concealing the racism and sexism of its multiculturalism (Thobani, 2007), Canada positions itself as exalted, "able to rise above other, less democratic nations, in order to maintain a sense of national identity" (Nguyen, 2020, p. 85). Multiculturalism as a cosmopolitan value both domesticates difference (Nguyen, 2016) and erases difference all together, leaving racialized and gendered others outside citizenship despite promises and presentations of 'inclusion' and 'recognition' (Coulthard, 2014; FitzGerald, 2017; Volpp, 2017).

THE REFUGEE-HUMAN

The Vietnamese refugee persists as a productive figure for the Canadian state and its construction of humanity (Nguyen, 2020). Between 1979 and 1980, 60,000 Vietnamese refugees formed the largest intake of refugees ever into Canada (Nguyen, 2020). Vietnamese refugees were stripped of their humanity by a dividing Vietnam and gifted it again by a gracious Canada. The very identity of the refugee is formed through human rights: "Refugee collective identity gains definition in relation to the presence or absence of human rights" (Nguyen, 2020, p. 83). But Nguyen (2020) says that neither presence nor absence is total; the refugee perpetually oscillates between humanity and inhumanity. That a refugee might not ever become human shows the 'stickiness' of her 'refugeeness', establishing the ground for a perpetual indebtedness crucial to citizenship. Nguyen (2012) writes:

> The gift of freedom emerges as a site at which modern governmentality and its politics of life (and death) unfolds as a universal history of the human, and the figuration of debt surfaces as those imperial remains that preclude the subject of freedom from being able to escape a colonial order of things. (p. 5)

This debt coincides with narratives of bootstrapping and stereotypes of Asian immigrants as obedient, subservient, grateful, and insular (Day, 2016; Kimoto, 2018; Roshanravan, 2018; Wu, 2018). The model minority is not made invisible, rather, her visibility is made useful. As she is included, *tenuously*, into a nation's citizenry (Thobani, 2007), she is given an important responsibility: to produce the story of *her* success as a story of *Canada's* success. But her story is not entirely reliable. She remains ambivalent as an 'incomplete' Canadian (Miki, 2004; Nguyen, 2016). She is a perpetual subject-in-formation decades after departure, arrival, and naturalization.

WITNESSING AND REMEMBERING/FORGETTING

If through the Canadian state, humanity is left undone for the Vietnamese refugee, what opportunities lie beyond 'inclusion' in or 'recognition' by the nation then? Human rights demand a critical re-articulation. Kurasawa (2009) and Nguyen (2016) argue that witnessing and remembering/forgetting are necessary for human rights. How might these acts be re-articulated outside the nation and be re-oriented towards humanity? Kurasawa (2009) develops witnessing as a dialectical binding between being 'seen' and 'seeing' beings, an "ethico-political labour, an arduous working-through" (p. 95). One such labour or task-peril she presents is remembering *against* forgetting. Nguyen (2016) posits acts of memory as acts of identity formation too, for "those who represent themselves are also saying… remember us" (Nguyen, 2016, p. 41). Identity, human rights, and memory are hence intimately connected.

Memory is powerfully wielded, so remembering is both needed and problematic (Nguyen, 2016; Simon, 2013). Of the Vietnam War, what is remembered is the effort of the Canadian government and the Canadian people hailed around the world as the gold standard response to refugee crises (Nguyen, 2020). What is forgotten is Canada's role as the United States' chief arms dealer, "producing traditional and chemical weapons that enabled the fighting and killing of millions of Vietnamese civilians" (Nguyen, 2020, p. 86). Instead of a national memory, Nguyen (2016) calls for a just memory. "A just memory constantly tries to recall what might be forgotten, accidentally or deliberately, through self-serving interests, the debilitating effects of trauma, or the distraction offered by excessively remembering something else" (p. 17). Nguyen's (2016) articulation of remembering though is not in opposition to forgetting like Kurasawa's (2009). A just forgetting is as necessary as a just remembering for reconciliation to take place (Nguyen, 2016).

If freedom is a constant struggle (Davis, 2016), so must be remembering. How is a memory made memorable then? Nguyen's (2016) articulation of Toni Morrison's rememory is poignant. A rememory "inflicts physical and psychic blows; it is a sense that the past has not vanished but is solid as a house, present in all trauma and malevolence" (p. 65). But this is not to say memory should be all about pain or victimhood, particularly in focusing on refugee subjectivities. Entrenchment into victimhood is an obliterating kind of disremembering, "of being simultaneously seen and not seen" (Nguyen, 2016, p. 63). Seeing and remembering the refugee *only* as a victim is the problem. While this permits her temporary 'inclusion' in and 'recognition' by the white male nation, it ultimately obscures her agency, her humanity. What is possible, then, in re-imagining her humanity?

IMAGINATIONS

As I stated in this paper, the centering of 'the human' in the figure of the citizen and in the figure of the refugee is fraught with struggles against the nation-state's production of witnessing and remembering/forgetting. Nationalism is identity formation from the top-down. Alternatively, Nguyen (2016) compels us to remember beyond our own humanity and even the other's humanity, "[to] a shift toward an ethics of recognition, of seeing and remembering how the inhuman inhabits the human" (p. 19). He asserts that centering "humanity is [a] fundamental misrecognition" (p. 91) that leads us to believe inhumanity is an exception rather than a condition for humanity. What could happen if we turn to our inhumanity instead, acknowledging its co-existence with our humanity? Recognition of our inhumanity gives us the freedom to re-make ourselves more wholly and apart from the nation and its binary associations of *victim-good* and *perpetrator-bad*, those that especially accompany dominant notions of race and gender. Like

many Vietnamese refugees in Canada, my family members were once Chinese migrants to Vietnam, drawn to the nation because of the economic opportunities presented by its French colonizers. Purchasing property from France, they profited from these imperial efforts, disremembering the displacement and dispossession of people who were there before them. They were perhaps emboldened to do so because of their roots in China, a nation with its own complex history of imperial violence and rule across the Asian continent. Their boldness now has been tempered by years of hardship in settlement and low-waged employment in Canada and yet, to this day, my parents keep copies of these defunct deeds in a tattered briefcase. The human must be conceptualized along with her shadow, the inhuman, to reconcile the past, live in the present, and imagine the future. She, then, can be a figure whose humanness remains unknown and beyond western and even eastern nations.

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FAR BEYOND POST-COLONIALISM: GUERREIRO RAMOS' CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL THEORY

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THE "TENDENCY" TO POST-COLONIALISM.

When academics think about "post-colonial theory", they most likely point to the academic trend of postcolonial studies that flourished in the 80s with the publication of Said's *Orientalism*. It shows how there is no neutral intellectual activity, and that power hierarchies are always at work (Azim, 2001). Two decades later, post-colonialism has developed into an academic discipline, including debates on a variety of subjects. It highlights the pervasive power of the empire's legacies, and how our knowledge is not untouched by these colonial thoughts (Go, 2016). Despite this trend of thinking about post-colonial studies in the 80s with Said, Spivak and Bhabha, some authors have been pointing out that these figures are the second wave of post-colonialism, and that there was a first wave with the participation of Fanon, Césaire, Cabral, and others (Go, 2016). The conceptualization of post-colonialism, as well as which studies can be categorized under this category, is even more complex: when is the post-colonial? Who is the post-colonial? And what is post-colonial? (Childs & Williams, 1997).

Social theorists tend to approach postcolonialism as "little else than a trendy fad lacking substance. At best, in their view, postcolonial theory dangerously celebrates the cultural and particular at the expense of the material and universal" (Go, 2016: X). At the same time, authors that never claimed the status of post-colonial thinkers have been classified in this category. We ask: in which sense is it convenient for colonialism if we create and feed such classification? How colonialist is it to classify every south theorist as a post-colonialist? Who counts as a theorist?

We aim to answer the first question above, analysing the processes by which some authors are being rediscovered and labelled as post-colonialists. And for that, we use the hypothesis that there is a convenient Northern tendency to label marginalized scholars as anti-racists, feminists, and anti-colonials, instead of calling them social theorists. In this article, we bring Guerreiro Ramos as a study case. Other questions come from this analysis, but unfortunately – due to the limits of this paper – we will not explore them here.

GUERREIRO RAMOS

Our argument in this part of the article is that Guerreiro Ramos' theories are not about the geopolitical periphery and colonized societies. Instead, reflections aimed to build a global framework for the social sciences based on the explicit knowledge of their constraints and, for that, it also exposed the constraints of the theories elaborated in central geopolitical contexts (Ramos, 1981). Ramos claimed that his last book (1981) was the most finished form of ideas on social theory he had been expressing since the 1950s. However, it was not the centre of his early writings, which addressed themes related to local context such as Brazilian development, the Brazilian political conjuncture, racism, and the critique of national sociology. By studying these topics, he faced distorted interpretations due to the imitative attitude of many of the peripheral

intellectuals. Therefore, he elaborated a methodology of critical assimilation of foreign knowledge, which would become a social theory about the modern human being living between the risk of alienating massification and the affirmation of a critical individuality aware of its social milieu and political will.

Although Guerreiro Ramos is recognized as a precursor of post-colonial studies and an eminent diasporic Black intellectual (Filgueiras, 2012), we aim to go beyond these definitions that limit Ramos to a specific and smaller shelf of the social sciences. Ramos's theory was based on the explanation of his locus of enunciation as a Black man in a peripheral country, marked by the colonialist mentality.

However, he did not intend to theorise about this locus, but from it. For him, universalism and totality in the social sciences are only possible when the sociologist's starting point was recognized. According to him, sociology is an epistemological habit engaged in the self-determination of individuals, groups, and social systems (Ramos, 1958). Ramos went beyond a critique of the importation of alienated models of thought and built a theoretical and conceptual basis. His key concept is the universalization of criticism, of the human capacity to identify its conditionings of life in society, and consequently, of its thoughts and worldviews. According to him, criticism is the ability to uncover the constraints and then condition them according to options reflected for future projects. There would be nothing more human than this ability to project on known bases and thus change the environment itself (Azevedo & Albernaz, 2006).

These abstract conceptualizations, which we consider the author's most complete contribution to social theory, were carried out with the proposition of the sociology of

organisation. However, his idea of aspiration for social totalities foresaw that his proposal would be a contribution to the social sciences in general. He saw the social sciences in an integrated way, as biases of interpretation and action in the social world (Ramos, 1981). It was mainly in the study of Brazilian society (50s-60s), however, that Ramos began to develop his more complete vision of the social sciences. Meantime, he has consolidated decisive contributions to the sociology of knowledge, and the studies of race relations, which go far beyond the realisation of the peripheral condition (Bariani, 2008). The personal experience of being a Black Brazilian and the reflections that he made about it are driving forces of his thinking about the sociologies of development and knowledge and give him a perspective of a peripheral author. He considered that in Brazil there were three lineages or paradigms to think about the African diaspora. The first treated Blacks as an object and as an exogenous element of the national society. Throughout the book cited, Ramos uses the term "the black" ("o negro", in Portuguese) with a several distinct meanings, usually attached to an analogous and antithetical meaning to the term "the white" ("o branco", in Portuguese). The three most important are: (i) the two population contingents that move to Brazil in opposite conditions of exploiter and exploited; (ii) the stereotyped imaginaries formed in the Brazilian population about each contingent, always transferring to "the negro" the worst ethical and aesthetic stigmas associated with phenotypic characteristics; (iii) the individual and collective awareness of social positions determined by skin colour. Blacks were a subject yet to be constituted and would be able to do so only if acculturated from their African heritage and assimilated into white society. The second considered Blacks a constitutive part of the national reality but did not foresee emancipation actions to eliminate the dehumanizing condition created by slavery. The third was a form of action: there are concrete and reflexively oriented attitudes toward emancipation (Ramos, 1957; Shiota, 2014).

Ramos understood the denial of the Black matrix in the national formation as a consequence of the colonial mentality that remained not only in the white elites but also in the mestizos (eager to identify themselves phenotypically and culturally with the whites) and in Blacks (who would lack mechanisms to rehumanize themselves). This imitative attitude and uncritical assimilation of foreign ideas, ethics and aesthetics was not limited to racism. In our political thought and our social sciences, the colonial mentality would lead to borrowing foreign narratives to the Brazilian reality.

Against this attitude, he proposed *the sociological reduction*, the main concept of his sociology of knowledge. More than a conceptualization of the social sciences in the periphery, it is an attitudinal proposition for sociologists. The reductive attitude presupposes: (i) a social scientist's commitment to the society in which he is inserted; (ii) a non-refraining from considering universal aspects related to scientific practice (such as the socio-historical context) and not innate; (iii) that any other foreign contribution must be subsidiary and not faced as a superior parameter; (iv) and the reductive attitude also depends on the *cultural phase* of a society, it depends on the progressive understanding of human self-determination and the interdependence of the conditionings of social life.

CONCLUSION

If Ramos did not recognize himself as a post-colonial author, instead, as a sociologist; if his works did not address a geopolitical or post-colonial periphery, but strive to build a global framework; if the author did not speak about his place of speech; and if he aimed to build a conceptual and theoretical foundation not only for sociology, but for the social sciences, what makes him different from any Northern author to be called postcolonial? This article aimed to

precisely analyse this process in which authors from the South, despite not having as their main goal in their work to talk about the post-colonial scenario, are often labelled as post-colonialists.

We argue that this labelling process is a mechanism to reproduce epistemological hierarchies. It tends to categorize and classify the knowledge to take it back in a specific position in their architecture of knowledge. The Global North does not assimilate the knowledge and critics produced by the South integrating it with its own knowledge. Instead, they classify this knowledge in a specific position, as "critics" or "postcolonial claims", and they remain the main knowledge, not being affected by others. In this sense, the global north remains the main source of knowledge, and the global south remains only one more critic.

Ramos is an interesting case study because in addition to symbolizing this whole process in a particular way and being one of the authors who has been subjected to this "tendency" (Cavalcanti & Alcadipani, 2016), Ramos already pointed out a way for us to think about it. He reiterates that self-determination and critical awareness are necessary for self-improvement. As individuals, we should incorporate the reductive attitude into our everyday life, and work on our sociological habitus to always identify our position when facing groups and social systems that make up our historical environment. In the world today, it would mean – maybe – to be suspicious about the Northern tendency to isolate us in post-colonial, anti-racists, and feminists sections, programs, departments, and courses. And to challenge the epistemological hierarchies imposed by the Western forces — in this sense — is to self-call us social theorists.

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AT MUMMY'S FEET: A BLACK MOTHERWORK APPROACH TO ARTS-INFORMED INQUIRY.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing, dancing, drawing, spittin' rhymes, and other artistic expressions have long offered us, Black mothers, opportunities to reaffirm our humanity amid oppression. Art is a freeing space where we tell our stories, wield our agency, and heal our spirit. We leverage "the arts to help sustain who we are, as we recall and (re)member in the midst of chaos what it means to thrive" (Love, 2019, p. 111). Black women researchers, like Venus Evans-Winters (2019, 2021), Robin M. Boylorn (2021), and Adwoa Ntozake Onuora (2015) use art to reconceptualise conventional inquiry and centre Black mothers' collective knowledge. An arts-informed research methodology invites us to retain the parts of ourselves that Western forms of inquiry and anti-Blackness have long sought to erase. Eurocentric notions of knowledge production valourizes objectivity, neutrality, and autonomy in research processes (Toliver, 2021). In the afterlives of slavery, academia has long shunned creative methodologies that embody Black mothers' storied lives, cultural values, and practices. Western approaches to inquiry continue to dictate who is considered a researcher and how research should be conducted and represented.

In this essay, I advance an arts-informed research methodology grounded in Black motherwork theory. I begin this paper by contextualizing Black motherwork theory within a Canadian setting. I, then, briefly explore Black Canadian mothers' deeply rooted tradition of using artistic methodologies to articulate our everyday experiences, histories, and dreams. Through a creative non-fiction short story, I showcase how a group of Black Canadian mothers who are adult literacy learners living in Toronto engaged in a research project guided by an arts-

informed Black motherwork methodology. In so doing, I highlight the methodolgy's possibilities and limitations. The paper concludes with a series of reflective questions challenging scholars to reimagine research processes in ways that centre Black mothers' artistic traditions.

BLACK MOTHERWORK IN CANADA

Canadian scholars Andrea O'Reilly (2004), Adwoa Ntozake Onuora (2015), and Notisha Massaquoi and Njoki Nathani Wane (2007) documented the preserving, nurturing, and healing aspects of Black motherhood. O'Reilly (2004), for example, explored Black mothering as articulated in Morrison's novels, essays, speeches, and interviews. O'Reilly (2004) illustrated how Morrison builds upon Black women's experiences of and perspectives on motherhood to theorize a Black motherwork that is, in terms of maternal identity, role, and action, radically different from the motherwork prescribed in the dominant culture. Black motherwork understands that when our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery and collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice (hooks, 1991).

Black motherwork, according to Morrison (see O'Reilly, 2004), Collins (2000), and other Black feminists, comprises four interdependent components: (1) site of power, (2) motherline, (3) homeplace, and (4) collective mothering. Indeed, Black motherwork is an act of resistance, essential to Black mothers' fight against racism and sexism, and propels our ability to achieve well-being for ourselves, our children, and our community (O'Reilly, 2004). Motherline, which centres communal learning and cultural knowledge systems, and homeplace, a site where the agency of Black mothers and their children is nurtured, are fundamental to Black motherwork in Canada (Fearon, 2020; O'Reilly, 2004). Black motherwork theory conceptualizes mothers to

include community mothers, othermothers, aunties, and grandmothers (amongst others) who work and care for children who may or may not be biologically or legally theirs (Fearon, 2020).

ARTS-INFORMED RESEARCH

Black Canadian mothers, such as the late poet Dr. Louise Bennett-Coverley (2009) and lauded theatre interventionist d'bi.young anitafrika (2007) draw on the arts to engage our children and communities in creative inquiries on Black life. Echoing Black women scholars, like Hartman (2020), Toliver (2020, 2021) and Evans-Winters (2019, 2020), I decry the power hierarchies and oppressive discourses inherent in Western research methodologies. Hartman (2020) explains that sociologists, historians, scholars, and others who uphold Western knowledge systems and anti-Blackness "fail to discern the beauty and they see only the disorder, missing all the ways Black [mothers] create life and make bare need into an arena of elaboration" (p. 23).

Dillard, along with her colleagues Abdur-Rashid and Tyson (2000), remind us that Black mothers convey meaning using varied genres extending beyond academic essays "couched in the traditional communicative pattern of Eurocentrism" (p. 452). Dillard (2000) calls on academia to validate knowledge systems thriving within Black artistic sites like literature, dance, and music. An arts-informed methodology uses art to represent findings of a study or a response to a situation studied (Wang, Coemans, Siegesmund & Hannes, 2017). This research methodology is influenced by, but not based in, a broadly conceived understanding of the arts (Baden & Wimpenny, 2014). Proponents of this creative form of inquiry maintain that the core purposes of arts-informed research are: (1) to enhance understanding of the human condition by redefining inquiry processes and representation, and (2) to render scholarship more accessible to diverse audiences (Cole & Knowles, 2008). Ultimately, arts-informed research "brings together the

systematic and rigorous qualities of conventional research methodologies with the artistic, disciplined, and imaginative qualities of the arts" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59).

When grounded in Black motherwork theory, an arts-informed methodology seeks to restore Black mothers cultural memories, and affirm our communal experiences and spiritual traditions. This methodology uses the arts as alternative sites that counter Eurocentric notions of objectivity, require community, and remember responsibility. An arts-informed methodology grounded in Black motherwork theory provides opportunities for research to illuminate the radical imagination and everyday existence of Black Canadian mothers.

STORY CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE

Just prior to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, I embarked on an arts-informed study in Toronto. I explored the ways that four Black mothers attending an adult literacy program reconceptualised their motherwork. I collaborated with Black mothers, artists, and adult literacy educators within the community to design and implement the study. The research team and participants sought to uplift the storied lives of Black Canadian mothers whose narrative traditions had long been ignored within academic settings. The creative nonfiction story *Mint Tea and Comic Books* draws on Black storytelling traditions to capture my preliminary thoughts on an arts-informed Black motherwork methodology.

The story centres the experiences of the main character, Dr. Brantford, and a research participant, a Black mother named Gloria. *Mint Tea and Comic Books* captures my journey to use a Black motherwork approach to rethink arts-informed research. Much like Baker-Bell (2017), I relied on personal memory, journal writings, classroom interactions, current

scholarship, and conversations with staff and participants. These sources furnished pertinent information necessary to tell my stories. The representation of my preliminary thinking as a short story engages readers in a dialogic exercise with myself and participants. Readers are asked to vicariously experience what the story characters have gone through and affirm them as legitimate sources of knowledge. Readers are also challenged to leverage that knowledge to rethink qualitative research methodologies outside the bounds of Western frameworks.

SHORT STORY: MINT TEA AND COMIC BOOKS

On a Tuesday evening in November, Gloria and three other Black mothers filed into the church recreation room. The women huddled at a table lined with cups of tea. Gloria slumped into a chair, hunched over the hot drinks, and grabbed a glass mug. Steam rose from the mint tea, circled her nose and grazed her tapered afro. Dr. Brantford, a local researcher, tucked a trio of braids behind her ears and settled into the chair across from Gloria. The researcher planted her arms on the table. Both the table and Dr. Brantford were caramel with hints of yellow. Phyllis, the group's reading instructor, leaned against the nearby windowsill and chatted on her cell. Her dark coils covered her phone and grazed the collar of her *Made in Jamaica* sweater. Blaring horns, screeching brakes, and other raucous from the rush hour traffic seeped through the closed window and spilled into the room.

Dr. Brantford: Thanks for agreeing to take part in my research study.

Gloria: I've seen you help out at our reading program a few times. Plus, Phyllis vouched for you. You're good people.

B: I'm glad I have a good name around here.

G: I do feel comfortable around you. At least enough to share my stories with you.

B: Your stories are important.

G: In this program, it took me a while to even feel safe to write and talk about my life. To trust you with my stories is a big deal.

B: The stories that you and the other Black mothers share in the study are gonna help shift how academia understands adult literacy.

G: You know I ain't doing this study for those people up in those fancy universities.

B: Who are you doing it for?

G: We're doing it for our children and even other Black mothers. At least I am.

B: I get it. I'm a Black mama too.

G: When you told us that the final report will be like a comic book. I knew this was something I could do.

B: I really want this report to be accessible for Black mamas, especially those in adult literacy programs. Phyllis came up with the comic book idea and even found a local artist to work with us on the images.

G: I'm not the best reader. But I can figure out a comic book. My sister-friend Daisy, who stays in the apartment across the hall, is gonna be able to understand the report. My teenage son too—he's still trying to figure out this reading thing. This will help him and Daisy push through to their goals.

B: That's the point of us doing this work.

G: I see other researchers buzzing around the neighbourhood. They're not even from here.

B: Lots of people are interested in studying the Black experience in Toronto.

G: The other mothers and I talked about it the other day. No more letting these outsiders just take from us and get famous off our stories.

B: I hear ya. That's why I'm working with Phyllis to make sure this study is done right.

G: I respect the way you're moving with this study. You're getting guidance from the right people.

B: Thank you. I'm trying.

G: We want to be part of the conversation, not just the topic of it. More times, after the study interviews, we never see the researcher or the final report. People have a way of disappearing on us.

B: You and the mothers have a right to engage in research, especially if it's about *you*.

G: I know that. But I've seen a lot of researchers move like I'm not smart enough or interested enough in this thing they call research.

B: We already have a few other adult literacy programs committed to using the final report as a mentor text.

G: Yup, Phyllis already done put it in our schedule. We're gonna read the whole report together as a class.

Dr. Brantford nodded and grinned, revealing a set of dimples. Gloria closed her eyes, raised the mug of tea to her lips, and took a sip. The 54A bus barreled down the avenue just outside the church, muting a cackle from the three other mothers now grouped around Phyllis and the window.

CONCLUSION

Mint Tea and Comic Books introduces an arts-informed Black motherwork methodology. The story illustrates the ways that researchers and participants reimagine the research site as a space for Black mothers to organise, resist, and undermine oppressive structures. *Mint Tea and Comic*

Books also reveals the motherline as a defining feature of a Black motherwork approach to arts-informed research. In the story, Gloria understood the research study as a vehicle to transmit intergenerational knowledge. Gloria maintained that the study's reliance on visual and literary arts enabled her to pass on cultural capital to help her child and other Black women think critically of the society in which they live. In the story, Dr. Brantford prioritised forming relationships with leaders and learners who attended the adult literacy program. Accordingly, Dr. Brantford established the research site as a homeplace where Black mothers are esteemed as competent thinkers and leaders. Grounding an arts-informed methodology in Black motherwork theory shifts dominant paradigmatic views that keep the academy and community separated.

A Black motherwork approach to an arts-informed research methodology has some limitations. For example, the story depicts the considerable authority researchers exercise over determining the artforms used. This methodology requires researchers to nurture partnerships with Black mothers and their communities over a course of time. The goal of these relationships, as Gloria warns in the story, must be to enhance the wellbeing of Black mothers, their families, and communities.

I close this article by offering a series of reflection questions to help guide our repositioning of an arts-informed methodology for Black Canadian mothers:

- How might you move beyond Western ideologies of knowledge and esteem Black mothers as skilled leaders throughout the research processes?
- How might research processes be reimagined to prioritize Black mothers' cultural memories and artistic traditions?
- How might you shift the power imbued in a researcher’s identity to Black mother participants?

- What steps might you take to establish meaningful relationships with Black mother participants and community stakeholders?

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