

# DECOLONIZING PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHIES

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*In this co-authored essay, we reflect on how our respective research interests in Latin America have led us to engage with epistemologies of the global south. In your engagement with our writing, we hope you become curious about how critical theory emerges from these spaces, places, and practices. While we do not claim that the work these thinkers and practitioners do is exclusive to the significance of thinking and doing, we do contend that their work deserves the same critical attention as those thinkers and doers whose names are probably more frequently scattered throughout this volume and in standard reference works on performance and philosophy. If you have further interest in this topic, we provide a list of readings as a cursory introduction to decolonial thinking.*

## **Sitting with Sylvia: reflections on the significance of Sylvia Wynter**

There exists a well-circulated photo of Sylvia Wynter. She sits, presumably in her office, with some papers and a pen in her hand. Caught in the act of reading, editing, and perhaps even writing, Wynter turns away from the papers and looks squarely at the camera. Her hair, a gorgeous Afro crown, her glasses resting on her nose, amplifying her eyes, looking at us. Perhaps the photographer purposely caught her in *media res*. In our selfie-saturated image culture, perhaps Wynter, like many black radical intellectuals and artists, was ahead of her time. What if *she* directed the angle, the action, the image of her? Then again, given her vehement critique against Western liberalism's concepts of the "human" and by extension the "self," maybe not. Let us suppose, then, that this image is asking for *us* to have an encounter. What does it mean to encounter, and subsequently sit with, Sylvia Wynter?

Human geography scholar Katharine McKittrick poetically comments that, "any engagement with Sylvia Wynter demands openness" (McKittrick 2014, p. x). Her edited volume *Beyond Human As Praxis* (2014) invites scholars from a variety of disciplines to sit and think with Wynter and subsequently write their respective essays. Wynter's significant contributions to scholarship are far beyond the scope of this short introduction. Like McKittrick, I have been open to Wynter's effects on my own thinking since I first encountered her work as a critical dance studies graduate student. One of my professors encouraged us to think alongside Wynter and even asked us to expand on her notion of deciphering practices (1992). Developing a practice of deciphering, as per Wynter's suggestion, means to think about how particular modes of aesthetics (sound, film, performance, or any artistic 'object') develop

into cultural imaginaries and the specific rules ascribed to those imaginaries. For Wynter, these rules should not, or rather, *must not*, stand in for universals; rather, they reveal the processes through which they are developed in the first place. Above all else, Wynter advocates for an abolishment of the universal, opting instead for the specificities that make respective existences in the world knowable. But the question persists: how do we know *at all*, and – for our purposes – how do we get to know Wynter in this short encounter?

This writing will not be a hagiography of Wynter. To do that would risk crystallizing her work and all that it continues to offer scholars who aspire to reframe and expand discourses about humanity,<sup>1</sup> aesthetics,<sup>2</sup> decoloniality,<sup>3</sup> or feminism.<sup>4</sup> As a poet, essayist, novelist, philosopher, and scholar, Wynter has worn many hats. She is also known as an actor, dancer, playwright, short story writer, and translator. Rightly so, she fits into the model for the performance philosopher. As a black Caribbean woman, her many roles evidence the inventiveness of black diasporic identity and the multiplicity of roles women of colour have to play in order to be valorized beyond the representational limits bestowed upon us because of coloniality and modernity. In a famous essay “No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues,” Wynter draws from public police reports in Los Angeles that consistently use the term “N.H.I.,” no humans involved, to refer to the murder of black males from economically disenfranchised poor areas of the city.<sup>5</sup> The question concerning the humanity denied to black men (and [poor] people of colour) and the historical and philosophical rationale for this denial become the crux of this epistolary essay that moves through thinkers such as Martiniquais philosopher Frantz Fanon, Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, French thinker Michel Foucault, and Eritrean anthropologist Asmarom Legesse, to name a few. This radical global, epistemological awareness enables Wynter to piece together an argument that ultimately holds us all accountable for “misrecognition in human kinship” (Wynter 1994, p. 42). Knowledge must be rewritten, she states. She advocated this to her own faculty in 1984, but it fell on deaf ears, perhaps due to her intersectional identity and the radical interdisciplinarity of her work. *Knowledge must be written*. The different places from which we know must be identified and valorized. The way we think about knowledge must mutate, shift, and we must develop tools of language, discernment, and deciphering in order to begin to understand.

Without being reductive, one of Wynter’s main philosophical concerns is to undo the supremacy of the Western concept of the human. Wynter conceptualizes this in two terms – Man1 and Man2 – where Man1 emerges from the Renaissance imaginary and Man2 from the Enlightenment imaginary. These two “Men” differ in terms of historical moment and their respective developments of the concept “human,” and they help explain the ‘humanity’ of the human (Wynter 2003). If Man1 and Man2 were ways of describing oneself to those who invented it, then these terms automatically dismiss any difference from that image on stage – to use a performative metaphor. Racism and sexism emerge as natural correlates to these constructions. To begin to think decolonially about the concept of humanity is to see the machinations of the advent of the concept. In other words, and in performative metaphorical language, we have to be willing to see that which went on (and continues to go on) backstage, namely, the development of discourses that constructed ideologies and hegemonic knowledge based on colonial and capitalist expansion. These discourses created ideas of (supposed) racial, sexual, and gendered (among other) differences, which we continue to critique and reconceptualize today.

Let us turn to Wynter’s call for a deciphering practice that is

part of the attempt to move beyond our present ‘human sciences’ to that of a new science of human ‘forms of life’ and their correlated modes of the aesthetic: to move beyond

what Adorno defined in the wake of Auschwitz as that ‘evil’ which still haunts human existence as the ‘world’s own unfreedom’.

(Wynter 1992, p. 240)

Similar to how critical dance studies asks us to think about how particular sets of choreographed choices function within a piece, a deciphering practice requires a careful inquiry into the rules that dictate a particular aesthetic practice. She explains:

rather than seeking to ‘rhetorically demystify’, a deciphering turn seeks to decipher *what* the process of rhetorical mystification *does*. It seeks to identify not what the texts and their signifying practices can be interpreted to *mean* but what they can be deciphered to do, and it also seeks to evaluate the ‘illocutionary force’ and procedures with which they do what they do.

(Wynter 1992, pp. 266–267)

This is a helpful framing, for example, for (white) performance and museum curators who often struggle to find aesthetically appropriate language for artistic work by black, brown, or indigenous artists.<sup>6</sup> Of course, the first port of call should be to consult with artists, philosophers, and writers familiar with or from those spaces from which the art emerges, but, as a practice, deciphering involves the long, laborious, dedicated, ethical engagement with work by another “human.” Wynter’s calling out of *ontocentrism*<sup>7</sup> necessarily returns us to shift the conversation from *what* we know, to *how* we come to know what we know. She elaborates, “the *ways* in which each culture-specific normal subject *knows* and *feels* about its social reality should in no instance be taken as any *index* of what the empirical reality of our social universe *is*” (Wynter 1992, p. 271).

Wynter’s scholarship has become indispensable for those seeking to expand the important fields of critical race studies, postcolonial and decolonial studies. African American Studies scholar Alexander Weheliye was the keynote of *Genres of the Human* conference in 2018, and his concept of “humanity otherwise” relies on his own encounters with Wynter’s work and his desire to expose the limitations of discourses about biopolitics (Foucault) and bare life (Agamben).<sup>8</sup> Weheliye’s “humanity otherwise” (Weheliye 2014, p. 6) exists as stubbornly persistent forms of life whose abjection subtends the master categories of legitimate and legible humanity (white supremacist, propertied, heteropatriarchal) – but which constitute, through that very abjection, fugitive practices of alternative human being (Menzel 2016). It is these different “genres of humanity,” as Wynter would call them, that offer different forms of cognition necessary for the endurance of ‘humanity’ today, still riddled with intersectional problems of space (e.g. forced, violent migrations, environmental catastrophes), place (e.g. social justice, (g) local economic issues, ethnic cleansing wars), and time (e.g. precarity, labour, transitional justice). Sitting with Sylvia is not necessarily a comfortable respite from a world dominated by European modernity, but it requires an acknowledgement that different contexts create different performance philosophers, who strive to expand how we think, heal, share, make performance, reconsider ontologies of thought, and effect change.

*Whilst this previous section articulated a philosophical practice of ‘deciphering,’ this next section examines how an Afro-Colombian choreographer engages in a type of ‘deciphering practice’ for the marginalized indigenous and Afro-Colombian citizens of a Colombia in transition from civil war to ‘post-conflict.’*

### **Thinking, healing, and sharing: Sankofa Danzafro's *Fecha Límite***

To write this section on decoloniality and performance has been a little difficult. It seems more important to speak about what is going on in the place from where I write than about performance or decoloniality itself. Currently, there are protests from labour and student groups fighting for the right to live with dignity.<sup>9</sup> There are also myriad political issues that impede artists and academics from having a professional life or exercising basic rights.<sup>10</sup> We must look beyond the model of the Western proscenium stage and actually look at, and make connections with, the geopolitical stage itself. This is why the decolonial perspective on performance is fundamental.

In order to align decoloniality and performance philosophy, an understanding of capitalist modernity from the 15th century onwards is necessary. European modernity installed “the colonial matrix of power”: integrating multiple hierarchies and classifications of superiority/inferiority, development/under-development, and civilization/barbarism (Castro-Gómez 2007b, pp. 152–172). Peruvian philosopher Aníbal Quijano situates corporeality as a decisive plane where colonial relationships of power materialize the three modalities of collegiality: being, knowledge, and power (Quijano 2000, pp. 342–386). But rather than just outlining the main ideas that constitute the core work of *the collective* modernity/coloniality/decoloniality, I want to draw attention to the spaces where a decolonial practice emerges, and to enable the body-thinkers to speak.

#### ***We dance to have a voice***

This is what Colombian choreographer Rafael Palacios states when questioned about his work with his Afro-contemporary dance company, Sankofa Danzafro. Sankofa means to ‘return to the root’; more than a word, it is an African philosophy from the Akan people in Ghana. This concept is part of a broader and complex system of thinking that insists on the necessity of knowing the past as a condition of understanding the present and projecting the future (Sankofa Danzafro 2018). Sankofa Danzafro enacts this exact philosophy. After twenty-one years of solid and continuous work, the company is exemplary for its pedagogic projects and its commitment to connecting Afro-Colombian communities with the past, in order to understand the present and prepare for the future (Sankofa Danzafro 2018).

Working in a country where racism and classism are as prevalent as in most of Latin America, Sankofa’s artistic work intertwines resistance and re-making. It resists ways of stereotyping black Colombians, while it re-makes ways to understand contemporary dance from the topos of black diasporic memory. It offers new ways of being and feeling, especially for its Afro-Colombian dancers, and it reconfigures blackness into Colombian-ness, amidst histories of erasure and inequality, thereby re-creating new possibilities of existence.

Sankofa’s most recent work, *Fecha Límite* (which can be translated as Deadline or Expiration Date), was created in 2017 in a residency at the Museo de Antioquia in Medellín. Using Afro-Colombian dance traditions from the Pacific region, this performance is a reflection on land, spirituality, and identity and the histories of dispossession and inequality experienced by Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities.

In suit and tie, a masked dancer prowls the stage. This dragon-faced man moves around and then disappears. Dancers enter stage-left. Four men and one woman carry *bateas*<sup>11</sup> on their heads. Even though the style of their dresses is inspired by the ones used in traditional dances from the Colombian Pacific coast, they are not the usual colourful and celebratory ones. These are black and mournful.

Ritual, solemn, and in mourning, the movements are a play in contradictions. Using repertory of traditional celebratory dances and Afro-contemporary technique, they combine joy and sorrow, rage and power to create spaces to re-claim and re-exist. They seem to relish the joy of being together and the physical joy of being in their bodies. This is not taken for granted in communities plagued by conflict and bodies regulated by many external forces. The movements are powerful, frenetic yet contained, an aesthetic contradiction that allows a connection between the rage against belonging to a country that historically has offered little space or representation for Afro-diasporic and indigenous communities, and the choreographic power of using space to symbolize their claims for space on the land.

The dancers begin with the *bateas* on their heads, but these slowly transition from prop to an extension of their bodies, materializing those bodies from Colombia's Pacific region where the search for gold in the rivers is an everyday necessity. In their publicity material to sell the piece to foreign audiences, *Fecha Límite* is described as:

a portrait of the daily struggle of the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities to maintain and rebuild traditions and legacy in a society shaped by epistemicide. It is a call to action: the time of inequality is over. Now is the time for finding solutions, for rebuilding social fabric, for protecting Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities from the rain of illegalities and injustice.<sup>12</sup>

This 'call to action' becomes their performance philosophy.

*Todo el que nace se va a morir  
Solo un alma tengo  
La quiero salvar  
Déjalollorar*

All who are born will die,  
I only have a soul,  
I want to save it.  
Let him cry.

Lyrics from a song performed on stage articulate a need to mourn. The stage design features a sky decorated with bullets as if stars, creating a sense of urgency, of emergency (using both meanings of the word): practices and subjects that emerge out of the context of violence.<sup>13</sup> The choreography allows its dancers and its (Afro-Colombian and/or indigenous) audiences a way to find joy and re-claim their land and identity in a context that for centuries denies the communities their citizenship (a full political, cultural, and economical citizenship). As such, *Fecha Límite* exists as an emancipatory performance practice.

The work of Rafael Palacios with Sankofa Danzafro, his mentorship of other groups such as *Jovenes Creadores del Chocó* (Young Creators from Chocó), and with other processes of dance education in many territories of the Pacific region can be understood as a diasporic epistemology, a space of enunciation that, following the *sankofa* philosophy, connects and processes the past, to understand the present and to project the future. Here, the colonial wounds enacted by patriarchy and racism (and made materially evident throughout the paramilitary crisis) are put at the forefront of his choreographic exploration.<sup>14</sup> Palacios highlights the cultural and personal experiences of racialized subjects, and either the witnessing of or participation in the performance allows for some processing of the pain and suffering of those oppressed by colonial legacies and systems of coloniality. Most importantly, Palacios' work



Figure 14.1 Image from Rafael Palacios' Sankofa Danzafro, *Fecha Límite* (2017). Sergio González Álvarez

emphasizes the possibility of knowledge production from a decolonial perspective, and the creation of new possibilities of existence.

In Sankofa's *Fecha Límite*, the colonial wound and its healing process are posited in the entanglements of contemporary black subjects among the exoticizing logics and other 'epistemic traps'<sup>15</sup> that Western aesthetics assigns to black bodies. Sankofa's practice and pedagogy provide opportunities to open safe spaces, sites of enunciation, and self-determining practices that claim citizenship, rights, and empower participation in society. At one point in the piece, the dancers wave the Colombian flag incessantly. An almost overdetermined signification of citizenship takes on new meaning when it is an Afro-Colombian body demanding recognition and affiliation with that flag and all of its colonial, violent, and delegitimizing histories.

*Todo el que nace se va a morir  
Solo un alma tengo  
La quiero salvar  
Déjalollorar*

This circling back to the words repeated in the song during the performance of *Fecha Límite* acts as a constant reminder to the audience that we have to let him/them cry, because this is a safe space where affect has political potential. And it is precisely in this safe space that the 'colonial wound' can be unveiled, made present, and experienced fully – not as something to be kept hidden, in shame or lament, but to be shared communally.<sup>16</sup> This sharing opens possibilities for healing through 'counter-poetics' (to use a term proposed by Wynter) that challenge hegemonic structures of being in the word through artistic form (Eudell & Allen 2001, pp. 1–7). Performance here is a tool to resist, re-create, and re-make the spaces of colonial domination from unacknowledged and unrecognized realms. In his own way, choreographer Palacios is offering up a way to begin healing the colonial wound especially for Afro-Colombian communities, but not exclusively so. His is an expansive pedagogical-performance-philosophical project whose scope aligns it to, in the case of *Fecha Límite*,

the political potential of affect, especially for communities who have not been afforded the opportunity to feel or express the full potential of their subjectivity.

It was a small space inside the Museo de Antioquia where I first saw this performance. There were about sixty people present. Yet, the transfer of energy and affect was palpable. The irony of this moment rests in the fact that this particular museum has played a significant part in constructing a cultural history of the state of Antioquia as solely *mestizo* (a mix of Spanish/European and Indigenous ancestry). In effect, they have contributed to the erasure of the history of blackness as constitutive of Antioquia. Yet, there in a small corner was Sankofa Danzafro, asserting their physicality, presence, creativity, subjectivity, and power. The geopolitics of performance enables these tactical counter-poetics to counter modernity as a “machine that generates alterities in the name of reason and humanism, while at the same time excludes from its imaginary hybridity, multiplicity, ambiguity and the contingency of concrete ways of life” (Castro-Gómez 2000, pp. 145–162). Perhaps the expiration date that *Fecha Límite* signals is a future conjunction of space and time when marginalized citizenry will be afforded equality and have their knowledge valued for its ability to generate alternative spaces for existing in the world. In the meantime, we wait for performances by artists in the global south to continue to question and undo the darker side of modernity.

*Moving from the safe space generated by a Colombian choreographer for the Afro-Colombian community of his ancestry, to the conceptualizing of space by Brazilian choreographer Wagner Schwartz, who uses Brazilian geographer Milton Santos to make sense of his own place in the contemporary dance world, this last section continues the exploration of how deciphering practices establishes new geographic frontiers from which to create corporeal, spatial, and affective philosophies of performance that, in their questioning of modernity, are often censored by governments in the southern hemispheres. Ironically, the deciphering practice here turns on itself, to privilege a politics of respectability that emerged from colonial bourgeois value systems. The colonial wound is deep; yet, we must tend to it.*

### **Geopolitics of space and censorship**

In 2006, Brazilian contemporary choreographer Wagner Schwartz published a text in which he discussed the conceptualization of his performance *Wagner Ribot Pina Miranda Xavier Le Schwartz Transobjeto* (2005), and the process of applying for a production grant, all while travelling to Europe for the first time. Schwartz came to realize that the relevance of his work, and the likelihood of receiving funding from Brazil, depended on his acknowledgement of European artists such as Xavier Le Roy, even if Le Roy might never come to know him. Schwartz wrote:

I understood the set of relations that would make up my new project. According to Milton Santos, we live in a world that demands a discourse towards the intelligence of things and actions. Space is globalized, but it isn't *mondial* [worldly], except for in a metaphorical way. All places are worldly, but there is no worldwide space. In reality, people and places are globalized. The only worldwide dimension is the market.

*(Schwartz 2006)<sup>17</sup>*

In this excerpt, Schwartz references the work of the Afro-Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (1926–2001), namely “1992: a redescoberta da Natureza” (1992),<sup>18</sup> and *Por Uma Outra Globalização: do pensamento único à consciência universal* (2000).<sup>19</sup>

For Santos, geography is an epistemology of existence. He proposes that we consider space as an intertwined set of systems of objects and actions mediated by techniques. More importantly,

his work thinks “outside the box” of Western modernity, and his culminating work on globalization offers three senses for that concept: globalization as a *fable* (the world as a constructed reality, as the globalizing agents want us to believe); as *perversity* (the world as it is and, especially, how it is felt across the global south); and as *possibility* (the world as it could be), which might emerge from “philosophies produced on the various continents, to the detriment of European rationalism” (Santos 2000, p. 60), from which I include, for example, the Amerindian concept of *buen vivir* (to live in plenitude). Above all, for Santos, the perversity of today’s globalization, especially its structural organization around capital and competition, “kills the notion of solidarity, returns mankind to a primitive form of individualism and, as if we were to backslide into wild animals, reduces the notions of public and private morality to almost nothing” (Santos 2000, p. 32).

Schwartz took these three concepts, in general, and the relationship between capitalism and “primitivism/wilderness,” in particular, and used them to critically reflect on his funding application, which called for a brief description and a video excerpt. It is worthwhile noting that, in Brazil, 95% of all arts and culture funding initiatives are managed by the private sector, via tax exemption laws, with the intent of advancing their brand name (Rosa 2015, p. 208–219). In his funding application, Schwartz echoed Santos and concluded that

[g]lobalization, therefore, is first and foremost: fantasy (in this section Schwartz wrote 15 lines of text), for the transference is nothing but a promise, and perversity (in this section, Schwartz offered a five minute video recording of the work), due to the practice of competitiveness.

(Schwartz 2006)<sup>20</sup>

Over time, Schwartz developed an excerpt of *Transobjeto*, based on *Bichos* (Animals/Things, circa 1960s) by counter-cultural artist Lygia Clark, into a stand-alone solo titled *La Bête* (*The Animal*, in French).

*Bichos* is a series of sculptures made of aluminium plates connected through hinges that evoke the idea of a backbone. Originally, it was designed to be handled and played with. In today’s art market, Clark’s work can cost up to two million dollars,<sup>21</sup> and, ironically, her “animals” are often displayed under glass cases as static objects rather than kinetic puzzles with multiple possibilities of forms and movements.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, Schwartz’s performance seeks to restore Clark’s original concept of art-making as an interactive process and, subsequently, question the commodification of the art world, which overvalues objects as investments and despises artists as disposable labour force.

*La Bête* begins with Schwartz laying down, naked, playing with a small replica of one of Clark’s *Bichos*. After a few minutes, he asks the audience: “Do you want to try?” As a volunteer arises, the performer assumes the position of the “animal/thing” to be manipulated. Although Schwartz is present in flesh and blood, this simple gesture places him in a vulnerable position of otherness. The performer is – albeit metaphorically – dehumanized. In a review titled “La Bête and the barbarism of these dark times,” dance scholar Helena Katz notes that Schwartz’s choreography pushes the physicality of his body “to the edge of discomfort, imbalance and pain,” hence making this vulnerability visible to the naked eye (Katz & Schwartz 2015). Resonating with Santos, Katz concludes that, “it becomes very clear that this is how things present themselves today: One can do to the other whatever one wishes. *La Bête* makes us realize that we are the ones moving barbarism forward” (Katz & Schwartz 2015).

For the past decade, Schwartz’s work has gained wider recognition and, in 2017, he was invited to perform *La Bête* at the opening of the *35th Panorama da Arte Brasileira*, at the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo (MAM). The following day, a video containing a short



fragment of Schwartz's performance – depicting a moment when a mother and daughter touch his passive naked body (arms and feet, to be precise) – went viral. Whilst the opening of the exhibition was limited to invited guests and the “nudity content” of the performance was clearly signalled, Schwartz suffered a series of virtual attacks and accusations of paedophilia, with an arsenal of memes and fake news fed by socialbots. The assaults were spear-headed by alt-right organizations and political parties connected to Brazil's agro-business, the pro-gun movement, and neo-Pentecostal religions, collectively known by the anachronism BBB (meaning Beef, Bullet, and Bible). The exhibition's curator and the child's parent, choreographer Elisabete Finger, were similarly attacked and, in the following days, a furious mob invaded the museum and lashed out at its state employees.<sup>23</sup>

The hostile reactions against “the naked man in the museum,” as the episode came to be known on social media, clearly reveal the on-going perversity of globalization – especially what Santos calls the tyranny of information, whereby “what is transmitted to the majority of humanity is, in fact, manipulated information that, instead of clarifying, confuses” (Santos 2000, p. 20). Far from being an isolated case, in 2017, alt-right groups stirred up a series of public attacks on social media against the arts and humanities, commonly associated with the Left, collectively framing them as a negative influence on civil society.<sup>24</sup>

Back in 1992, Santos had already noted that the most dramatic trait of our times is the role that fear and fantasy play in our quotidian life.<sup>25</sup> This mixture of fear and fantasy, a recipe arguably deployed in the United States military campaign in search for “weapons of mass-destruction” post-9/11, as well as the media coverage of its last election, and the Brexit vote in the UK, is consistent with alt-right tactics in Brazil. The proliferation of fake news, with its stimulation of hate and suppression of solidarity, coupled with the historical dismantling of critical thinking via cuts in basic education, has pushed disenfranchised segments of the population to support and even applaud their own oppression. In the end, the perversion of globalization in this case lies not only in the strategic manipulation of information to produce scapegoats – or a fake “axis of evil” – but also the distorted appropriation of dissident grassroots tactics, especially the democratized use of technology and means of communication such as social media, to turn the masses into decentralized agents of oppression. In March of 2018, Schwartz confessed in an interview to *Estado de São Paulo* newspaper that “[o]nce the images of ‘La Bête’ went viral and virtual lynching started, my body became ill. It is impossible to speak at the moment when you are tortured<sup>26</sup>” (Schwartz 2018). He further concludes that

[t]he “fake news” transforms the haters’ will into an image, and in the online life they experience a desire for violence, and the feeling of hatred flows through offline life, creating a sense of fear and insecurity in the public space. And, strangely enough, I felt the mourning of seeing my own body dead on the screen.

(Schwartz 2018)<sup>27</sup>

The following year, Wagner Schwartz collaborated with other attacked artists on the creation of *Domínio Público* (*Public Domain*, 2018): a play that departs from the lore around Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* to address both their freedom of expression and the political appropriation of their images. “To perform again is to return to live,” Schwartz indicates.

It is to be able to look at violence with a certain distance, that only art allows us to do. It is to leave the trauma and go to the act, to return to the spaces that produce reflection instead of confusion.

(Schwartz 2018)<sup>28</sup>

Putting theory into practice, more importantly, the stories retold by each artist vivify Santos' understanding of the geopolitics of civil space as an intertwined set of systems objects (e.g. works of art) and actions (e.g. construction of discourses/narratives) mediated by techniques, especially those that decontextualize images and ascribe them new meanings. With the *Mona Lisa* in the background, the monologues problematize both the "fable" and the "perverse" sense of (globalized) modernity and its (neoliberal) reality. Meanwhile, by superimposing the stories *lived* by the artists on stage, this performative response gestures towards globalization as a *possibility*, as Santos envisioned, centred on humans rather than money, solidarity rather than competition.

*These three essays were written in solidarity with one another and our commitment to highlighting people, places, and practices that theorize and articulate. In using words, bodies, movements, and aesthetics, these people, places, and practices consider the world beyond the limits of European modernity. We hope to point your attention towards this new 'ground' notably imagined by Sylvia Wynter and advocated for in her intellectual endeavours, for it is the one that will "be of a new science of human discourse, of human 'life' beyond the 'master discourse' of our governing 'privileged text' and its sub/versions" (Wynter 1990, p. 366). We remain hopeful in future intersectional explorations of epistemological differences and how, in those precious differences, alternative modes of existence can arise to rescue us all from 'the dark side of modernity.' As a field, Performance Philosophy might think about plurality, e.g. Performance Philosophies, and look across space and time for the multiplicity of ways to acknowledge, regardless of geopolitical location, how we have all been thinking and making our worlds into being.*

## Notes

- 1 See, for example: Wynter, Sylvia. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation: An Argument." *New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337.
- 2 See, for example: Wynter, Sylvia. "Rethinking "Aesthetics": Notes towards a Deciphering Practice." in Mbye B. Cham, ed., *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*. New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1992.
- 3 See, for example: Wynter, Sylvia. "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues." *Forum NHI: Knowledge for the 21st Century* 1, no. 1 (1994): 42–71; and Wynter "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being" (2003).
- 4 See, for example: Wynter, Sylvia. "Afterword: "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/Silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman'" in Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, eds., *Out of the Kumbia: Caribbean Women and Literature*, 355–372. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990.
- 5 This was written as a direct result of the 1991 Rodney King police brutality incident in Los Angeles and the subsequent 1992 riots after the acquittal of the police officers.
- 6 Here, I am thinking of the excellent curatorial work done at Berlin's Bode Museum in their exhibit *Unvergleichlich* or *Beyond Compare: Art from Africa*. Notes from the exhibit state that

the experimental juxtaposition of works from two continents reveals possible correlations on various levels, including historic contemporaneity, iconographic and technological similarities, and artistic strategies. Despite stylistic differences, striking similarities appear in the ways works of art function in both contexts.

(<https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/bode-museum/exhibitions/detail/beyond-compare-art-from-africa-in-the-bode-museum.html> [accessed 16 April 2019])

This type of thoughtful intervention around historical and aesthetic contexts helps reconsider how to avoid universalizing or Eurocentric claims to beauty, history, or time.

- 7 Ontocentrism is the idea that the human pre-exists the complex of signifying practices and discursive systems by means of which it is instituted as such a subject or mode of being (See Wynter 1992, p. 270).
- 8 In 2018, Wynter was honoured by her alma mater, King's College, in three ways. In June 2018, they hosted a two-day conference, "Genres of the Human: On Sylvia Wynter," the first ever conference about this influential thinker in the United Kingdom. Later, the college added her profile to their Hall of Fame, and in October 2018, ninety-year-old Wynter received an honorary

- doctorate. Wynter already has the award of the Order of Jamaica in 2010 for her contribution to education, history, and culture.
- 9 In November 2018, there were significant student, professor, and workers' unions protests in Colombia because of newly elected President Iván Duque's neoliberal plans to de-fund public education and delegitimize unions and workers' rights with respect to ethical work conditions, fair pay, and ancestral territorial claims. There was also a demand for the state to account for the increasing number of assassinations of human rights and environmental rights activists.
  - 10 These issues include limited access to or existence of grant funding; scarce rehearsal and performance spaces; sustainable employment opportunities as a working artist; and precarization of academic labour at both private and public universities in Colombia.
  - 11 Shallow pan used for gold panning, a manual technique of gold mining.
  - 12 See the Association of Performing Arts Professionals website. « <https://www.apap365.org/Conference/Programs-and-Events/Special-Events/UP-NEXT/UP-NEXT-2019-Participants>» Accessed 4 September 2018.
  - 13 Since 1948's *La Violencia*, Colombia has been plagued with an over fifty-year civil war pitting conservative and liberal ideologies against one another. Exacerbated by the drug wars of the 1980s, the violence became pathological during the 1990s. A consortium of paramilitaries, guerrilla groups like the FARC, and state-funded military interventions plagued the country with mass murders, forced displacements, human rights abuses, among other collateral damages from armed conflict. In 2016, then President Juan Manuel Santos signed a Peace Agreement with the FARC technically ending the armed conflict and ushering in an era of 'post-conflict' reconciliation and peace. For more information on Colombia's 20th-century history, please consult Maria McFarland Sanchez-Moreno's *There Are No Dead Here: A Story of Murder and Denial in Colombia* (2018).
  - 14 For further elaboration on the concept of the colonial wound, please consult Vazquez, Rolando, and Walter Mignolo. "DecolonialAestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings." *Social Text Online* 15 (2013).
  - 15 This is an expression used by Walter Mignolo in an interview by Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández. "Decolonial options and artistic/aestheSic entanglements: An interview with Walter Mignolo." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 1 (2014).
  - 16 The term "colonial wound" first emerged in the work of Chicana feminist philosopher Gloria Anzaldúa's *The Borderlands*. Walter Mignolo has taken the term and elaborated on it in his work on decolonial aesthetics.
  - 17 Original in Portuguese:

Entendi quais seriam as relações que iriam compor meu novo projeto. Segundo Milton Santos, vivemos em um mundo exigente de um discurso para a inteligência das coisas e das ações. O espaço se globaliza, mas não é mundial, senão como metáfora. Todos os lugares são mundiais, mas não há espaço mundial. Quem se globaliza mesmo são as pessoas e os lugares. A única dimensão mundial é o mercado.
  - 18 See Santos, Milton "1992: A redescoberta da Natureza." *Revista Estudos Avançados* 6, no. 14 (1992): 95–106. Original in Portuguese:

Vivemos em um mundo exigente de um discurso, necessário à inteligência das coisas e das ações. É um discurso dos objetos, indispensável ao seu uso, e um discurso das ações, indispensável à sua legitimação. Mas ambos esses discursos são, freqüentemente, tão artificiais como as coisas que explicam e tão enviesados como as ações que ensinam.
  - 19 This book has been translated into English in 2017 as *Toward an Other Globalization: From the Single Thought to Universal Conscience*.
  - 20 Original in Portuguese: "Globalização, portanto, é antes de tudo: fantasia (15 linhas do texto), porque a transferência não passa de uma promessa, e perversidade (5 minutos do trabalho em vídeo), pela prática da competitividade."
  - 21 Lygia Clark's *Contra Relevô* (Objeto N. 7) (1959) sold for \$2.255 million at Phillips New York in 2013. <https://www.phillips.com/detail/LYGIA-CLARK/NY010513/20> (Accessed 16 April).
  - 22 For an illustration of the range of possibilities inherent to Clark's work, please see Walker Art Center curator Peter Eleey video on Lygia Clark's *Bicho* and the Walker's exhibition *The Quick and the Dead*. Available at: <https://walkerart.org/magazine/bicho-by-lygia-clark> (Accessed 12 March 2019).

- 23 For a comprehensive list of articles regarding the political appropriation of La Bête and for an extended bibliography on the political appropriation of La Bête on the media, and its repercussion across peer-review journals, books and catalogues, see “Dossier,” in Wagner Schwartz Website <<<https://www.wagnerschwartz.com/dossier>>>
- 24 Examples include a) Jo Clifford’s play *O Evangelho Segundo Jesus, A Rainha do Céu* (*The Gospel According to Jesus, Queen of Heaven*, 2017), closed down for Jesus was played by Renata Carvalho, a transsexual actress; b) Santander Cultural’s exhibition *Queermuseu – Cartographies of Difference in Brazilian Art* in Curitiba, closed following protests alleging promotion of paedophilia, zoophilia and blasphemy and, most ironically; c) a petition to ban the US philosopher Judith Butler from coming to Brazil and presenting at the conference *The Ends of Democracy* in São Paulo. During the event, protesters gathered in front of the venue, whereby they burned an effigy depicting Butler as the witch of “gender ideology.”
- 25 “There have always been times of fear. But this is a time of permanent and pervasive fear. Fantasy has always populated the minds of men. But now, industrialized, it invades every moment and every corner of existence at the service of the market and of power and, together with fear, constitutes an essential part of our model of life” (Santos 1992, p. 101).
- 26 Original in Portuguese: “Assim que as imagens de “La Bête” foram viralizadas e o linchamento virtual teve início, meu corpo adoeceu. É impossível falar no momento em que você é torturado.”
- 27 Original in Portuguese:

As ‘fake news’ transformam a vontade dos “haters” em imagem. Elas realizam, na vida online, o desejo de violência. A sensação do ódio escorre pela vida offline, construindo a sensação de medo e de insegurança no espaço público. Eu vivi essa morte. E, estranhamente, senti o luto de ver meu próprio corpo morto na tela.

- 28 Original in Portuguese:

Voltar a representar é voltar a viver. É conseguir olhar a violência com uma certa distância, essa que só a arte permite. É sair do trauma e passar ao ato, voltar a frequentar os espaços que produzem reflexão ao invés de confusão.

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