

There Is No Making It Out

Stories-So-Far and the Possibilities of New Stories

Romeo García

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Introduction

(Decolonizing) Archival Impressions

Since the early 1990s, members of the Modernity/Coloniality Collective (the MCC), whose origins are documented (Grosfoguel 2007; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Mignolo 2011a; Corrigan 2019; García and Baca 2019), advanced a decolonial option. It put human life first over, say, the transformation of the humanities and its disciplines. Members understood, though, that both can be at the service of promoting decolonial and decolonizing agendas. I flesh out their conversation below, but for now, I want to turn to Walter Mignolo (2000b). He argued for the importance of the humanities despite both the university's historical role as *an* assemblage and *in* assemblage with other institutions that advance modern/colonial and settlerizing designs (and notwithstanding the humanities role as a *working part* within universities' normalizing such designs) (see Yang 2017). Indeed, Mignolo (2006, 2011b, 2013) claims a decolonial option can exist within academic structures through scholarship, course work, and mentorship—the humanities can be at the service of decolonial projects as decolonizing programs. And this is supported years later, when Tlostanova and Mignolo (2012) conclude that a decolonial humanities is one that advances a *learning-unlearning-relearning* path. Now, it is imperative that we do not overlook criticism of the MCC by scholars such as Cusicanqui (2012), who argues the small empire these intellectuals have built,

buttressed by a new academic canon and structure of hierarchies, “neutralizes the practices of decolonization” (104). But in the same breadth, it is vital we recognize and acknowledge how the lines of critique and appeals for *praxical theorizing actioning* by the MCC lends itself to *an-other* option and invites a politics of wor(l)ding *otherwise* that transcends them.

Some of the above viewpoints are also expressed in Writing and Rhetorical Studies (WRS) though in different terms and for different reasons. Jaime Mejía (1999) presented on how traditional rhetorical understandings are inadequate and appealed for “study of differences among a variety of Latino/a rhetorical situations and cultural contexts” at the Rhetoric Society of America Conference. Though much has changed, twenty-six years later and this outlook still resonates. Mejía (1998, 1999) called for a departure from the field’s “west-east” trajectory of literacies and rhetorical studies (15), a movement that he himself contributes to the next year with a piece on the conditions in South Texas and the effects and consequences of power on its people—the haunted. Victor Villanueva (1997, 1999) also advances a historical and sociopolitical view of colonialism and racism, urging that we “break from the colonial mindset and [to] learn from thinkers from our own hemisphere” (1999, 656, 659). Twenty-five years later, the field of rhetoric, both in the context of WRS and communications studies, is still contending with how to translate that effectively. It would be some time before the MCC’s project of decoloniality though would be taken up by name in WRS.

The year 2008 marked a transition for WRS. Since then, conversations have centered on decolonizing and delinking WRS from its traditional roots and intellectual heritage in Western European rhetorical and epistemological traditions. Contributions include addressing the tyrannic culture of alphabetic writing and an Aristotelian syndrome that reinvents the cultural *other* (D. Baca 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Ruiz and Baca 2017); excavating, recovering, recognizing, reinscribing, and re-presenting rhetorics and rhetorical practices in the Americas (D. Baca and Villanueva 2009; García and Baca 2019; Kelly and Black 2018); reclaiming and retheorizing terms and concepts coopted by modern/colonial and settlerizing designs (Medina 2014a; Ruiz and Sanchez 2016; Arellano and Ruiz 2019; Legg 2023); analyzing the unfolding of modern/colonial and settlerizing designs (Dougherty 2016; R. Jackson 2017; King et al. 2015; Soto Vega 2020; You 2023); researching the effects of settler colonial archives and the role of the settler museum (Cushman 2013; Adams-Campbell, Falzetti, and Rivard 2015; García 2019b, 2022a, 2022b; King 2023); field of study, programmatic, pedagogical, and/or linguistic implications

(Clary-Lemon and Grant 2022; Haas 2012; Canagarajah 2022, 2023; Medina 2014b, 2017, 2019; Mukavetz 2018; Na'puti 2020; Tinoco, Eddy, and Gage 2020; Wanzer-Serrano 2018); and even critiques of a decolonial option itself (Cortez and García 2020; García and Cortez 2020). I argue each contribution is like a (decolonizing) archival impression that gives structure to and constitutes a decolonizing archive in WRS, in assemblage with other decolonizing archives. This book ultimately is the by-product of a view that a decolonial option can exist within academic structures and that scholarship and the classroom can be at the service of decolonizing agendas.

There Is No Making It Out contributes to the MCC's *analytic* at the intersections of literacy, rhetorical, and (settler) archival research. The idea for a study on archives truly stems from the archival impressions "scholars" across my academic trajectory have had on my *story-so-far*. There is Jacqueline Jones Royster's (2000) *Traces of a Stream*, which invited me, on the one hand, to think critically about literacy as a communicative practice and instrument for socio-political thought and action, and on the other, to be mindful of the difference between a rhetorical view that produces essentialist analysis and a view that looks for connections and offers contextualization of general patterns of rhetorical actions within the landscape of literate and rhetorical practices. Gesa Kirsch and Liz Rohan's (2008) *Beyond the Archives* was the first archive-focused text that emphasized for me how archival research can be "life-changing" and how it is possible to bring the "subject to life"—rhetoric and rhetorical research as embodied and a social practice (8). And it was Royster and Kirsch's (2012) *Feminist Rhetorical Practices* that invited me to do that *work* with care. How do we use our *critical imagination* to think about the ways race, class, and gender inform how people walk and see the world? Can we withhold judgement at least temporarily to create a space to *strategically contemplate* embodied experiences? Why do *ideas*, regardless of the outcome, *socially circulate* and in what ways are they shared-in, imported, expanded, and/or disputed in their movement?

There Is No Making It Out contributes to the MCC's *prospective vision* of *learning-unlearning-relearning* through archival research and theory of archival impressions. I have often wondered if a story is a story if it is not archived (broadly conceived). I guess it depends on whether we unsettle the settledness of some *things*. James Baldwin (1972) to Michel Foucault (1978), Pierce Lewis (1979), Anthony Giddens (1981), and Edward Said (1985) saw in landscapes and history alike human work and projects. We live amid archives (re)written in unending cycles by archival impressions. Indeed, a central argument in Doreen Massey's (2005) work is that space and place is always

the product of human work and projects, the constructed-ness of *things*, and hence always under construction—*stories-so-far*. But memory is also archival and archivable (Browne 2021, 43). This position would come to inform how I interpreted then Judy Rohrer's (2016) words, "We are the set of stories we tell ourselves, the stories that tell us . . . I am these stories" (189). To be one's stories is to be an archive. Ann Cvetkovich's (2003) *An Archive of Feelings* taught me that archival research is not just done outwardly as we are cultural texts too, "repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the context of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception" (7, 181, 208). Kevin Browne's (2013, 2019, 2021) *Tropic Tendencies*, "Moving the Body," and "A Douen Epistemology" encouraged me to think about what is at stake in recovery work in modern/colonial and settlerizing contexts, where to begin excavation when all that is left are materials, and how to conceive of ourselves as *archives* in the making. The latter invites us to deliberate how to reorient ourselves to a people-earth-and-future *longing* (Tuck 2009; Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013), or as Rohrer (2016) might say, the *possibilities of new stories*. These archival impressions have had a lasting impact on me. *There Is No Making It Out* is partly about the affective element (or *pesado-ness*) of some *things*, once more.

Hauntings and haunting situations do not unfold evenly. What I have learned from others on literacies and rhetorics—Deborah Brandt and Katie Clinton (2002), Ralph Cintron (1997), Juan Guerra (1998), John Duffy (2003, 2007), Brice Nordquist (2017), Nedra Reynolds (2004), Brian Street (1994), Martin Nystrand and John Duffy (2003), Jenny Edbauer (2005), and Rebecca Leonard (2013)—I apply in my approach to hauntings and haunting situations. Hauntings and haunting situations are both global and manifest in local forms and conditions—they are on the move. In a modern/colonial and settlerizing context, I became interested in literacies and rhetorics beyond their traditional characterizations typically framed by the question, what is literacy or rhetoric? À la Mike Baynham and Mastin Prinsloo (2009) and Harvey Graff (1979), I began to wonder what are the *goings-on* of haunted/haunting literacies and rhetorics? How are they shaping reality? I conceived of literacies and rhetorics once more as this a priori ambient energy of *thinking*, *feeling*, and *being-with*, a worldly act of rhetoricity, and a catalyst of and for action/ing through words and ideas. But while I believe hauntings are a *structure of feeling* (à la Williams) that live deep within our bones (A. Gordon 2008; Williams 1977), I know we are all constituted differently, and thus some experience the privilege of not having to know. We can chalk this up to how

we come to inherit and embody what Kitarō Nishida (1998), Fanon (1986), and Susan Bordo (1993) might refer to as historical bodies, and/or we can attribute it to the ways everyday stories, rhetorics of the everyday life, and everyday literacy practices have structural underpinnings and material consequences, as Ralph Cintron (1997), Judy Rohrer (2016), Sarah Pink (2012), Alastair Pennycook (2010), and others discuss. Either way, I argue we cannot come to terms with hauntings and haunting situations without coming to terms with literacies, images-signs-sounds, and rhetorics.

I have often wondered too if archival work can amount to more than just more accounting. I hope so, because I neither engage in archival research nor register hauntings for the sake of it. What if all questions then, regarding knowing and being, started with hauntings and haunting situations? First, it would invite us to conceive of a constellating concept—an archive not in the proper name of a repository that signs “at once the commencement and the commandment” (Derrida 1995, 9), but those that we live amid marked by their (re)writing. Second, it would allow us to see how we are all in and part of archives in the making. This is when I started to think about a macro-level archive, a modern/colonial and settlerizing archive, or the *Archive*, whose presence is unavoidable. Notwithstanding the theoretical trap—“power is everywhere” (Foucault 1978, 93)—questions surfaced from which this study flows: What are the literacies, images-signs-sounds, and rhetorics of the *Archive*? What constitutes an archival impression? When, where, how, and why do archival impressions happen? Who is responsible for maintaining the *Archive* in the present? Can archival impressions *otherwise* unsettle the settled-ness of the *Archive*? Such lines of inquiry ground the rhetorical nature of this book and inform its most central sites of analyses—the archival impressions that keep the *Archive* in an unending process of *being-and-becoming*. Out of these questions others materialized. If we are all in and part of the *Archive*, does that mean we too are *archives* and archival impressions making the *Archive*? If the *Archive* is a haunted/haunting *story-so-far*, what does that say about our own?

It is important to extend archival research to the *elsewhere* and *otherwise*. Because we too are an *archive*. So a micro- and meso-level archive, or our *stories-so-far* as an *archive*. The line of rhetorical questions above extends to *archives* as well. In investigating those questions in the second half of this book, I remain convinced and thus submit here that we are constituted by and are the accumulation of archival impressions, that which also keeps our *archives* in an unending process of *being-and-becoming*. But if the *Archive* is a haunted/haunting *story-so-far*, and we are all in and part of it, that means that

our *archives* are contaminated too. This realization gives way to a premise that forms an essential focus of this book. How do we reposition the contents of the *Archive-archives* so that we can position ourselves in relation to both *otherwise*? I have found that the meaning of researching and searching for hope in the *Archive-archives* can be extrapolated from such *doings*. For the *Archive-archives* there is a demand for some *thing* else, a central theme of this book, a public record of its contents. It can provide us with insights into what constitutes them. And with our capacity to have knowledge of the inner workings of the *Archive-archives* is an opportunity not to make it out but, under certain conditions, to alter both and wor(l)d *an-other* archive. An archival approach affords the opportunity thus to view contents as *stories-so-far*, subject to change, in the making. That would re-situate agency within the cultural archives of the “You” and “We,” that “We” indeed can initiate archival impressions *otherwise*. Will “We” ever have shared that in common, a hope for and the struggle toward *possibilities of new stories* vis-à-vis the initiating of decolonizing archival impressions into *stories-so-far*?

There Is No Making It Out is first and foremost then an archive of haunted/haunting *stories-so-far*. My debt to archives, archival impressions, and hauntings is bookmarked throughout, a statement on how I regard my starting points in inquiries of *stories-so-far* and the *possibilities of new stories*. It is an excavation project of many kinds of cultural texts that reflects the hope-struggle to research and search for hope in the *Archive-archives*. By archival impressions, I mean the accumulation of entries of writing, impressed and initiated by some *thing* or some *one* that bears on and enduringly acts upon the *Archive-archives*—the pesado-ness of deposits, signatures, traces marks or absent presences, sedimentations and/or historical layering engraved within and giving form to the palimpsestic narratives of *stories-so-far*. At the macro level, decolonizing archival impressions—entries of counter-writing impressed and initiated by some *one* meant to unsettle the settled-ness of *things* and bring about decolonizing agendas that can alter the *Archive-archives* and wor(l)d *an-other* archive—will mean the unsettling, decolonizing, and amending of the lies, contradictions, myths, narcissism, cynicism, denialisms, and sickness-disease of the *Archive* and its actor-agents who initiate impressions that give structure to and constitute it. At the micro and meso level, decolonizing archival impressions means unsettling the settled-ness of Self and ways of relating within the full spectrum of matter (living, nonliving, and nonhuman). *There Is No Making It Out* argues we can unsettle the *Archive-archives* through an archival approach and by initiating decolonizing archival impressions.

There Is No Making It Out is an archive of knowledges, understandings, feelings, and doings. In an amendment of Cvetkovich's (2003) *archive of feeling*, the additions announce themselves throughout this archive of a book. In other words, each chapter functions both as an impression and entry submitted into this book that is an archive. Guiding this book are the many archival impressions I remain *thinking*, *feeling*, and *being-with*, that which reflect at least partially the intellectual universe of thought I work from. To underscore that fact, while also mitigating the risk of conflation or erasure of different projects, I trace and weave together sometimes seemingly irreconcilable and contradictory intellectual conversations below, but not as some academic exercise in reviewing discourse but to provide a window into the threads of hope-struggle for which are the foundations of this archive I call *There Is No Making It Out*. Now, any shortcomings in interpretations, groupings, and/or associations are solely mine. Still, I remain of the mind that no one theory can do everything for me. As I do in life today, I surround myself with those who will inspire me to rise to a level of obligation and responsibility that can bring about change. As Said (1983) points out, we "borrow," which I showcase below for the purpose of situating decolonizing archival impressions *in* assemblage, highlighting converges rather than fixating solely on divergences. Each heading is to be read as an archival impression.

A Rehabilitated Humanity and Society

Many academics are connected by a hope that it is possible to unsettle the settled-ness of some *things*. While hauntology is attributed to one, really it is a "borrowed" concept that underscores the inability to make it out of power (or the *Archive*) that traffics in the normative and the capacity to *do* both in ways that "it" will feel and in ways that can wor(l)d some *thing* else. Fanon understood that greatly.

My introduction to the intellectual universe of decolonial thought I prescribe to started with Fanon. And thus, I begin with him. Based on my readings and interpretations, Fanon's (1963) *analytic* amends decolonization in *The Wretched of the Earth*. He conceived of "it" as a coercive and seductive system, superstructure, and/or machine that has the past, present, and future as its ends; it has no borders or boundaries and traffics in the normative. Fanon understood that colonization was not an isolated egregious *event* but an ongoing and organizing structuring principle of settlerizing encounters, interactions, and engagements. He saw in "it" an *epistemic system* (of ideas, images,

and ends), a *hegemonic architecture* of *contents* and *terms*, the (epistemological) regime of modernity (see A. Gordon 2008, 10), and the modern/colonial and settlerizing designs of a 500-year-old *Archive*. Though “it” manifested in local forms and conditions, Fanon registered “it” as a colonization that functioned as an archival impression within a colonial history and world—the colonial problem that orders the colonial world. He understood that near and far such impressions—desires of and for domination, management, and control—ensure an *Archive* in the making. For Fanon, it was vital thus to unsettle its lies, contradictions, inventions, myths, narcissism, cynicism, denialism, and violence (supposedly) cloaked and hidden by the haunted/haunting literacies, images-signs-sounds, and rhetorics of salvation, civilization, progress, and development (e.g., modernity). And therein emerges one of his most central arguments: that we must *clinically search out-excavate* and *mercilessly* till out from all lands and minds its *seeds-germs of decay* (Fanon 1963, 2004). Such an appeal invites and lends itself to an archival approach and theory of archival impressions. If archives are a space where knowledge is potentially made, it can be at the same time a site where knowledge is possibly unmade.

The intellectual universe of decolonial thought I prescribe to states dignity is tied to land and that human dignity needs rehabilitation. Fanon (1963, 1986) argued that humanity brings society into being. That in others, as archives and archival impressions, we can bring about *an-other* archive. His *cries* for a rehabilitated archive, without the *good will* of or desire to mirror the current haunted/haunting one, can be heard in both *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon’s *prospective vision* amends decolonization. He understood that colonization contaminated knowledge and relating and that modernity gained currency at the epistemological level. That made Eurocentrism an epistemic and aesthetic issue too (see Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 125). For Fanon it was vital thus to unsettle the whole structure of humanity and society contaminated by the haunted/haunting literacies, images-signs-sounds, and rhetorics of saviors destined to both save *others* from themselves and lead the world in the *right* direction. An *awakening*, which he so often linked to an explosion, extrication, and/or disalienation-to-come, was demanded of settlers and the colonized alike. While prior efforts had been made to create *an-other* archive, for Fanon, they remained predicated on reductive, dichotomous, and/or oppositional structures. And that is why he calls for the rehabilitation of *all* of humanity. If hate calls to be cultivated and brought into being, Fanon claimed the same goes for *an-other* humanity and society. I interpret that call as the appeal to initiate decolonizing archival impressions.

Thinking, Feeling, and Being-with Others

I understand that within the intellectual universe of decolonial thought I prescribe to even that which was meant to unsettle the settled can benefit from hauntings as a starting point (see Ballif 2014; Fukushima 2019; Lueck 2021; Hanchey 2023). It is for that reason I turn to Derrida (1994b), Toni Morrison (1987), and Avery Gordon (2008), who each *return* to and *carefully reckon* with hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings as language, rhetoric, corporeal exercises of address, and categories of analysis. *Analytic tasks* and *prospective visions* flow out from each conversation.

Humanity is at stake. Derrida's (1994b) *analytic* in *Specters of Marx* amends the meaning of hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings. He understood the "old" and "modern" world are but a constellation of hegemonies, hauntings, and ghosts—an archive. Hegemony, a power necessitated by an ontological system (of ideas, images, and ends) and structure of power, is at least partially constituted by the metaphysics of the subject. For Derrida it is vital then to *return* to and introduce hauntings and ghosts to all facets of life (hauntology) to unsettle their proper, totalizing, and juridical-normative-moral *contents* and *terms*—*contents* and *terms* that ensure an *Archive* in the making. For him, if forgetting and conjuration are essential to hegemony then a remembering that yokes and calls forth hauntings and ghosts is most crucial for a humanity at stake. Hauntology, which I interpret as a decolonizing archival impression, becomes the foundation for inviting a "scholar" *otherwise* to get caught up in a politics of hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings *otherwise* vis-à-vis an archival approach.

Hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings demand a "scholar" unlike the "traditional" or "learned" scholar whose spectatorship adheres to distinctions (the un/real, non/living, and non/being). Derrida's (1994b) *prospective vision* amends the idea of learning how to live. Like other *things* he situates the idea in "memory, fidelity, the preservation of something" to initiate a "break" (Derrida 2021, 6). Derrida (1994b) understands that the question couched in the idea comes down to a *choice* of getting caught up in a world that is a massive gravesite—an archive of wreckage. Though suspended between an injunction and disjunction, *careful reckonings* reflect the possibility to think and learn how to address oneself to hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings. For Derrida it is vital to unsettle the disposition of the "intellectual," then to deconstruct and restructure responsibility in relation to the (secret) meaning of inheritances. We are heirs to and archival impressions adding to an *Archive*. But he does not stop

there. Derrida anticipates the demand for an *enduring task* and thus reminds us that the readability of any one *thing* is never a given, but rather, it is always already betraying translation and defying interpretation. Because some *things* must remain at *work*.

Hauntings and ghosts can have a powerful presence in the lives of the living. Though absent presences (for some), they themselves are the trace marks of archival impressions. In *Beloved*, Sethe speaks of some *thing* more haunting than a haunted house that was 124 Bluestone Road. Morrison's (1987) *analytic* in *Beloved* amends the senses to the dearly beloved and a beloved *thing* but secret company. She understands humanity is an archive constellated by the engravings of deposits, signatures, sedimentations, and/or historical layering—Slavery, Mr. Death, (a livable) Life. They give form to *palimpsestic narratives*, where the past shapes the present and touches the future (also see A. García 2004). For Morrison it is vital to draw attention to the weight (or what I call the *pesado-ness*) of the beloved implanted with *the jungle* and fear of nothingness and self-worth. And to speak to the pedagogical agenda underscoring (modern/colonial) haunted/haunting situations: "but school teacher beat him . . . to show him that definitions belonged to the definers—not the defined" (363). But for Morrison, hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings involve and extend well beyond one Self, because we are all in and part of the haunted/haunting *stories-so-far*. They have demands of all. Archives thus are a poetic metaphor for a process of remembering, unsettling, and *wor(l)d*ing otherwise.

A politics of hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings is demanded. Morrison's (1987) *prospective vision* amends an "undecipherable language" (381). *Beloved*: the disremembered, unaccounted, unclaimed, unidentified, forgotten, and the secret story not to be passed on. *Beloved*, traces of a mark that scatters. *Beloved*, the *knowing the things behind the things* (74). Morrison understands that the past is hardly over and done with and that the nonliving, like memory, seldom leaves us—history and memory after all can function as a window into or a prism through which to see how hauntings and haunting situations continue to form the basis of humanity. *Returns* can hurt, *careful reckonings* can be painful, and *enduring tasks* always already ensure some *things* remain at *work*. For Morrison, though, to begin this *work* in earnest it is vital to unsettle distinctions (the un/real, non/living, non/being). Via Sethe and her daughter, Denver, an invitation for healing is extended through a politics of hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings. *Beloved*—an awaiting, for "some kind of tomorrow," the space and place of spectrality, im/possibilities, and *stories-so-far* and the *possibilities of new stories* (521).

Hauntings and ghosts are part of the social world. In *Ghostly Matters* Avery Gordon's (2008) *analytic* amends the meaning of Raymond Williams's (1977) *structures of feeling*. She understands that the historical materialism of hauntings and ghosts are present in the making of histories, subjectivities, and social relations of power—and that *structures of feelings (and thought)* are embedded in both. They conjure up but are also the sign that organizing systems of power continue to *take* and *make* place: countervailing systems of value and difference, complex systems of permissions and prohibitions, and deterministic systems of power and repressions-exclusions; wor(l)ding aspirations materializing. Hauntings and ghosts have desires: in/actions. For Gordon it is vital then to create a vocabulary that would underscore an *epistemology for the living* that could unsettle conditions producing the *nastiness* that belongs to our *stories-so-far*. To be haunted, according to Gordon, means to be tied to a constellation of self/selves, histories, subjectivities, and social lives—the archives. A healing and wor(l)ding—the acknowledgment that wording is human work and a project that has worlding capacities (see Ahmed 2012, 2017; Haraway 2008, 2016b)—*otherwise* begins here, which I interpret as a call for initiating new (decolonizing) archival impressions.

Hauntings and ghosts have desires. Gordon's (2008) *prospective vision* amends the meaning of conjuration through an interplay between “calling out” what produces absences and silences and “calling up” *careful reckonings*. She understands that we are all in this story of *nastiness* and that something ought to be done by all, a “Weism” that appeals for, I believe, the initiating of decolonizing archival impressions into archives in the making. For Gordon it is vital to *return* to and *carefully reckon* with the “shadows of our selves and our society” through hauntings and ghosts because they unsettle familiarity, rationality, control, and distinctions (134). The *choice* to be haunted, according to Gordon, speaks to an effort to heal and engage in wor(l)ding *otherwise*. But to imagine this possibility we must have a politics of hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings, which invites and lends itself to an archival approach and theory of archival impressions. Corporeal exercises of address can yield no guarantees. Still, an ethic, ethos, and praxis of *thinking, feeling, and being-with others otherwise* awaits our invention and address (broadly conceived).

A Learning-Unlearning-Relearning Path

My academic path toward a decolonial option began with Fanon (1963), Césaire (2001), and Memmi (1991). Then, it included the MCC. Now, it is important

for me to preface that I am not *Latin American*. I do not live in *Latin America*. Yet, I heed the call by the MCC to conceive of Latin America not as a continent but as a prismatic paradigm through which to see both the logic of coloniality refracted through the rhetorics of modernity and the emergence of a Western epistemic genealogy of intellectual thought. I take seriously thus the appeal that one does not have to identify or reside in a particular place to engage with the locus of enunciation advanced by the MCC. Perhaps for no other reason do they argue that what it means to be ethically committed to decolonizing agendas cannot be determined by identity or geography but rather must be guided by the questions of *who, where, why, how, and for* (Castro-Gómez 2007; Escobar 2007; Mignolo 2013; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Quijano 2007; Quijano and Wallerstein 1992; Tlostanova 2017b). These rhetorical questions unsettle the idea of a decolonial master, a privileged master plan, and master-like universals. I spend more time in this section for two reasons. First, to trace the MCC's theses, which remain relatively new to WRS. Second, my argument for an archival approach that materializes the *Archive* and theory of archival impressions (that keeps it in an unending cycle of being made, unmade, and remade) rests on several of their propositions.

The MCC's lynchpin argument is that the world is organized, connected, and haunted by the unavoidable presence of some *things*. This is an important proposition, whether or not there is consensus. The MCC are not proposing that power unfolds evenly; they are claiming that though each local history shares an approximation to colonial and imperial differences differently, none can avoid the presence and reach of modern/colonial and settlerizing designs and technologies (Mignolo 2007, 474). *Americanity, coloniality, and the modern/colonial world system* (hereafter the frame of modernity/coloniality) are some of those designs and technologies, which emerge as categories of analysis within a spatial-temporal break from eighteenth-century Europe and shift to the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Americas. Though not synonyms, they belong to the same historical setting, the Americas, and context—the *idea of the Americas*. The significance of this break and shift cannot be overstated. By returning to a settler colonialism 500 years ago and the *idea of the Americas*, the MCC are able, first, to establish a turning and nexus point in world history at the start of the modern world; second, excavate from a glossed-over history, the first stage of modernity and its darker sides—the ways coloniality is constitutive of modernity, underscoring the entanglement between a rhetoric of modernity and logic of coloniality; and third, argue some *things* and the ideas, images-signs-sounds, and ends of some *one* have remained in land, memory,

knowledge, and relation-ing long after they have passed—an epistemological force (Mignolo 2007, 476; 2018, 366). The MCC fill a gap thus by critically attending to the foundational designs of—the local-regional histories of designs and technologies that belong to the logic of coloniality and crooked rhetorics of modernity (the frame of modernity/coloniality)—and *structure of feelings and thoughts* (an amendment to Williams’s original phrasing) embedded in the Western monocentric project (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 107–108). Such an intervention underscores a historical foundation of modernity and Western civilization as much as it invites scholars to approach the sixteenth-century Americas as the backdrop for the materialization of some *thing*.

Origin stories are no doubt contested sites. Still, it is difficult to deny a turning and nexus point in world history with the ~~discovery~~ invention of the Americas (see O’Gorman 1961). For the purposes of underscoring the significance of an archival approach and a theory of archival impressions, it is important to trace the propositions of the MCC further. Enrique Dussel (1995) and Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein (1992) amend the meaning of Western modernity. Conquest and a structure, logic, and pattern of power is its constitutive side. A new model of a world system of power (supposedly) no longer reliant on historical colonialism was configured out of the Americas. The ~~discovery~~ invention-creation of the Americas, they argued at the onset of their essay, was the “constitutive act of the modern world-system” (549). As Quijano and Wallerstein appeal for a seeing, feeling, and listening to the “sounds . . . images . . . symbols . . . utopias” of the Americas it is to underscore the ways power as an epistemic and aesthetic issue gives way to hauntings and haunting situations too (556). The destruction (wreckage), technologies (the *idea*), inventions of worldviews and institutions (spatial-temporal colonial difference, colonization of space-time, Western imperialism), and power differentials—internally realized and globally pursued—contaminated knowledge and impaired our relations with space and place, time, land, and others. For the MCC it is vital to excavate Europe’s march toward hegemony out of the project of modernity. Because it partly brings nuance to how the West acquired an epistemological hegemony and the process of building the modern/colonial imaginary (Escobar 2007; Grosfoguel 2013; Mignolo 2007; Quijano 2000; Quijano and Wallerstein 1992; Wolfe 2006). And the excavation work for them begins in the Americas, a site both of writing and for a super-structure of written record that established a textual death space.

The MCC argue that Europe becomes hegemonic Europe partly because power is an epistemic and aesthetic campaign. The *end* is to hoard and

produce information-as-facts in excess vis-à-vis the production of knowledge. The *end* is a war to dominate information—the enunciated establishes the *contents of the conversation* while the enunciation polices the *terms of the conversation*—and manage and control mediums of circulation fought on the battlefields of ideas (Man), images (Human), and ends (Rights-to) (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 143–44; Roy 2014, 30; Baldwin quoted in Kenan 2011, 93). According to the MCC, a modern/colonial and settlerizing (an amendment to original phrasing) imaginary is founded on the *idea* (of the Americas, *humanitas*/anthropoi, race, epistemic and ontological differences, race/labor) shared-in through epistemic racism, and expanded-disputed by the *ends* to dominate, manage, and control. Emphasizing the epistemic and aesthetic issues of Eurocentrism, Mignolo and Catherine Walsh (2018) argue that a “hegemonic architecture of knowledge [*contents of the conversation*] and the principles, assumptions, and rules of knowing [*terms of the conversation*]” must be unsettled (212). W/H questions—*where, who, what, how*—guide what I refer to here on out as a *decolonial analytic* (also see Veracini 2010, 2011):

- Where is *coloniality* and modern/colonial and settlerizing designs (my addition)?
- Who are the affective channels of rhetorical transmission for coloniality and designs?
- What do the enunciations and material exchanges of knowing subjects entail?
- How do institutions (broadly conceived) comprise a locus of enunciation for knowing subjects (see Mignolo 2011a, 189)?

There is consensus beyond the MCC and among scholars from Linda Smith (1999, 2) to Lewis Gordon (2007, 123, 137) that the power to produce knowledge and define what counts as truth lies at the core of colonial projects and is what allows *ideas* to *appear* and *become* consequential. A premise takes shape about a *hegemonic architecture* of knowledge (hereafter *hegemonic architecture*), which is the source of inspiration for this book’s emphasis on literacy, rhetorical, and (settler) archival research. Though power does not unfold evenly, we cannot come to terms with modern/colonial and settlerizing designs without coming to terms with enunciations, enunciators, language-discourse, and institutions—a *semiotic apparatus of enunciations* (see Mignolo 2009). Put another way, epistemological hegemony is constituted, ideologies are carried over, and hegemony is maintained by literacies, images-signs-sounds, and rhetorics. A *decolonial analytic* wagers that a *hegemonic architecture* is tied

to language and rhetorically sold-purchased by an *association of social interests* that is at least 500 years old (Quijano 2007, 168).

Literacies, images-signs-sounds, and rhetorics play a role in a modern/colonial and settlerizing imaginary and *hegemonic architecture*. These economies are present, though not named, in Dussel's (1995) and Quijano's (2000, 2007) discussions of a paradigm of modern/rational knowledge. They are consubstantial in the colonization of the imagination and to the strategy of systematic repression, expropriation, excess, and erasure. Mignolo (1989, 1992, 1994, 2003) names the three economies more explicitly. His work on a Renaissance and Spanish philosophy of language, tyrannic culture of alphabetic writing, and cultural literacy in the spread and expansion of a 500-year-old logic, (epistemic) system (of ideas, images, and ends), and *hegemonic architecture* is one example. Mignolo argues that as contents and sign carriers they have a role within modern/colonial situations chiefly shaped by *semiotic interactions* and its *cultural productions*. They aided in the invention of a philosophical, hierarchal, and pedagogical apparatus by a misanthropic skeptic whose *ends* are domination, management, and control. An *epistemic system* (of ideas, images, and ends) I refer to as "settler" emerges (Wolfe 2006; Mignolo 2011c; Arvin et al. 2013; Tlostanova 2017b; Yang 2017; Mignolo and Walsh 2018).

How a local-regional system-totality gained universality points to advantageous contents and practices surrounding the reception-production of a *hegemonic architecture*. Santiago Castro-Gomez (2005, 2007), Ramón Grosfoguel (2007, 2013), and Mignolo (2009, 2013) are alert to inventive-discursive contents implanted in theologically and secularly structured terms such as Being and Rights. An epistemology or hubris of the zero point-provenance (Kruks 1995)—observers observing from a nonsituated locus—is a focus. Because from here a pretended universality of a particular ethnies generating knowledge out of a fabricated privileged place of enunciation is mapped on a *Chain of Being* model (Lovejoy 1933). Such provincial pretenses reared a haunting design: the West is the guiding light destined to bring out the world's salvation, progress, and development as the center of space and present of time (see Mignolo 2011a). Ultimately, such a *structure of feeling and thought* produced a dualistic perspective and evolutionary continuum that eliminated coevolutionary views, producing absences, silences, and *ideas* of dispensability (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013; Bergland 2000; Escobar 2007; Quijano 2000a, 2000b, 2007; Trouillot 1995; Tuck and Yang 2012; Castro-Gomez 2007).

The zero point is constituted by egos (*conquiro*, *extermio*, and *cogito*) that reveal a colonial force by misanthropic skeptics (Grosfoguel 2007, 2013). An

epistemic system is mapped out from here. Literacies, images-signs-sounds, and rhetorics are not overtly named in Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007), María Lugones (2008), or other works of the MCC, but they cannot be ignored in a racial imaginary that invented and grafted new social-and-geocultural identities on a *Chain of Being* model (also see Veracini 2011). It situated the West as peak Man-Human while identifying *othered* people and lands as deficient in, without, and/or lacking, authorizing the Rights-to by Man-Human, ultimately satisfying a desire and objective to belong-to lands. *Thingification* (see Césaire 2001), and the invention of epistemic (less knowing) and ontological difference (less being), is the mark of *coloniality of being* (racialization, domination, exploitation, dispensability) en/gendering a nonbeing. This haunting design codified relations of domination as biological and natural, which engineered a technology of domination/exploitation around race/labor (Dussel 1995; Lugones 2010; Quijano 2000a, 2000b, 2007; Yancy 2008). What a focus on literacies, images-signs-sounds, and rhetorics underscores is how ontology is constituted by an epistemology 500 years in the making.

The MCC thus returns to the Americas and *Americanity* for a reason. It is to contend with a settler colonialism and modern/colonial and settlerizing imaginary that established a logic of domination, management, and control as well as a *modern/colonial world system* that fused a “new” through the “old” underwritten by a *hegemonic architecture* and *epistemic system* (of ideas, images, and ends). *Americanity* is a representation of the old. For Quijano and Wallerstein (1992), they understand *Americanity* as the establishment of new world views: the haunting design land was waiting to be discovered, owned, and transformed into “resources” by divine and natural right, and that *others* were dispensable or exploitable by divine and natural design. *Americanity* introduced new institutions, *coloniality* being the creation of hierarchal and rule-based organizations of relations between peoples and states, while the *modern/colonial world system* the superego of nation-states. For Quijano and Wallerstein, modernity nor the Western monocentric project can be conceived without the Americas as an ideological model and *Americanity* the ideological overlay to a new global logic and system of cultural power: *coloniality*, a *modern/colonial world system*, and a capitalist world-economy (and its aesthetics).

Out of *Americanity* came a structural logic that some may not be able to (supposedly) see but that underlies Western civilization, pan-global empires, and Eurocentrism. *Coloniality* has endured even as power is disputed because an *association of social interests* ensures its parts rearticulate into an adapted structure of power (Quijano 2000a, 2000b, 2007). Domination, management,

and control over domains of life are its *ends* (Mignolo 2007). *Coloniality's* modus operandi, according to the MCC, are the following: labor, resources, and products (capitalist enterprise); sex, resources, and products (bourgeois family); authority, institutions, and violence (nation-state); intersubjectivity, knowledge, and communication (Eurocentrism). Put another way, these *things*, whether we refer to it as a monster, computer, *Archive*, or four-headed machine—with legs, the projects of territorial (land-nature/resources) and epistemological (race/labor-capitalism) (ap/ex)propriation—is “the control of labor and subjectivity, the practices and policies of genocide and enslavement, the pillage of life and land, and the denials and structures of knowledge, humanity, spirituality, and cosmo-existence” (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, 16). This evidences once more how Eurocentrism is an epistemic and aesthetic issue partly because power is an epistemological, ideological, and rhetorical war on information. *Coloniality* is the force within a global-totalistic project of integration and racial homogenization that distinguishes Eurocentrism from other forms of domination in the history of the world.

There is no *modern/colonial world system* without *Americanity*. It is the union between the “old/modern” colonial logics working in and through crooked rhetorics and narratives of modernity. For the MCC, modernity has a politics as the hegemonic narrative of Western civilization and Eurocentrism. For Dussel (1995) and Mignolo (2005), one focus of a *decolonial analytic* thus is the invention of the Americas (e.g., *the idea*). From here, a myth of modernity presents, justifies, and rationalizes an *idea* of a universal right to victimize and sacrifice in the name of civilizing and human progress. It paints an organicist image of society with Western Europe as the brain and Western Europeans its far-reaching extremities (Quijano 2007). A myth of modernity submits a macro-historical subject whose rhetoric is an omnipotence of direction and finality. It is self-serving for an *association of social interests* to the extent that epistemology institutes ontology to fabricate pristine and unilinear logics of development positioning the West as the center of space and present of time (Grosfoguel 2007, 2013; Mignolo 2011a; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Quijano and Wallerstein 1992; Fabian 2014).

Mutated modalities (Christianity, Secularism, Modernity, Market designs) underscore the expression, modern colonialism—colonial modernities, or global modernities-colonialities. The MCC understands they are theologically and secularly structured. And that is why the *decolonial analytic* begins in and with the Americas and *Americanity*. There, a spatial colonial difference and colonization of space based on the idea of race and racial epistemologies was

the by-product of religious epistemic racism and a pursuit of power. It provided territorial (land-nature/resource) and epistemological (race/labor) projects of (ap/ex)propriation for capitalism to thrive even as power was disputed. Theo-politics, for the MCC, would become the bedrock of a secular epistemology and hubris of the zero point as well as a temporal colonial difference and colonization of time. Imperialism did not *replace* but mutated the translation of theo-politics utilizing the framework of a people deficient in, without, and/or lacking in pursuit of power. Theo-and-ego politics is an organizing framework, the MCC argue, that needs to be decolonized (Dussel 1995; Grosfoguel 2013; Mignolo 2006, 2008, 2011a). I argue that the claim of global modernities-colonialities nods to the materializing of a *thing* that for documentary purposes was necessary to help explain, rationalize, and justify the operation of a colonial matrix—coloniality of knowledge, being, nature, power—and its designs and technologies as the price for civilizing and human progress.

Before I transition to the *prospective vision*, it is important for me to recognize and acknowledge why I trace the MCC's (debatable) theses and propositions. I see them as archivists narrativizing the skeletal system of what I call the *Archive* with each return to the Americas and *Americanity*. Quijano and Wallerstein (1992) write, "Americanity has always been, and remains to this day, an essential element in what we mean by 'modernity'" (549). Dussel (1995) echoes, "Modernity appears when Europe organizes the initial world-system and places itself at the center of world history" (9-10). I argue that the MCC's break, shift, and categories of analysis appeal to scholars to approach the Americas as the backdrop for a site of writing and the materialization of a superstructure of written record I refer to as the *Archive*. That is to say, the archival record of a *modern/colonial world system* began in the Americas when a settler colonialism at the start of the modern world established some *things*, when superstructures of written records became necessary for documentary purposes, and when *designs* and technologies (which function much like an archive too) required an explanation, rationalization, and justification for its projects of territorial and epistemological expropriation. The *Archive* allows us thus to nuance our understanding of the power of the *idea*, a colonial matrix of power, and Western Imperialism, all of which are a prism through which to see the meeting-up of an *association of social interests* elsewhere and otherwise sharing in, importing, expanding, and/or disputing the *Archive's* designs and technologies. Overall, the *Archive's* function is regulative, with smaller archives elsewhere and otherwise both operating as its means to *appear, become*, and remain consequential and functioning to create textual death spaces.

If literacies, images-signs-sounds, and rhetorics were used to fashion a modern/colonial and settlerizing world, by the same token they can be utilized to wor(l)d *otherwise*. The MCC's *prospective vision* amends the *analytic* process of delinking and decolonizing the rhetoric of modernity from the logic of coloniality. Because Quijano (2007) understands epistemic extrication from a modern/colonial praxis of thinking, feeling, and being is crucial too. Quijano's understanding is vital for Tlostanova and Mignolo's (2012) *learning-unlearning-relearning* path (epistemological decolonization), comprised of denaturalizing imposed cultural and thinking programs and re-existing for new inter-epistemic/cultural communication (epistemic reconstitution). According to Escobar (2007, 2020), Lugones (1987), and Mignolo (2000a, 2007, 2011a), the goal is *pluriversality*: the coexistence and co-invention of worlds, doxas, and geo-and-body politics of knowledge and understanding. Of course, this is predicated on the *longing* expressed by the Zapatistas (EZLN 1997): "En el mundo que queremos nosotros caben todos" (89). A decolonial *prospective vision*, overall, is about changing the *contents* and *terms* of *thinking*, *feeling*, and *being-with* others (Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Quijano 2007; Tlostanova 2017a, 2017b).

A decolonial *prospective vision* demands epistemic disobedience. Sylvia Wynter (2007) understands that definitions and meaning of human/being have been contaminated by universal concepts (also see McKittrick 2015). For her it is vital then to unsettle the referent of human and being and approach both rather as a praxis. This is why Mignolo and Walsh (2018) advance a praxis of *thinking*, *feeling*, and *being-with*, which can unfold as Maldonado-Torres's (2007) restoration of the logics of the gift through a decolonial politics of *receptive generosity*. It can also unfold as Lugones's (1987) cross-cultural/racial and *playful world-traveling*. Here traveling is not a world view, but the *plurality of self/selves* as playful-creative traveler between incomplete yet visionary worlds where a deep "loving way of being and living [-with others]" is possible (3). This kind of traveling unsettles the pretext of laws of *what* and *who* can be *in-common* and invites life questions (how to hold some *things*, like a value [to live in-common, welcome, and love-another], in common) to be pursued in a wor(l)d *otherwise*, not on the basis of identity or identification but in the *non-name of all* (Acosta 2012). Within the MCC's *prospective vision*, I couch the contributions of my archival approach and the significance of a theory of archival impressions in a series of [H] questions initiated by Escobar (2020): "How can we construct the archive of this 'history book,' bearing in mind the full spectrum of beings—human and nonhuman—who inhabit it?" (58). In other words, "How

can we best construct the archive,” by which he means the archive of decolonial thinking, feeling, and doing, “of this new formation” (63, 84)?

(Decolonizing)—Archives and Archival Impressions

It is a risk to rest the idea of the *Archive* on the MCC’s theses and proposition. But even so, an archival approach and theory of archival impressions already proves its values to scholars who contemplate: How do we contend with a settler colonialism and the *idea of the Americas* at the turning point in world history that established the first stage of modernity and its darker sides? How can we unsettle modern/colonial and settlerizing amnesia? How do we make sense of some *things* that continue to traffic in the normative? What options exist that we could meaningfully and usefully describe as decolonizing? In the chapters for the first section, I aim to fill a gap in WRS by shinning a light on the underbelly of the *Archive* and excavating from its architecture imaginaries, logics, designs, systems, technologies, and palimpsestic narratives of domination, management, and control that function as archival impressions. While a geo-political US-based analysis is limiting, it will suffice both for the point I am making about the *Archive* and the appeal for an archival approach and theory of archival impressions. It is not meant to reflect *the* story or the *whole* story. It is one, despite the presence of a theoretical trap—“power is everywhere” (Foucault, 1978, 93)—that stories both a turning and nexus point in world history and a power living yet inaccessible by any one *thing* or *one* created out of the Americas. It is a story about some *things* left behind, which have not *ceased to be* for 500 years. It is a story that invites us to bear witness to the *exaggeration of crises* refracted (Gobineau 1915, 160), elsewhere and otherwise, that always already stages the emergence of a penetration into the space, place, and time of an-other (see Mbembe 2001; Bhabha 1994). “No archive,” Hall (2001) argued, “arises out of thin air” (89). So I ask you, my reader, to remain open to the idea that the Americas was a locus for a method of writing textual death spaces and the testing site for the materialization of the *Archive* that manifests and materializes across the cultural texts that I will read in what follows.

The racist Arthur de Gobineau (1915) understood that the institutions, laws, and customs the “dead master[s]” invented and prescribed to were architected to live-on long after they had passed (33). He hints both at a historicity and the rhetoricity (see Murphy et al. 1998; Agnew et al. 2010) of a world connected by *things* that have not *ceased to be* and that are in (supposedly) *operation with/out colonies*: ongoing structuring principles of settlerizing

encounters, interactions, and engagements organized by a colonial matrix of power and cloaked by rhetorics of modernity. De Gobineau understood then as academics do today that the power of power is determined in part by the affective element (*pesado-ness*) of human work and projects, archival impressions, the enduring effects and consequences on land, memory, knowledge, and relation-ing long after some *things* or some *one* has passed. Unknowingly, he laid out a framework of modern/colonial and settlerizing designs before academics would identify it as such by writing: “so long as even their shadows remain, the building stands, the body seems to have a soul, the pale ghost walks” (33). All this to say that what decolonizing archival impressions appeals for is an ethos of bearing witness in unsettling ways and a praxis of unsettling the settled: a seeing within the heart of ecocide, genocide, and ethno-and-epistemicide; a feeling of the souls’ *original impulse* to stage a haunting-and-ghostly totality of structures and institutions of *feelings and thoughts*; a deep orientation toward listening that can materialize whispers of *pale ghosts*. *There Is No Making It Out* attends to the historicity of and the rhetoricity behind archival impressions that give structure to and constitute the *Archives-archives*.

To talk of, intervene in, and/or unsettle the some *things* of our world we have to be present and be a witness to them. On the one hand, a decolonial turn thus is in part about readjusting distracted eyes, recalibrating sensibilities, and fine-tuning a deep orientation toward listening, all of which feed into an ethic of obligation and responsibility of *haunting back*, ethos of bearing witness in unsettling ways, and praxis of unsettling the settled; a seeing, feeling, and listening without being settled with and a *doing* of peeling back layers to unsettle the settled. On the other hand, a decolonizing turn is in part about *work*, in assemblage with *work elsewhere* and *otherwise*, that thinks “from and with standpoints, struggles, and practices, from and with praxical theorizings, conceptual theorizings, theoretical conceptualizings, and theory-building actionings,” regardless of whether the *work* is land- or epistemologically-centered (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 20). A decolonizing turn can only be determined by an assemblage of the *who*, *where*, *why*, *how*, and *for*. There is an underutilized yet powerful medium and undertheorized yet compelling means that lend themselves to both agendas. *There Is No Making It Out* submits for consideration thus an archival approach and a capacious theory of *archival impressions* as *praxical theorizing actioning*, one that invites a *decolonizing rhetoricity* in both *analytic and prospective* capacities, a *longing for making it out* the unsettling of the settled-ness of *things* and laboring toward both altering the *Archive-archives* and wor(l)ding *an-other* archive.

But while the *Archive* allows us to recognize the *idea of the Americas* as a turning and nexus point in world history, alone it can do no more than help us acknowledge how its designs and technologies remain with us today. Partly, I rely on conversation then by the MCC and Settler Colonial Studies (SCS) that a *decolonial analytic* is not an identity-driven but a technological analysis of the way designs are shared in, imported, expanded, and/or disputed by an *association of social interests*. In other words, the question is not solely about the “who” but the “what”—are the desires and objectives of power—and the “how” (Yang 2017, 14). Take for example the *idea*, alluded to multiple times already. Mignolo (2005) states, “The ‘idea’ of America is not only a reference to a place; above all, it operates on the assumed power and privilege of enunciation that makes it possible to transform an invented idea into ‘reality’” (151). By referring to the *idea* in this way, he invites an archival approach and theory of archival impressions, because like an archive, the *idea* records the archival impressions of *ideas* elsewhere and otherwise as much as it produces the *epistemological experiment* of it (Stoler 2002, 87). The *idea* transcends a reference to a place because it is as much a technology (the *idea of the Americas*, *humanitas*/anthropoi, race, epistemic and ontological differences, race/labor) as is the *Archive*—a prism through which to see the *idea of the Americas* refracted through the lens of *Americanity* and within the frame of modernity/coloniality. Still, some *thing* else is demanded.

My appeal for an archival approach as a critical method and theory of archival impression as a theoretical apparatus is not unfounded. In “Orientalism Reconsidered,” Said (1985) proposes an “epistemological critique” between the “development of a historicism” and the practice of imperialism that involves the “incorporation and homogenization of histories” (101). On the one hand, “incorporation” and “homogenization” invites a critical method that can contend with the historicity of some *things*. An archival approach lends itself here. On the other hand, it calls for a theoretical apparatus that can contend with the rhetoricity that leaves some *things* behind, near and far and elsewhere and otherwise. A theory of archival impressions approaches manifestations of an ongoing and organizing structuring principle of settlerizing encounters, interactions, and engagements *elsewhere* and *otherwise* as archetypical of a range of impressions that gives structure to, constitutes, and ensures an *Archive* in the making. While I am not suggesting power is monolithic or unfolds evenly, my starting points in inquiries of *stories-so-far* and the *possibilities of new stories* must include the *idea of the Americas*. It is the prism through which to see successive evolutions and mutated modalities of designs refracted through the lens of *Americanity* and within the frame of modernity/

coloniality. An archival approach and theory of archival impressions makes it possible to conceive of power as an *Archive*, regulative in function and constantly in a state of being-and-becoming, *appearing* and *becoming* consequential within and beyond its immediate settings and contexts because of how it is *in* assemblage with smaller archives (or the *working parts* of the *Archive*).

The value of an archival approach and theory of archival impressions is in what is afforded. An archival approach presents the opportunity to create an archive in the face of an *Archive* that does not want to retain certain memories. *It* reduces as much as it erases—white spaces-places : white time : white memory. But the memory the *Archive* attempts to efface, like the some *things* it attempts to cover-over, remain in land, memory, knowledge, and relation-ing long after some *things* or the ideas, images-signs-sounds, and ends of some *one* have passed. There are always wrinkles in power—a power that exists both in a precarious state and late stage—and thus some *things* beyond (Said 1985). Such an approach and theory thus are necessary at a time when settler colonialism and *coloniality* is understood by definition but, more often than not, is discussed in superficial or overtotalizing ways. When everything is coloniality or when settler colonialism and power exists everywhere, we lose sight of how power manifests in local forms and conditions and what exists *beyond*; where there are spaces of modern/colonial and settlerizing writing there are sites of counter-writing. This results in a loss of explanatory power (Acosta 2019). A theory of archival impressions offers the possibility to create time-stamped receipts, to take stock in other words of the impressions that give structure to, constitute, and ensure an *Archive* in the making. Now, discussions on intentions or motives can be problematic. In part, thus, I enlist William Benoit's (1996) notion of *dis-course about actions*, which allows me to conceive of the accumulation of *archival impressions* as accounts that function to explain, justify, interpret, and/or rationalize actions. We have the palimpsestic narratives in the following chapters to test that out, which tell stories of the good sides of modernity but is unsettled by archival impressions that editorialize its darker sides.

Neither settlers nor their accomplices or allies can ever be in full control of the afterlife of what they produce. But it would be a mistake at the same time to chalk up the (re)writing of “settler” or “settler” archives as mere coincidence. Both a framework of rhetorical ecologies and a rhetorical framework of palimpsests encourage us to recontextualize the (re)writing of such archives in their historical, temporal, and lived contexts. When done, the bleeding, as Edbauer (2005) might put it, of public rhetorics, memories, interactions, and forces is undeniable. I am more concerned thus both with the

rhetorical phenomena of (re)writing “settler” archives as archival impressions additive to the *Archive* and how they exist *in* assemblage elsewhere and otherwise to make, unmake, and remake the *structures of feeling and thought* and *epistemic murk* that contaminate humanity. With Benoit’s (1996) notion of *discourse about actions* thus, I approach the accumulation of “settler” and “settler” archives elsewhere and otherwise as sites of *doing*, accounts that function to explain, justify, interpret, and/or rationalize certain actions through acts of modern/colonial and settlerizing (re)writing. We have what Spivak (1988a) called the palimpsestic narratives of (colonialism and) imperialism as evidence of this. My conversations on “settler,” whether that entails the rhetorics of settler colonialism/settler archives or settler rhetorics of archival impression, hence benefit greatly from the intellectual universe of rhetorical ecologies, assemblage, circulation, and ambient rhetorics (see Wingard 2013; Rickert 2013; Gries and Brooke 2018). Within this universe, I find it possible once more to conceive of the *Archive* as *an* assemblage *in* assemblage with smaller archives (or the *working parts* of the *Archive*) that register the epistemological and ontological *idea of the Americas* in the frame of modernity/coloniality. Per rhetorical excavation work, I find that palimpsestic time (Alexander 2005), identities (Shohat 2002), and narratives (A. García 2004) are intentional cultural productions of modern/colonial and settlerizing mentalities baked into material forms of public memory such as the archives. Ultimately, I intend to argue that settler rhetorics of archival impressions, whether carried out by settlers, the posterity of settlers, or others who do *work* rhetorically to transmit modern/colonial and settlerizing designs, reflect an awareness—intentionality vis-à-vis iteration (see Bhabha 1994)—that impressions could be at the same time the domination of information, management of knowledge, and control of epistemic obedience in perpetuity.

The *Archive* documents existence and power and lends legitimacy to some *things* as much as it cements discursive practices. The latter includes impressing non-encounters with or a disavowal of presence in order to erase (the *other*, intrusions, violence), subsume, and/or underscore epistemic and ontological differences, practices to be shared-in, imported, expanded, and/or even disputed (see Adams-Campbell, Falzetti, and Rivard 2015, 109–110). Both an archival approach and theory of archival impressions create the occasion then to recognize and acknowledge that if the *Archive* is an *epistemological experiment*, by the same token *Archive-archives* can be an experiment for a wor(l)ding *otherwise*—the connective tissue between a *praxical theorizing* and *theory building actioning*. Both ground *an-other* exigence that forms *an-other* question. With

our capacity to have knowledge of the inner workings of the *Archive*, *what is our obligation and responsibility*? Surely, it cannot be to give back to the *Archive*. Thus, how do we reposition the contents of the *Archive-archives* so that we can position ourselves in relation to them *otherwise*? The significance of an archival approach and theory of archival impressions is in what it ultimately appeals for in this book, the initiating of decolonizing archival impressions.

Decolonizing archival impressions function in the vein of *analytic tasks and prospective visions*. Along the lines of archival impressions—entries of writing impressed and initiated by some *things* or some *one* that bears on and enduringly acts upon *Archive/archives*—decolonizing archival impressions reflects entries of counter-writing impressed and initiated by some *one* meant to unsettle the settled-ness of *things* and bring about decolonizing agendas that can alter the *Archive-archives* and wor(l)d *an-other* archive. An argument put forth at the onset of this book bears repeating. If we are all in and part of the *Archive* that means we too are an *archive*. Here I turn on rhetoricity, a most central theme in this book, to emphasize *doings* behind (decolonizing) archival impressions. Regarding *decolonizing rhetoricity*, I mean then *doings* that both strategically re-assemblages decolonizing *archives* and conceives of *archives* as *decolonizing archival impressions*. An archival approach affords the opportunity to retain the memory of a “Weism” initiating *doings* and *archival impressions elsewhere* and *otherwise* that may indeed give structure to and constitute *an-other* archive. Akin to Wynters then, the suffix *-ing* is not meant to convey the arrival of a proper arrival and arrivant—the decolonized agent or decolonization—but underscores a laboring that operates as a decolonizing force *in* assemblage with other *work*; *work* that can be characterized as a rhetoric of counter-writing.

In my geopolitical context, I ask, what is the US if not the *dead master's* inventions—institutions—and the enlargement of the grounds for *pale ghosts* to walk, persevering 500 years later in the form of *public secrets* and *monstrous intimacies*? The *idea of the University* and WRS is a most immediate case in point. The former coincides with and remains an essential pillar of modern/colonial and settlerizing designs (Bhambra, Gebrial, and Nisancioglu 2018; Grande 2018; Grosfoguel, Hernandez, and Velasquez 2016; Patel 2021; Peña 2022; Santos 2017). The latter, by simply calling into question its existence, reveals a discipline hitched to an archive of ghosts, predicated on an *Aristotelian syndrome*, and in the service of such designs (G. Olson 1998; Lu 1992; Kennedy 1998; Brereton 1995; Connors 1992, 1997; Bernal 1987; Ezzaher 2008; K. Lloyd 2011, 2013; Lyon 2010; You 2006, 2023; Russel 1991). Neither is inconsequential as

they help maintain the US as one big wounded/wounding space and place—a cemetery of gravesites (Till 2012; Brasher, Alderman, and Inwood 2017). Convinced either will only ever absorb and tokenize resistance (Brittenham 2001), and knowing there is no making it out of institutions or the *Archive*, I amend Mignolo's (2000b) article title and thus ask, what is the role of humanities scholars-educators in the throes and face of some *things* that remain trafficking in the normative? I believe it can be to unsettle the past and intervene in the settled-ness of the present. An archival approach and theory of (decolonizing) archival impressions lend themselves to such aims, especially as we remain under the yoke of the *Archive* and as WRS lacks a theory of writing and rhetoric that can assume and reckon with the enduring, epistemological, and rhetorical force that is modern/colonial and settlerizing designs.

There Is No Making It Out is concerned with what remains in land, memory, knowledge, and relationality after some *thing* or some *one* has passed. But neither hauntings nor haunting situations unfold evenly. So it behooves us to create a public record of how modern/colonial and settlerizing designs manifest in local forms and conditions and how they show up in our everyday lives (Tlostanova 2017a). The role of humanities scholar-educators cannot be overstated here because as researchers, scholars, and educators we know that such designs require a *semiotic apparatus of enunciation* that situates us squarely on literacies, images-signs-sounds, and rhetorics. We can contribute thus more robust conversations on modern/colonial and settlerizing designs and comprehensive versions of its rhetorics. We can provide thus richer and extensive accounts on the effects and consequences of hauntings and haunting situations on land, memory, knowledge, and relation-ing. We can do this by rhetoricizing (Davidson 1996) with a *decolonial analytic* informed by rhetorical analytical methods, rhetorics of epistemology, truth-and-knowledge claims, and the rhetoricity behind archival impressions. Such will underscore how rhetoric needs to matter because it demands engagement with the full spectrum of matter—the living, nonliving, and nonhuman (Eberly 2002). It will appeal for a politics of hauntings, inheritances, and dwellings. But more importantly, by creating a public record, we can reposition the contents of archives and position ourselves in relation to it *otherwise*. And it is my hope that such sparks the exigence then for initiating decolonizing archival impressions.

Overall, decolonizing archival impressions applies in the book to knowledge, being (broadly conceived), and relation-ing. Because we cannot decolonize being without decolonizing knowledge (Mignolo and Walsh 2018). I

define decolonizing archival impression in short thus as the unsettling, decolonizing, and amending of Euro/Western-centric cultural, thinking, and being programs. Will a *future-to-come* (Derrida 1994b) tell of the *choices* we made to send decolonizing signals, decolonizing archival impressions, to the *Archive*? I have this hope that if the *Archive-archives* are in part a *human thing* human beings have built, the by-product of temporally initiated physical contact and the accumulation of some *things* left behind by human touch, then perhaps healing can be the condition of and for the archivization of impressions carried out *otherwise* (see Escobar 2020, xxiv, 51, 63). A *doing* of a “Weism” in the service to the full spectrum of matter—living, nonliving, nonhuman—is where *an-other* archive can start.

Chapter Breakdown

There Is No Making It Out is not at all about making it out. It is about the demands for some *thing* else. That some *thing* else in this book leads me to the *Archive-archives* and archival impressions. Both underscore the *doing* behind some *things* made, unmade, and remade in unending cycles, and the possibility of a slow and deep (de/re)compositioning of *things otherwise*. It is about the contents of a modern/colonial and settlerizing *Archive*, where I offer case studies on the *idea of the Americas* and how it manifests in local forms and conditions in the US. I *return* to and *carefully reckon* with the *idea of Utah* and *Mormon/ism* and *Texas* and *the settler* as archival impressions within this archive. The book is also about how its designs show up in students’ *archives*—adhering to, interacting with, and/or carrying out the projects and work that the *Archive* represents. The essential focus of *There Is No Making It Out* takes shape in the form of a question: How do we reposition the contents of archives so that we can position ourselves in relation to it *otherwise*? I respond as a literacy researcher and rhetorical scholar with each chapter functioning as an initiation of (decolonizing) archival impressions across multiple literacy, semiotic, and rhetorical scenes. If literacies, images-signs-sounds, and rhetorics have been used to construct settler sites, constitute haunted/haunting communities, and maintain wounded/wounding spaces and places, by the same token they can be used alongside such (decolonizing) archival impressions as stepping-stones toward the *possibilities of new stories*.

There Is No Making It Out is compartmentalized into three sections underscoring how we cannot decolonize being without decolonizing knowledge. The first section, “An Archival Interruption: The Analytic,” centers on modern/

colonial and settlerizing designs and how they manifest in local forms and conditions in the US vis-à-vis a *decolonial analytic* (put forth by the MCC). Methodologically speaking, what is locatable, identifiable, and nameable—the rhetorics of settler colonialism/settler archives and settler rhetorics of archival impressions—is analyzable. The first section features multi-sited inquiries of the *idea*, which as Mignolo (2005) claims, “is not only a reference to a place . . . it operated on the assumed power and privilege of enunciation that makes it possible to transform an invented idea into ‘reality’” (151). Settler archival research and piecemealing of archives through the creation of public records is the method. The three chapters of section 1 establish how writing, rhetoric, place, archives, and modern/colonial and settlerizing designs are intertwined. They contain decolonial-driven close readings and a rhetoricizing of rhetorics of epistemology, truth-and-knowledge claims, and the rhetoricity behind archival impressions. Overall, the first section contributes to a theory of writing and rhetoric that can assume and reckon with the enduring, epistemological, and rhetorical force that is modern/colonial and settlerizing designs vis-à-vis an archival approach and theory of archival impressions.

Chapter 1, “An Epistemic System and Modern/Colonial and Settlerizing Designs,” is spatially and temporally situated in Spanish conquest and among Euro-and-North American descendants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It traces, per the MCC’s theses and propositions, the historical foundation, successive evolutions and stages, and mutated modalities of the *epistemic system* and designs of a 500-year-old *Archives*. Tracking with the MCC, SCS, and Indigenous scholars in academia, I approach “settler” not necessarily as an identity, but as an *epistemic system* of ideas, images-signs-sounds, and ends. With a *decolonial analytic*, I interrogate how a local-regional system-totality of territorial and epistemological projects of (ap/ex)propriation gained universality. I do this by attending to a *semiotic apparatus of enunciations* and tracing how an *association of social interest* shared-in, imported, and expanded-disputed viewpoints of Man-Human-Rights. Chapter 1 establishes the basis for understanding the colonial matrix of power—coloniality of knowledge, being, nature, and power—and modern/colonial and settlerizing designs as acts of writing.

Chapter 2, “Corrido-ing the Idea of Utah and Mormon/ism,” is spatially and temporally situated in the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is a case of the *idea of Utah* and *Mormon/ism* based on settler archival research. Chapter 2 is guided by two questions. How does the *idea* function as an archival impression within the *Archive*? And believing we are all in and

part of this archive still in the making, what can the initiating of decolonizing archival impressions afford us? With a *decolonial analytic*, I interrogate settler archives-as-*epistemological experiments* and excavate the march toward hegemony out of the project of modernity. Attending to a *semiotic apparatus of enunciations*, I create a public record-archive of and rhetoricize rhetorics of epistemology, truth-and-knowledge claims, and the rhetoricity behind archival impressions. Out of that work, I investigate how rhetorical and affective strategies of church settlers invent new images, myths, and meanings of place and citizen/ship and naturalize an *epistemic system* and the *modus operandi* of modern/colonial and settlerizing designs. Chapter 2 demonstrates one role that humanities scholars-educators can play in unsettling the past and intervening in the settled-ness of the present.

Chapter 3, “Corrido-ing the Idea of Texas-LRGV and the Settler,” is spatially and temporally situated in the United States during the twentieth century. Based on settler archival research, it is a case on how the *idea of Texas* served as a foundation for the *idea of the Magic Valley* and *the settler* in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Chapter 3 is guided by the same two questions as chapter 2. With a *decolonial analytic*, I interrogate settler archives and settler advertisements-as-*epistemological experiments* and excavate the march toward hegemony out of the project of modernity. Attending to a *semiotic apparatus of enunciations*, I create a public record-archive of and rhetoricize rhetorics of epistemology, truth-and-knowledge claims, and the rhetoricity behind archival impressions. Out of that work, I investigate how rhetorical and affective strategies of settlers invent new images, myths, and meanings of place and citizen/ship and naturalize an *epistemic system* and the *modus operandi* of modern/colonial and settlerizing designs. Chapter 3 underscores the role humanities scholars-educators can play in initiating decolonizing archival impressions.

Illuminating practices of invention and *epistemological experiments* is a move toward potentially decolonizing knowledge and possibly decolonizing being. The second section, “Decolonizing Archival Impressions: The Im/Possibilities of a Prospective Task,” complements the decolonizing of knowledge with the prospect of decolonizing being. It ruminates over the role of humanities scholars-educators in the lives of students we teach. It features multi-sited inquiries of how modern/colonial and settlerizing designs show up in students’ *archives*, a prism through which to see how the historicity and rhetoricity of their *stories-so-far* adhere to, interact with, and/or carry out the projects and work the *Archive* represents. The central methods are quasi-classroom

ethnography and *literacy history interviews*—interviews that trace and encourage participants to share a partial picture of the ways literacy and literacies (broadly conceived) are situated, inherited, embodied, experienced, practiced, and/or are altered by chance encounters, human interactions, and/or other kinds of engagements (broadly conceived)—which are included in a snapshot format and edited slightly for coherence (see Vieira 2016). The two chapters of section 2 contain observations, reflections, and student accounts. It is guided by the questions: How do we reposition the contents of *archives* so that we can position ourselves in relation to it *otherwise*? How do we encourage decolonizing archives and the initiating of archival impressions *otherwise*? Here, rhetorical studies invites us to recognize and acknowledge that if archives are a by-product of human touch, by the same token, it is our everyday hand-touch that can initiate archival impressions *otherwise*. (¡Ojalá!)

Chapter 4, “Making It Out of Haunting Mentalities,” speaks to efforts to initiate decolonizing archival impressions in the classroom. It is an Institutional Review Board (IRB)–approved case study, where I reflect on the questions, *where is one at, whom is one teaching, and what can be gained from placed-based pedagogies?* (Tinberg 1990). Chapter 4 interrogates how my classroom became an extension of the everyday-ness of Utah, investigates the parallels between the *Archive* and students’ *stories-so-far*, and contemplates the prospect of decolonizing knowledge-being in the classroom. It underscores how curricula and pedagogical agendas do not always go as planned. Because what is good in theory—encouraging students to create a public record of the contents of their *archive* and situating them at the nexus of their *stories-so-far* and *possibilities of new stories*—does not always translate or bode well in practice, especially when human beings are involved. Chapter 4 speaks to all humanities scholars-educators who ought to know that decolonizing knowledge-being is conceptually, pedagogically, and emotionally complex, messy, and to some extent impossible.

Chapter 5, “Making It Out of Haunted Mentalities,” speaks to efforts to initiate decolonizing archival impressions in the lives of first-generation students who identify as Mexican, Mexican America, Latino/a, or Hispanic in Texas and Utah. It is a multi-sited IRB-approved case study, where I reflect on the same two questions as Chapter 4. Chapter 5 interrogates the parallels between the *Archive* and students’ *stories-so-far*, investigates the role that archival research can play, and contemplates the prospective of decolonizing knowledge-being in the classroom. It tells of how some are on bad terms with both making it out and anything that gets in the way. Chapter

5 speaks to resistances, though, to theory made evident by the everyday of those whose reality and needs are in conflict, and thus, at odds with the ideal of both a decolonial option and academic responsibility (see Spivak 1994). Chapters 4 and 5 raise compelling questions both about the im/possibilities of a *prospective vision* (put forth by the MCC) for the classroom (and beyond) and whether it is suitable for *anyone*. Reflecting on its entanglements and complicity with *academic responsibility*, both chapters claim there is a demand for something else.

The third section, “The Demand for Something Else,” responds to the question, What then, if decolonizing knowledge-being is to some extent impossible in the classroom? The final chapter both deliberates whether it is just a possibility that has yet to be worked out and contemplates if decolonizing knowledge-being can exist under certain conditions. If the perils of reductive, dichotomous, and oppositional rhetorical structures remain intact, it is argued, it strains both how to see that we are all in and part of the *Archive* and thus *do otherwise*. Such undermines too how we might go about constellating our *archives*, wor(l)ding decolonizing archival impressions, and unsettling the *Archive otherwise*. The chapter takes seriously Said’s (1983, 242), Hall’s (2019, 322), and Derrida’s (2021, 6) arguments that the obligation and responsibility of the “scholar” is to be critical and thus to think of the very intellectual work we prescribe to under erasure if only to initiate a “break” and bring about something “new.” Thus, section 3 is about the demand for something else, some *thing* that can unsettle the settled-ness of the *Archive* and yet be more in tune with reality and the exigencies surrounding the world we live in today.

The final chapter, “Being-and-Becoming Recognizable to ‘We/arth,’” returns to the question of how to live otherwise as taken up by Alcoff (2011), Derrida (1994b), Fanon (1986), A. Gordon (2008), and the MCC. Each offers his or her own framework—revitalized reconstructive work in epistemology, hauntology, a world of You, an *epistemological framework for the living*—across scenes of the *Archive-archives* that is a haunted/haunting *story-so-far*. It investigates whether a decolonial option is suitable for anyone, *wherever they may be* and in the *non-name of all* (Acosta 2012; Fanon 1986). The final chapter deliberates thus how to till the grounds on which power takes root without foreclosing on another’s *possibilities of new stories*. Recalling *shadow work* and an ethic, ethos, and praxis of *thinking, feeling, and being-with* the full spectrum of matter (living, nonliving, and nonhuman), it sketches out an *epistemological framework for the haunted* as one option that can create the conditions under which decolonizing knowledge-being may be possible in the classroom and beyond. It

underscores the essential foci of this book—archives, repositioning the contents of archives so that we can position ourselves in relation to it *otherwise*, and the exigence for initiating decolonizing archival impressions. And facilitated by *deep rhetoricity*, such a framework, I conclude, grounds how we might learn how to *be-and-become* recognizable to an-*other* archive—“We/arth”—and thus engage in a wor(l)ding of a future of the “We/arth.” Can this word or figure be stabilized (see Derrida 1995, 14)? I have hope that it is at least conceivable to struggle over its possibility.

Can archives feel? The chapters that follow will evidence a refusal by settlers (and posterity) and the haunted to surrender the hope in that *possibility*. Each chapter functions both as an impression and entry submitted into this book that is an archive. The point is to connect hauntings and haunting situations with the experiences of human beings across space, place, and time. It can come to form the basis for a *doing* otherwise. Ultimately, this book might upset readers. I might get a lot of things wrong, especially in conceiving of power as an *Archive in assemblage* with smaller archives (or the *working parts* of the *Archive*). Still, I intend to argue throughout that the *Archive* is perhaps the most honest and critical space to think and speak from. Moreover, I offer no definitive resolutions in the throes and face of a haunting reality; there is no making it out. Still, I maintain there is the possibility of altering and wor(l)ding *otherwise*. I offer thus only a hope that impressions may give way to the *possibilities of new stories*—a wor(l)ding of an-*other* archive. I offer then only an-*other* set of options that presents us with an-*other* set of questions that grounds an-*other* set of exigences. I have found that the meaning of *stories-so-far* and the *possibilities of new stories* can be found in *that process*.

It is necessary for a people who have hope that the *work* we do today may plant the seeds of a future to be reaped by a world of tomorrow *yet to arrive*. Ojalá—because if “one could count on what is coming, hope would be but the calculation of a program” (Derrida 1994b, 212). Wor(l)ding in this book, then, is nothing more than recognizing and acknowledging that wording is human work and we do human work, as humanities scholars-educators, that *takes* and can make *place* otherwise. This is a wor(l)ding de-linked from Martin Heidegger’s (1962) grip (see Spivak 1985a, 1985b) and re-linked to a verb (A. Gordon 2008; Haraway 2008, 2016b; Rickert and Salvo 2006) in which “we” carry out *work* in the service of being-for (see Davis 2010, 2017).