

**Decolonial Disability Futurities From the Global South:
Radical Relational Lessons From Glissant**

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Abstract

This essay explores decolonial disability futurities through the lens of Glissant's notions of creolization and opacity. The author pursues bridging of global South and global North contexts, stressing the need for relational cross-coalitional¹ approaches for ethics, epistemology and politics meaningful across various intersectional subalternity² categories, e.g., disability, race, gender, caste and class.

Keywords: decolonial disability, agentic intersectionality, relational becoming

¹ By speaking of cross-coalitional, I not only mean cross-disability collaborations. I am especially interested in collaborations between cross-disability and other forms of activism by oppressed groups, e.g., racialized and gendered minorities, caste and underclass marginalized segments of the population, etc.

² See note #8 below for a discussion on the origins of this expression and its relevance to the present essay.

Decolonial Disability Futurities From the Global South:

Radical Relational Lessons From Glissant

I am a disabled scholar of color born and raised in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. My own work reflects the features of a disabled of color organic intellectual, to use Gramsci's famous category (Salamini, 2014; Srivastava & Bhattacharya, 2012). Therefore, I deliberately focus throughout the present essay on relational elements which pertain to body/mind issues. These issues are important because they align with what Michael Oliver designated more than three decades ago as disablement (Oliver, 1996). They are intrinsically connected to micro and macro identity trajectories within colonial and neocolonial configurations. These trajectories need careful examination to elevate the intersectional and complexifying explanations within existing and emerging articulations of critical disability studies.

My purpose in this essay is to link intersectional disability and decolonial/inter-imperialist theorizing (see, p. 6 and following in this essay for definitions) from the global South (Padilla, 2021a; Edwards, 2003; Gordon, 1995). Importantly, the expression global South does not circumscribe its meaning to geographical regions placed in the southern hemisphere. Its meaning primarily relates to marginalized knowledges, even if they flourish within global North nations, i.e., United States, Canada, Germany and so forth. By contrast, when I talk of global North or global North contexts throughout the essay, I allude to Euro-American spaces of knowledges which, especially since the 15th century, have controlled the production, distribution and hierarchization of knowledges that matter, at the expense of every other kind of knowledge outside of such prescribed spaces and ways of knowing (see, e.g., Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992). My approach elevates analytical contributions from

Édouard Glissant. Glissant was a late 20th and early 21st century decolonial global South Caribbean thinker/poet who emphasized relational ontologies (see, e.g., Drabinski, 2014, 2019; Glissant, 1989, 1997. See also, Escobar, 2020b). As one of the essay's reviewers aptly points out, Glissant was also for long periods part of the intellectual life of Paris and New York, among other global North, i.e., Euro-American epistemic centers. Since the global North/global South divide is not fundamentally geographical but rather linked to the politics of knowledge marginalization, this feature in Glissant's intellectual trajectory may help elevate the dialogical potential of his perspectives for transcending global South knowledge marginality. At the same time, this may emphasize the power of relational, place-based ways of thinking, feeling and creating as intrinsic to disability-based modes of decoloniality. Some authors regard Glissant as a post-postcolonial or second wave anticolonial thinker (Drabinski, 2019; Prieto, 2010). This differentiates Glissant from other global South postcolonial figures such as Fanon in the French Caribbean, Guevara in Cuba and throughout Latin America, or Senghor and Césaire, in the first wave of anticolonial movements which germinated throughout Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. In Glissant, one finds a much more complexified picture of agency and futurities. He is particularly attentive to political economy dimensions of material relationality. His approach is strongly grounded on a radical poetics of relationality.

My reference to relational ontologies in the previous paragraph alludes to understandings of being and becoming which, almost always situated in spatial politics, engender knowledges and diverse modes of truth-telling from “habits born of the imagination in place” (de Freitas, 2023, p. 200). In this sense, these understandings express poetic ways of

being tied to place and imagination. Among Glissant's many conceptual contributions associated with radical decoloniality, I focus on the concepts of opacity and creolization (which I define below, see, p. 11 and following in this essay). This entails elevating their sentipensante/ pluriversal politics, modes of knowledge creation and distribution along with their imaginative value. The term sentipensante was coined by Orlando Fals Borda (2016) in Colombia. It alludes to knowledge creation and dissemination paradigms which give preeminence to feeling and relationality in the articulation of thought processes. The expression pluriversal politics, on the other hand, was coined by Arturo Escobar (2018, 2020a; see also the introduction for Mignolo, 2021). It stresses the idea of pluriverse as antagonistic to the monolithic idea of universe with its hierarchical, Eurocentric ways of knowing and doing. Instead, it emphasizes multiple forms of knowing which operate relationally, in a political ecology of close interdependence and strict horizontality. As Glissant (1997) puts it: "thought usually amounts to withdrawing into a dimensionless place in which the idea of thought alone persists. But thought in reality spaces itself out into the world. It informs the imaginary of peoples, their varied poetics..." (p. 1).

I use these analytical categories to enrich the exploration of possibilitarian³ modes of intersectional disability futurities. I thus aim to bridge global North and global South knowledges and contexts, fostering through this bridging cross-coalitional agency. Here is my core thesis. Recent Eurocentric epistemologies such as those of Heidegger and Nietzsche

³ Senese (1991) uses this qualifier to describe critical pedagogy thinkers who, like Giroux (1983, 1988) tend to be under the influence of Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci. Instead of mere critique, these thinkers prefer to use transformative approaches to resistance that open up possibilities for the oppressed. These possibilities are unique insofar as they often seem impossible at first glance when one considers structural barriers and power dimensions.

are fundamentally grounded on an imaginative ethos of ruin and disaster (See Miller, 2009; Drabinski, 2019, especially Ch. 2; & Mendieta, 2012). Possibilitarian⁴ decoloniality approaches from the global South such as those of Glissant are instead grounded on relational ethics and hope. This is revolutionary. It allows to forge equity-driven intersectional subalternity⁵ futurities centered on antiracist/anti-ableist and disability justice concerns.

In the next section, I start by tackling decolonial/inter-imperialist theorizing from the global South. I examine it in terms of its relevance for critical disability studies regarding relational ways of being and becoming. Next, I turn to Glissant's analytical contributions. I highlight their intersectional disability justice significance. I do so by approaching being/becoming as well as relational/ experiential knowledge production and distribution through the innovative lenses of decolonial opacity and creolization as sentipensante/pluriversal⁶ politics and knowledges (Padilla, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b; Escobar, 2018, 2020a). I then conclude by linking these analytical discussions with the configuration of cross-coalitional, intersectional disability futurities. In so doing, I emphasize the search for

⁴ Throughout the essay, I use the adjective possibilitarian to qualify multiple conceptual and action-oriented categories. Apart from possibilitarian decoloniality, I talk of possibilitarian modes of intersectional disability futurities, possibilitarian justice-seeking thirdspaces, neocolonial sociopolitical spaces of possibilitarian futurity, inter-imperialism's hybrid possibilitarian spaces for both hegemony and counter-hegemony, and the possibilitarian contours of creolization and opacity. In every instance, I emphasize the situated emancipation power of possibilitarian modes of agency, especially in terms of cross-coalitional movement building and collective action that learns from the global South even within global North contexts of ableist, racialized or other kinds of intersectional subalternity/oppression.

⁵ Through this particular expression, I build on the work of J. D. Saldivar (2012). Saldivar is unique in his interrogation of the subaltern, making an explicit connection to the coloniality of power while also emphasizing the location of these categories within postcolonial studies. In his 2012 volume, Saldivar analyzes writings by Jose Marti, Sandra Cisneros, Toni Morrison, Arundhati Roy, and others, addressing issues such as the "unspeakable" in subaltern African American, U.S. Latinx/Chicanx, Cuban, and South Asian literature as well as constructions of subaltern identities. The latter is particularly relevant to my discussions of decolonial and intersectional disability dimensions.

⁶ See my previous explanation on their origin and definitions.

practical ways to bridge global South and global North contextual and agency considerations. My aim is to forge the building of alternative movements centered on equity-driven situated modes of emancipation. These are complex and relationally rich alternatives. They, like global North disability justice (Minguz, 2011) endeavors, have the power of placing subaltern/marginalized agents with disabilities and their experiential/ sentipensante articulations and multiple knowledges at the core of new agency dynamics. However, through decoloniality, these alternative endeavors bring disabled global South knowledges into the emancipatory equation. In this sense, I am trying to find ways to turn the tables of changemaking so as to put destiny in the hands of those who until now have been deemed without power or without spaces for decision-making.

Decolonial Disability and Inter-Imperialist Theorizing from the Global South:

Interrogating Critical Disability Studies via Agency

Goodley et al. (2019) formulate a set of questions to assess and shake by means of provocation the state of critical disability studies (CDS). They elevate various crucial considerations which impact the future development of the field. The last two of the questions proposed by these authors read as follows: "what matters or gets said about disability; and how can we attend to disability and ability?" (p. 972). Goodley et al. claim to come into these critical considerations through a reflexive paradigm. This paradigm is said to privilege an understanding of disability framed as politicized and filtered by precarity, crisis and uncertainty (Goodley et al., 2019, p. 972; see also, Jones, 2018). Their provocations are valuable. However, by failing to elevate relational dimensions, particularly as experienced in the global South, they only scratch the surface when it comes to addressing the political

nature of decolonial and intersectional disability matters. Within global South contexts, these matters are so politically grounded and immersed in micro-macro transgressions that they demand for activism and research to blur boundaries to make a difference in terms of justice-seeking endeavors.

Elsewhere, Goodley and his colleagues touch on the links between disability, ableism and empire (Goodley, 2014; Goodley & Lawthom, 2011). A careful survey of CDS makes evident the need to sharpen our understanding of the complex relational, politicized and material precarity roots of ableism, ability and disability in terms of decoloniality and intersectional subalternity (for expanded discussions, see e.g., the essays in Afeworki Abay & Soldatic, forthcoming, 2024). I aim to supplement these ongoing and emerging developments. I thus explore connecting and divergent points regarding decoloniality and inter-imperialism.

Introducing Inter-Imperialism

As used in this essay, inter-imperialism is both cause and product of domination and emancipation elements which interact in complex ways. It thus depends on fluid transmodernities, to use Dussel's (1997, 2008a, 2008b) terminology. Dussel's idea of fluid transmodernities operates within and beyond the limits of colonial and decolonial spaces of modernity. As such, it allows one to understand how, for example, in trans-Latinx and trans-Caribbean intersectional identities, there is a coexistence of African, Asian and uniquely American modes of oppressive marginality, what I call subalternities throughout the essay. These subalternities from the global South subvert the Eurocentric coloniality of power, knowledge and being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; see also, Mignolo, 2021; Quijano, 2000,

2006; Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992). The concept alludes to the othering power of Eurocentric coloniality. Resting on Levinas, a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust, the coloniality of being was for Maldonado-Torres fundamentally a critique of ontology, namely the metaphysical engagement with being in time, in the manner spelled out by Heidegger (Levinas, 1989). To be sure, ontology became for Levinas “a philosophy of power ... ultimately complicit with violence. Conversely, a new starting point presented itself for him, one that would make sure that philosophy would not lead, be complicit, or provoke blindness⁷ in respect to dehumanization and suffering" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 241). Therefore, Maldonado-Torres’ coloniality of being is especially important within the purposes of this essay. It helps analyze disability in global South and global North contexts, explaining othering/abjection as expressed through anti-ableist and racialized processes (Padilla, 2021b). These processes are intrinsic to late capitalist modes of existence (Padilla, Forthcoming, 2024). For instance, Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 253) indicates that for “Fanon, the black is not a being or simply nothingness. The Black is something else. The enigma of blackness appears as the very radical starting point to think about the coloniality of Being.”

Likewise, disabled Latinx and Caribbean folks (many of whom self-identify as Black or afro-descendant) represent radical beings who subvert the coloniality of being. They embody possibilitarian, justice-seeking thirdspaces (Waitoller and Annamma 2017; Soja

⁷ The use of the word blindness by Maldonado-Torres in this quote has ableist connotations. It is consistent with what blind scholars such as David Bolt (2014), among other CDS authors have criticized as ocularcentric, that is, a tendency to equate blindness with one’s inability to know or to have consciousness. Nonetheless, in this passage, the meaning of the word attempts to counteract philosophy’s colonial tendency to desensitize folks from the dehumanizing hierarchization of suffering. This is something that gets enabled through the othering power of Eurocentrism. Borrowing from Levinas’ concerns as a Jew, Maldonado-Torres is warning all of us about the danger of remaining oblivious to such othering dehumanization as a respectable approach to knowledge and knowing.

1989, 1996). Soja (1989) developed the term thirdspace to disrupt the binary between spaces of existence and spaces of non-existence. In this sense, thirdspaces are possibilitarian, hopeful ways of creating new futurities. They can emerge precisely where spaces of non-existence and annihilation were once prevalent. Subaltern thirdspaces are made up of waves and wakes of converging diasporas. They are dynamically constituted in Latin America and the Caribbean by what Robert Young (2001) calls tri-continentalism (alluding to Africa, Asia and Latin America as neocolonial sociopolitical spaces of possibilitarian futurity). Often, no doubt, these diasporic waves and wakes are filled with mixtures of extreme violence and pockets of hope. Nonetheless, insofar as they embody decolonial alterity through spaces of non-Eurocentrism, they are constantly becoming and discovering complex modes of relational interdependence. In other words, they are the very making and unmaking of continuous birth and rebirth against the wakes of suffering which have plagued these global South contexts with their unique knowledges. Their colonial suppression was not able to extinguish the vitality and generative creativity of these knowledges. They work through their fluid transmodern (Dussel, 1997, 2008a, 2008b) ways of being and becoming. They operate in their transformational emancipatory power through constant real and symbolic border-crossings.

In addition, the powerful knowledges of Blackness and negritude dynamics make possible to start understanding inter-imperialist legacies and complexities. This is because coloniality makes up LatDisCrit's⁸ and disabled trans-Caribbean contemporary modes of being and becoming. Their decolonial sense of collective action enfolds, for example, in

⁸ This term alludes simultaneously to Latinx disability and critical race readings and experiences (see Padilla, 2021a, 2021b, forthcoming, 2024).

global North and global South pedagogical experiences (Dei, 2017; Dei & Hilowle, 2018; Dei & McDermott, 2014). For example, U.S. global North classrooms, especially in urban areas, are being reshaped by the relational presence of Black Latinx and Black Caribbean students with and without disabilities. At the same time, one must remember that neo-colonial forces are still at work. For instance, in trans-Latinx embodiments of indigeneity and mestizaje, one finds vestiges of anti-Black and ableist sentiments. They often proliferate as micro-political and sociocultural oppression coming from teachers and White students (Padilla, 2021a, ch. 6; see also, Gudmundson & Wolfe, 2010).

In the tri-continental making of trans-Latinx and Caribbean experiences of disablement, there are pervasive macro-political forces as well. For example, their configuration of coloniality translates at the micro level through internalized racism. This manifests as deficit thinking and learned helplessness for most subaltern Latinx of color with disabilities, their families or guardians, and even for many of their self-proclaimed advocates. Within global North contexts, it is quite common for anti-Black sentiment to drive intra-Latinx interactions among communities and white dominated disabled people organizations in these racialized settings (Padilla, 2021a, especially chs. 6 and 8). Furthermore, in many global South contexts disabled people are subject to various forms of institutionalization or street-bound existences (Ferrante & Joly, 2017) and this gets justified as natural.

As a disabled Latinx engaged scholar, I am highly influenced by decoloniality thinkers from Latin America (Padilla, 2021a, 2021b; forthcoming, 2024). One of their grounding premises is that one needs to distinguish between coloniality and colonization/colonialism. They do so on the basis of Quijano's (1992) ideas on the

coloniality of power. Quijano's coloniality of power underscores much more than colonization as the root of today's imperialist order. Quijano highlights a tripartite conflation of components emerging from colonization, modernity and Eurocentrism. All of these components work together in a complexified fashion. They always operate within an extractivist model of production and reproduction. Although going back to the 15th century, this model has reinvented itself with each imperialist venture of the British, French, and all the rest of European and Euro-American superpowers. All of these inter-imperialist forces and systemic relations have engaged in multifaceted yet intrinsically congruent and mutually edifying ventures. They build upon ecclesial and secular doctrinal principles (Mignolo, 2021, Preface). Likewise, they build on Eurocentric knowledge assumptions that perpetuate white supremacy, ableist, gendered and class and caste-based modes of oppression (Padilla, 2022a; Grosfoguel, 2006).

Exploring Glissant's Contributions: Toward a Decolonial Disability Approach to Intersectional Subalternity Theorizing

Many scholars and even activists explore disability issues without any sense of place-based contours and in a de-historicized manner (for recent exceptions, see, e.g., the essays in Mintz & Fraser, 2024). Furthermore, this happens in an individualistic and non-relational fashion. I thus open this section with the following quote from Drabinski. It demonstrates the revolutionary nature of relationally grounded and place-based decolonial approaches such as Glissant's philosophy as applied to global South and global North intersectional experiences of disability:

What does it mean to think geographically? That is, what does it mean to locate thinking in a place, which is at once space and time, rather than outside our location? Historical experience ought to be our first leading clue. The question of geographic thinking is not mine, but native, as it were, to the question of language and home. No matter the shattering effect of transcendence, we all come from somewhere in our words, the words of the Other, and the dismantling effect enacted in the encounter between those words. (2014, p. 247)

The question of thinking geographically takes us directly into Glissant's formulations. It opens the door to a decolonial destination. This also interrogates place-based disabled experiences, particularly as tied to political economy notions such as productivity (Hartblay, 2014) which determine who is deemed as disposable and why across global North and global South contexts. Policy actors in these contexts deem the disabled as non-productive from capitalist and extractivist standpoints, especially as notions such as productivity are placed at the center of policy concerns in capitalist and post-socialist societies (see, e.g., Blayney et al., 2022; Hartblay, 2014).

Due to space limitations, I can only provide a very preliminary and illustrative reading of Glissant. My conceptual framings are hence quite circumscribed. The exercise nonetheless highlights the Eurocentric connotations of universalizing the thought of authors whose post-metaphysical quests were also born geographically but which are framed as eternal and all-encompassing.

The worthiness of being lies in its specific temporal-historical force of nihilation, which enables possibilities and opens being as the ongoing and future unfolding nexus of

relations, to human others, things, and animals, and thus to the ceaselessly reenacted world... The dignity of being is the singular possibility of the freedom of its event, its release from the historically determining metaphysical frameworks, that is, its “freedom” from power. (Drabinski, 2014, p. 241)

In other words, there is decolonial force in the eventfulness of events. Their relational becoming accentuates this (Raffoul, 2020) by humanizing our geographical grounding in feeling and thinking. Our relational becoming gives poetic, that is, *sentipensante* (see, page 3 for the origins and definition of this term) fluidity to our place-based disability knowledges in global South and global North contexts alike (Fals Borda, 2016). As such, it liberates us from the historical powers which have so far imposed their oppressive grip on our thinking, self-identity, our views on ethics and politics as well as our sense of hope/futurity.

Decolonial Disability as Creolization and Opacity

In terms of its power to liberate, opacity means not throwing away our complex relational engagement with a suffering past while we build anti-ableist, antiracist and decolonial futures. The Atlantic slave trade, for instance, is for Glissant intrinsic to the poetics of whatever emancipation future one forges within Caribbean contexts. I emphasize the poetic nature of Glissant’s thinking/feeling because it breaks at once with rationalistic and non-relational modes of thinking or collective emancipation pursuits (Glissant, 1997). In fact, many of Glissant’s insights are expressed through poems. The opposite to opacity in Glissant’s poetic feeling/thinking is transparency, i.e., linear non-relationality. Transparency not only means non-relational, linear ways of understanding reality. It also includes complex yet individualistic and exploitative realities of colonizing oppression through the over-

simplification of inter-imperialistic dynamics. Glissant's idea of opacity is thus closely tied to his conception of creolization. For him, creolization is not mere mixture, as in *mestizaje*. It is a complex coexistence where difference remains relationally intact. In turn, creolization also becomes crucial to understand the complex enactments of inter-imperialism in "postcolonial"⁹ spaces such as those of the Caribbean and Latin America. This certainly includes the Latinx geographical territories which are now absorbed into the geopolitical confines of the U.S. (e.g., New Mexico, California, Texas, Florida, etc.) which were taken by force from Mexico in the 19th century (López, 2006; Minich, 2014; Nieto-Phillips, 2004).

In terms of opacity and creolization, inter-imperialism's role is to bridge micro and macro dimensions of resistance against colonialities of power, knowledge and being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). The global South/global North divide is thus powerfully articulated through the ambiguous political economy and identity contours of inter-imperialism. Inter-imperialism plays out in power and knowledge dimensions. It is present in both sides of the transnational divide between global North and global South environments. These environments are fully infused in their emancipatory synergy. Inter-imperialism's hybrid spaces for both hegemony and counter-hegemony¹⁰ make this possible.

⁹ Decolonial thinkers such as Mignolo (2021), Quijano (1992) and Segato (2022) object to the term postcolonial to describe these contexts. They point out that (1) the formal achievement of independence among some Latin American and some Caribbean nation states (Puerto Rico being a notable exception in the region) colonialism ended but global relations of coloniality became even stronger; and (2) decolonial intersectionality dynamics must transcend the nation state, involving cross-coalitional movements which operate at the level which Mignolo calls political society (citing the work of Chatterjee, 2011).

¹⁰ Antonio Gramsci coined these terms. "Hegemony ... 'describes the practices by which some greater uniformity is sought'" (Backer, 2023, n.p.) between what Marx calls structure and superstructure, namely, economic relations of production and the rest of societal, cultural and political components within capitalism. Counterhegemony in turn opens up emancipation avenues. It emphasizes the fact

In the Caribbean, for instance, this dual tendency between hegemony and counter-hegemony manifests through the linguistic configuration of Creole language. Creole exists within a subversive mingling of old imperial languages (Portuguese, Spanish, French, English, and Dutch) combined with African vestiges. Creole expresses the freedom of the oppressed to counteract the canons of orthodoxy and aesthetics imposed by empires. It also expresses a sense of trans-geographical mobility. This in turn transgresses the imposed limits of imperial place-based hegemony. Of course, it is not simply that speaking Creole provides a magic pathway to emancipation.

In the kinds of non-European and anti-rationalistic modes of reality construction afforded by Creole there are potential basis for opening innovative emancipatory resistance avenues through alternative ways of being and knowing. The enactment of these emancipatory forces depends on two simultaneous tendencies: (1) a sustaining articulation gap; and (2) a crucial, often non-linear movement toward rupture with the vestiges of inter-imperialist oppressions, very much in line with what Glissant calls opacity.

The metaphor that Stewart Hall (1996) uses for representing this complex functional duality of inter-imperialism's opacity is that of an articulation. As in the body, articulations unite and divide. They at once bridge and demarcate. Their real force resides in not being as rigid as bones, in bridging, in not being core. Thus, they are especially vulnerable to ruptures and to the creative coordination of further subversive links and spheres of mobilization. The notion of articulation is crucial because it combines the structural and the discursive

that the relations between structure and superstructure are characterized by "massive disjunctions and unevenness" (ibid. See also, Johnson, 2018, p. 71).

possibilities of these disruptions. It also has an important flip side: societies organized around dominance are also the ground of cultural resistance” (Edwards, 2003: 12).

In the sociopolitical, sociocultural and socio-historical contexts of LatDisCrit’s¹¹ and trans-Caribbean modes of inter-imperialism, these dual forces are at once generative and generated by inter-imperial immediacy and exchange. For instance, large Latinx enclaves are in the borders of the imperial realities imposed by the U.S. This is true even if they do not reside within the limits of the American state of the union. Yet, at the same time, the vestiges of many other empires are intrinsic to their Latinx and Caribbean identities and to their sociopolitical embodiments of creolization and opacity (Castro-Gómez, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2011; Padilla, 2021a, 2022a).

Inter-imperial proximity, continuity, and discontinuity exacerbate what Edwards (2003) calls a “*décalage*” dimension of Diaspora. This refers to the residues of untranslatable discourse. It also involves cultural, institutional, peoplehood/nationhood and structural perception differences. These coexisting relational differences are such that they open the door to the uncertainty of concrete, context-based change articulation among various imperial actors. For this reason, Glissant stresses that creolization is not the same as static modes of *mestizaje*:

Rather, and this is Glissant’s final and most emphatic concept, the Caribbean is simultaneously local—hemispheric, specifically historical, particular in its memories—and global—the crossroads of the world, from the beginning. That is, Caribbeanness is *tout-monde*, not as an aesthetic or ethical idea or ideal, but as a

¹¹ See previous note #8 for a definition of this term.

direct description of the material histories and memories of the archipelago... The shoreline of the Caribbean. Landscape of pain, landscape of beauty. Black salt.

(Drabinski, 2019, n.p.)

Creolization is for Glissant intrinsic to this complex geographical and poetic specificity. It cannot be separated from Caribbeanness. It is tied to Glissant's foundational ethics, politics and epistemology of the archipelago. The archipelago is for him a relational way of being and becoming which paradoxically departs from the ashes and ruins of inter-imperialist devastation and oppression. "Thinking in ruins, which is productive rather than (solely) melancholic, is already thinking the archipelago as a geography of the globe and the geography of thought. The archipelago is already the crossroads of the world, so the Caribbean of Caribbeanness is already tout-monde in memory, history, and experience, if not word and concept" (Drabinski, 2019).

Thus, the difference between creolization and mestizaje in Glissant's relational thinking/feeling consists of doing away with the comparative and hierarchical components of mere mixture. In mestizaje, the process of wanting to know leads to Eurocentrism which almost always gets the upper hand. This leads to a perpetually cautious sense of measure and reciprocal reproach.

Meanwhile, in place of "measure, creolization puts excess. Glissant's relation to White Western philosophers, and indeed philosophy more broadly, is precisely that: the movement from measure to excess, a writerly embodiment of what he comes to call the thought of tout-monde. Excessive thought, excessive relation and Relation, is not threatened by its Other, even the colonial Other (Drabinski, 2019; see also, Az rardt, 2012). To be sure,

Glissant calls us to think like an archipelago, not just frame thought as an archipelago.

Relation is therefore dynamic, productive, dangerous, and alive with fecund engagement and appropriation (Drabinski, 2019).

Implications of Creolization and Opacity for Decolonial Disability Futurities

All of this may feel too abstract. However, it may help to switch the lens by thinking specifically of oppressive archipelagos which harm disabled people in both global North and global South contexts. Think for instance of the institutional or the carceral archipelagos that are indeed layers within the same colonial archipelago, harming in a cross-sectional way disabled, Indigenous and many other racialized, gendered and underclass communities (Stele, 2020). How can we proactively resist these colonial archipelagos? First of all, we must realize as activists that by becoming a thinking archipelago, we also become relational, that is, beings complexified, full of paradox and opacity features (Wiedorn, 2017). Disabled people, along with racialized, gendered, queer and other subaltern communities share the intersectional label of problematic people (Gordon, 2020). They embody the chaotic amalgam of what in the global North has been designated as the underclass (Wacquant, 2022). The disabled underclass is thus mingled with an expansive multitude of disposable, marginalized segments of society in global North as well as global South contexts (Goodley et al., 2019; Grech, 2017).

Nevertheless, the power of the ambiguous nature of opacity toward a creative imagination centered on relational ways of knowing is crucial. It breaks the chains of despair for those subaltern collectivities imprisoned within the certainties of intersectional oppression. Furthermore, opacity in tandem with creolization enact radical decoloniality

through the contours of inter-imperialist epistemic encounters. To bring the discussion even closer to issues specifically tied to decolonial disability, it is helpful to examine here Sami Schalk's (2016) critique of the blanket use of the term *supercrip* in critical disability studies which, as will be seen, does not seem to take into account the realities faced by disabled folks in global South contexts, presuming them as invisible categories for all intents and purposes. There is a positive dimension in this critique since Schalk's aim is to bring radical complexity, that is a form of opacity into this representational debate. Thus, in this sense, Schalk elevates dimensions of agency and creativity. Schalk stresses that one needs to give disabled groups the power as an audience to forge their own futurities in critical interaction with the strategic modes of emotionality derived from representations of who they are and who they should aspire to become like in the future (Schalk, 2016, p. 76).

Schalk's critique involves several layers linked to three main dimensions: narrative mechanisms, typology, and representational context. First, the focus on narrative mechanisms entails understanding that the *supercrip* is not a character but rather a narrative which creates a stereotype. It is not something static. Its core triggering representational components are: (1) the use of superlative language; (2) close analysis of body/mind/behaviors through scientific lens; (3) constant comparison to an abstract nondisabled norm; (4) suppression or masking of negative emotions, e.g., stress, anger or depression tendencies; and (5) emphasis on personal, individualized attributes such as willpower and determination (Schalk, 2016, pp. 76-77). The first three triggering mechanisms come from Silva and Howe's (2012) research on Paralympians as *supercrips*, while the latter two come from Catherine Scott's (2006) analysis of Christopher Reeve's memoir, a clear case where White privilege and celebrity

status conflates with the perceived success of their undertakings. Hence, Kafer (2013) is right to point out the intentional depoliticization of disability when it comes to supercrip representations.

Schalk, following Kama (2004) distinguishes between supercrip designations applied to disabled people who are presented as extraordinary for doing something ordinary versus representations of disabled people who are presented as extraordinary for doing something exceptional or rare. This distinction is important to understand the contours of regular versus glorified supercrip representations as well as dimensions tied to the reception of these representations by disabled audiences of various kinds.

I found Schalk's discussion interesting yet insufficient when it came to examples specifically able to speak to disabled audiences in global South contexts. It was almost as if supercrip typologies apply exclusively to global North standards of success. Perhaps, in terms of decolonial disability, it might be helpful to bring in Glissant's opacity, examining the supercrip construct along with a poetics of the disabled underclass in a relational interdependence with the contours of the representational debate as it is addressed by and within disabled global North contexts. What about the link between this representational debate and issues of disability justice? How can the discussion become genuinely relevant to both global South and global North audiences of disabled categories of individuals and groups? Failing to do so means that we might simply engage in a recolonizing process for representational spaces where only successful white disabled individuals residing in the global North or genres developed for their exclusive consumption are worth tackling in analytical exercises.

Concluding Remarks: Engaging Creolization and Opacity in Place-Based Decolonial Disability Futurities

All countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Despite this, thousands of disabled individuals are condemned to mendicancy and other extreme modes of material precarity (Ferrante & Joly, 2017; Grech, 2015; Meyers, 2019). Glissant's relational poetics demonstrates that in these places of diaspora and emerging spaces of hope, the dichotomy between what Kama (2004) calls supercrip versus "pitiful handicap" is not at all binary. It is a rich plethora of relational possibilities. As such it contains potential for resistance and transformational synergy.

The preliminary conceptual explorations of intersectional disabled decolonialities I presented in this essay are conceived as an invitation. I hope they propel further critical research of the possibilitarian contours of creolization and opacity as sentipensante ways of knowing and enacting change. The aim is to elevate relational freedom and sociopolitical interrogations of the poetics of place as far as disability is concerned. Furthermore, I hope that they stimulate intellectual and strategic curiosity into the prospects or cross-coalitional futurities of disability justice. This should be approached in tandem with other spaces of intersectional subalternity (see, e.g., Ben-Moshe, 2020) in ways that bridge global North and global South place-based emancipation. My invitational vision involves respecting place-based ethics and ways of knowing/acting. In turn, this would mean refining decolonial disability and agentic intersectionality while opening imaginative avenues for transgressing

political clichés as they have been so far dictated by Eurocentric, transparency-based (in the sense of antagonistic to opacity and creolization) non-relationality.

How and to what extent can these imaginative approaches help reshape current anti-ableist and antiracist modes of anti-capitalism in global South and global North contexts? How much of these emerging innovative assemblages of decolonial disability will help expose the coloniality of power, knowledge and being? How will they help put intersectional decoloniality concerns at the center of disability justice endeavors in alignment with those of other subaltern segments of the population? Only time will tell. For now, I just hope that Glissant's work can be noticed and carefully analyzed by disabled critical disability students/researchers/activists and other interdisciplinary actors toward radical transformational aims.

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