The Desire for New Humanisms

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Abstract

This paper articulates our desire for new humanisms in a contemporary cultural, economic and global context that has been described as posthuman. As researchers committed to modes of radical, critical, politicised and inclusive education, we are mindful of the significance of social theory and its relationship with articulations of social justice. Whilst sympathetic to the potentiality of posthuman thought we grapple with the imperative to embrace new humanisms that historicise and recognise global inequalities that concurrently exist in relation to a myriad of human categories including class, age, geopolitical location, gender, sexuality, race and disability. We focus in on the latter two categories and draw on ideas from postcolonial and critical disability studies. Our argument considers the problem of humanism (as a product of colonial Western imaginaries), the critical responses offered by posthuman thinking and then seeks to rearticulate forms of new humanism that are responsive to the posthuman condition and, crucially, the political interventions of Postcolonial and Critical Disability Scholars. We then outline six new humanist projects that could productively feed into the work of the *Journal of Disability Studies in Education*.

1   Introduction

This paper seeks to articulate our desire to find new humanisms in a contemporary cultural, economic and global context that has been described as posthuman. As researchers committed to modes of radical, politicised, critical and inclusive education, we are mindful of the significance of social theory and its relationship with the articulation of social justice. Whilst sympathetic to the potentiality of posthuman thought we grapple with the imperative to embrace new humanisms that historicise and recognise global inequalities that concurrently exist in relation to a myriad of human categories including class, gender, sexuality, race and disability. We focus in on the latter two categories and draw on ideas from postcolonial and critical disability studies. Our argument considers the problem of humanism (as a product of colonial Western imaginaries) but seeks to rearticulate forms of new humanism that are responsive to the posthuman condition and, crucially, the political interventions of Postcolonial and Critical Disability Studies scholars. We then outline six new humanist projects that could productively feed into the work of the *Journal of Disability Studies in Education*.

1.1   *An Intersectional Starting Point*
Our analysis recognises the particular and shared interventions from postcolonial and disability studies perspectives. In terms of the former we are influenced by the Black Studies scholarship of Sylvia Wynter and Frantz Fanon to name but two theorists. Their work remains incredibly influential in postcolonial, de-colonial and anti-colonial communities, not least because of the ways in which both Wynter and Fanon seek to articulate new ways of reclaiming human categories and forms of humanity that have been pathologised by racist colonial practices. Wynter was inspired by Fanon and sought to develop a radical response to racism's impact on the personal and political lives of black people. Her work also, interestingly, is very much focused on reclaiming a positive sense of humanity even in the face of centuries of oppression and discrimination. With reference to the latter – disability studies – we are drawn to the writings of Mike Oliver and Paul Hunt; key figures in the development of social oppression theories of disability. Like Black Studies scholars

and activists, Hunt and Oliver are renowned for politicising their own human conditions and offering new insights into the experience of disability. Oliver was very much inspired by the work of Hunt and his fellow disabled activists. And Oliver is known in the British context for promoting a social model of disability. We will return to these four writers – and others – in our discussion but it is worth stating a little about our own perspective.

In drawing together postcolonial and disability studies we hope to advance an intersectional kind of analysis (Crenshaw, 1991) that is sensitive to the ways in which race, ethnicity and disability merge together in moments of power and oppression. In addition – and crucial to the ethics of intersectionality – is an appetite to learn from politicised responses to this oppression (as articulated in postcolonial and disability studies perspectives) and, as importantly, to share analytical offerings across these perspectives in order to enhance our understandings. We understand intersectionality not simply in terms of an additive process of rolling together a myriad of oppressed positionalities (though such a move can be valuable) but as a liminal space where different forms of marginality and politicised responses work in tension, across and with a host of politicised offerings in very generative ways (see also Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016). As we shall we reveal in this paper, when we work within and across postcolonial and disability approaches – and when we foreground race, ethnicity and disability – then this theoretical work is in-keeping with a *critical disability studies* approach. Over the last decade we have seen the rise of critical disability studies (Mallett and Runswick-Cole, 2014; Meekosha and Shuttleworth, 2009; Goodley, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018; Shildrick, 2012). Critical disability studies has been described as a 'location populated by people who advocate building upon the foundational perspectives of disability studies whilst integrating new and transformative agendas associated with postcolonial, queer and feminist theories' (Goodley, 2016: 190–19). Writers such as Titchkosky (2014, 2015, 2016), Pickens (2017) and contributors to Grech and Soldatic's (2016) *Disability in the Global South* are just some examples of critical disability studies scholars that take seriously the racialisation of everyday life, draw on postcolonial and majority world scholarship as primary theoretical inspirations and attempt to think across and with disability, race and ethnicity as they intersect with one another.

Critical disability studies builds on the foundational work of disability studies – such as Oliver and Hunt whose work we expand on below – and seeks to elaborate on this work in order to make analyses of disability relevant to all disabled people. In so doing critical disability studies scholarship draws on ideas outside of the disability studies canon – pulling in the contributions of writers such as Wynter and Fanon – in order to broaden the conceptual

responsiveness of disability theory and increase the inclusivity of scholarship. This paper is but one small example of critical disability studies writing that is attuned to the significance of intersectionality. Such scholarship includes intersectional analyses of disability and trans (Slater and Liddiard, 2018), black (Dunham's, 2005; Pickens, 2016), feminist (Garland-Thomson, 2005), green (Fenney-Salkeld, 2016), queer (McRuer, 2006) and post-national politics (Mitchell and Snyder, 2015).

For the remainder of this introductory section we will start by excavating the problematic phenomenon of humanism. We will briefly trace its emergence and its exclusionary consequences. We will then introduce the posthuman turn and consider its potential as an antidote to the prohibitive tendencies of humanism. Our discussion will lead us eventually to how we might sate our desire to find new kinds of humanism.

1.2   *The Problem of Humanism*

'The story of humanism', Scott (2000: 119) writes, 'is often told as a kind of European coming-of-age story'. Humanism heralds a break with the 'cramped intolerances of the damp and enclosed Middle Ages' and a turn to the 'rational spaciousness and secular luminosity of the modern' (Scott, 2000: 119). Humanism, Braidotti (2013: 29) reflects, is a legacy of the enlightenment, forever associated with cherished notions of autonomy, responsibility, self-determination, solidarity, community-bonding, social justice and principles of equality. She warns that critics 'tinker with humanism' at their 'peril' (Ibid: 29). Yet, any account of humanism has to recognise its epistemic violence and ontological exclusions (Teo, 2010). 'Humanism's universalism, primacy of rationality, the unitary subject' (Braidotti, 2013, p. 31) is the 'white man's burden' where women 'were assigned to the pole of un-reason, passions and emotions, keeping them in the private sphere' (Ibid: 34). The humanist subject defines himself as much by 'what he is excluded from' and defends himself through a violent and belligerent reaction to 'the sexualised, racialised and naturalised others that occupied the slot of devalued difference' (Ibid: 144). For some of these others being human already feels alien; 'because my sex, historically speaking, never quite made it into full humanity, so my allegiance to that category is at best negotiable and never to be taken for granted' (ibid: 81). 'Humanity' Braidotti (2013: 24) notes, 'is very much a male of the species: it is a he'. Moreover, 'he is white, European, handsome and able-bodied' (ibid: 24), 'an ideal of bodily perfection' (Ibid: 13), 'implicitly assumed to be masculine, white, urbanized, speaking a standard language, heterosexually inscribed in a reproductive unit and a full citizen of a recognised polity' (ibid: 65), 'a rational animal endowed with language' (ibid: 141). This means that while all citizens are humans 'some

or more mortal than others' (ibid: 15) and, conversely, some are more disposable than others. And, to labour the point, some citizens are considered to be more valued in their citizenry than others. This humanism has a Eurocentric core and Imperialist tendencies, meaning that many of those outside of Europe (including many in the colonies) became known as less than human or inhuman. The very category of humanity – and the phenomenological experience of humanness – has been monopolised by a political kind of ideology: Western / neo-Colonial humanism. And this category, for Fanon (1993), invites recognition for some and negation of others.

Mignolo (2009a: 10) writes, 'he who spoke for the human was the humanist'. And this humanist man was, unsurprisingly, a particular kind of human kind. For Wynter (2003) humanist man is 'ethnoclass man': embodied in the white, Christian, heterosexual, able male. He is normative man; a civic-humanist and a rational citizen. Whilst often presented as a neutral descriptive state of the human (Wynter 2003, p.281), ethnoclass man has a violent history where:

> all other modes of being human would instead have to be seen not as the alternative modes of being human that there are 'out there,' but adaptively, as the lack of the West's ontologically absolute self-description... With this systemic repression ensuring that we oversee (thereby failing to recognize) the culture and class-specific relativity of our present mode of being human (Wynter 2003: 281–282).

The humanist human is an autonomous, fully evolved, eugenic or able, bio-centric and *homo oeconomicu*s human being in 'the ethno-class terms of Darwinian *Man over-presented as the human*' (Wynter, 2006: 128, italics added). This human category has been created by 'the West's institutionalization of itself in terms of its then epochally new self-conception or sociogenic code as Absolute Being' (Wynter, 2006: 146). The constitution of the human category in terms of ethnoclass man creates winners and losers. Humanism evokes a time of colonialism; 'humanism and colonialism inhabit the same cognitive-political universe inasmuch as Europe's discovery of its Self is simultaneous with its discovery of it Others' (Scott, 2000: 120). For Gilroy (2018: 10) European colonial humanism assembled the world in 'raciological and colonial patterns', constituting 'sovereign racial orders, hierarchies and ontologies'. At the heart of this humanism was a desire for the rational, sovereign self (read: white, able-bodied, settler, colonial man) and a negation of those who are represented as its antithesis (what Braidotti, 2002 define as 'his many Others'). This latter category Fanon described as *the damned.* Wynter extends this typology

argued that the damned are 'defined at the global level by refugee/economic migrants stranded outside the gates of the rich countries … with this category in the United States coming to comprise the criminalized majority Black and dark-skinned Latino inner-city males now made to man the rapidly expanding prison-industrial complex, together with their female peers – the kicked-about Welfare Moms – with both being part of the ever-expanding global, transracial category of the homeless/the jobless, the semi-jobless, the criminalized drug-offending prison population' (Wynter, 2003: 260). Disabled people are conspicuously absent from this description though, as we shall argue, readily slotted in.

Rodriguez (2008: 832) argues that 'Wynter challenges us to resist synonymizing White, Western, liberal, middle-class, American life with being "human" in and of itself'. This normative humanness is a state of affairs that exists alongside non-normative forms of humanness. Moreover, normative humans seek to corral other kinds of human life in order to gather, control and possess in ways that strengthen further the normative centre of their humanist ethics. These stark contiguities between rich/impoverished, white/black and as (we shall see below abled/disabled) suggests that European colonial humanism is inherently an exclusionary force. Blackness, as Wynter (2006: 14), becomes a referent category of the Human Other – an 'unbearable wrongness of being' (2006: 114) – the direct opposite of contemporary interests of Western, White, Bourgeious Man. Blackness she argues, drawing on Fanon, is experienced as Désêtre (i.e., dys-being); the wrongness of being: the opposite of normative human ontology (where dys is ill, abnormal and bad). Humanism gets under the skins as part of a deeper process of racialisation and racism. Here, then, is a clear nod to the present absence of disability in Wynter's work and, simultaneously, an invitation for disability to be included. Dys-being might be reconceptualised as a shared intersectional moment of exception: a place with Blackness and Disability come together with a hope of a new politics born out of a celebration of the wrongness of being in a humanist world.

1.3   *The Posthuman Turn*

An intellectual and political reaction to (European) humanism has been offered by posthuman theorising. Recently there has been an exponential rise in the use of posthuman studies across feminist, queer, postcolonial and critical disability studies (for a small selection of work see Braidotti, 2003, 2006, 2013; Galis, 2011; Reeve, 2012; Gati, 2014; Fox and Alldred, 2015; Feely, 2016; Flynn, 2017; Goodley, Lawthom and Runswick-Cole, 2014; Trigt, Schippers and Kool, 2016; Goodley, Lawthom, Liddiard and Runswick-Cole, 2018). Braidotti

(e.g. 2013) has been especially integral to the development of a distinct take on the posthuman. She shares the postcolonial critique of humanism's implicit exclusionary tendencies:

> Not all of us can say, with any degree of certainty, that we have always been human, or that we are only that. Some of us are not even considered fully human now, let alone at previous moments of Western social, political and scientific history.
>
> BRAIDOTTI, 2013: 1

And she offers us the proposition (and related project) of the posthuman condition as an opportunity "to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming'" (Ibid: 2). Caught in the midst of rapid developments in scientific, cultural and technological knowledge the twenty-first century citizen is a 'knowing subject' with the potential to 'free us from the provincialism of the mind, the sectarianism of ideologies, the dishonesty of grandiose posturing and the grip of fear' (Braidotti, 2013: 11). Not only is the humanist human undesirable, the human category has moved on; expanded, reached out, plugged in, networked, relationally spread, distributed, globally connected:

> I define the critical posthuman subject within an eco-philosophy of multiple becomings, as a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity, ... a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and embodied. Posthuman subjectivity expresses an embodied and embedded and hence partial form of accountability, based on a strong sense of collectivity, relationality and hence community building ... an affirmative bond that locates the subject in the flow of relations with multiple others.
>
> BRAIDOTTI, 2013: 49–50

This fluid, affirmative and responsive posthumanity contrasts hugely with the narrow, fixed and prejudicial humanist humanity outlined above. Similar to Wynter, Braidotti (2013: 26) concludes:

> the human is a normative convention, which does not make it inherently negative, just highly regulatory and hence instrumental to practices of exclusion and discrimination. The human norm stands for normality, normalcy and normativity.

The rise in posthuman theorising has, one could argue, sidelined humanism as an old fashioned relic of modernity. The rush to embrace all things posthuman has resulted in a commonly shared affect of distrust towards any intellectual or political project that appears to play with dangerous tropes of humanism. Trump's election and the rise of Brexit, for examples, have been viewed as peculiar kinds of Anglo-American, ableist, self-imposed, self-sufficient isolationalism with undercurrents of racist humanism (check out Breger Bush, 2016; Harnish, 2017; Harnish, Titchkosky and Goodley, 2018). Similarly, the rise of the Far and Alt Right in Europe and America are sobering reminders of exclusionary humanism. That said, we are intrigued by the possibilities of a re-articulation and what Gilroy (2018) terms a re-enchantment with the humanist human articulated by postcolonial scholarship – and as we shall consider – developed too in the writings of disability studies scholars. We worry that posthuman thinking is being fervently adopted without a recognition of important questions of race, class, sexuality, gender and disability that still persist today. We live in deeply dehumanising times. And these very human questions require our attention, our care and our energy. While accepting the promise and potential of the posthuman condition (see for example the paper by Goodley, Lawthom and Runswick-Cole, 2014) we also reach out through postcolonial and critical disability studies for new kinds of humanism. Ones unlike Trump and alien to Brexit. Humanisms in the mould of a Wynter, a Fanon, an Oliver or a Hunt.

2   New Humanisms

Rodriguez (2018: 831) writes that Fanon's and Wynter's 'unrelenting advocacy for a new humanist revolution in the twenty-first century is inspiring critical scholars across the disciplines to continue confronting the limits of the humanisms that presently govern our political, economic, educational, and scientific institutions'. For Rodriguez (2018: 832) the search for new humanisms is entangled within a wider rebellion against the law-like ways that the desires, interests, and world-making ambitions of the 'capitalist neoliberal and corporate financial bourgeoisie ruling class' are *represented homologously* as those of our species as a whole' (our italics). Fanon and Wynter are but two titans of postcolonial theory that seek to correct humanism's 'vision and fulfill its promise' (Scott, 2000: 120). Wynter, for Scott, combines the 'agonistic humanism of Fanon's anticolonialism' with the 'embattled antihumanism of Foucault's archaeological critique' (Scott, 2000: 121). Wynter reconstructs understanding of the grounds of the human being.

> The struggle of our new millennium will be one between the ongoing imperative of securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which over-represents itself as if it were the human itself, and *that of securing the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves.*
>
>   WYNTER, 2003: 260; our italics

Thinking of her time as a student in London in the 1950s when she arrived from Jamaica, Wynter finally recalls being recognised as black for the first time. And, as she reflects, this started a time of displacement, of rupture and double consciousness. In order to survive, 'One has to circumcise yourself of yourself' in order to view oneself as 'fully human' (Wynter in Scott, 2000: 130). This is a split ontology – a sense of being 'in and outside the polity and its definitions of humanity' (Gilroy, 2018: 2017) – when, for example, one is Black and an American. What is created is a psycho-social liminal space in which one experiences oneself as simultaneously Other and the Same (see also Braidotti, 2003); where the latter is emphasised and the former negated. Wynter recalls the revelation of experiencing this split consciousness. As she tells Scott (2000) in their interview; it was only when she landed in the colonial setting of the UK that she found herself able to truly grapple with the alienating conditions of racism:

> How do you deal with the stereotyped view of yourself that you yourself have been socialised to accept? ... It is not a matter of some getting up and suddenly being racist. It is that given conception of what it is to be human, to be an Imperial English man or woman, you had to be seen by them as the negation of what they were. So *you* too, had to circumcise yourself of yourself, in order to be fully human'.
>
>   WYNTER, quoted in Scott, 2000: 131–132, italics in the original

This recognition of the cultural dominance of whiteness as human is elaborated further in relation to the lives of young Black men in America:

> You may have heard a radio news report that aired briefly during the days after the jury's acquittal of the policemen in the Rodney King case. The report stated that public officials of the judicial system of Los Angeles routinely used the acronym N.H.I. to refer to any case involving a breach of the rights of young, jobless, black males living in inner city ghetto. N.H.I. means 'no humans involved'.
>
>   WYNTER, 1992; 13

Humanness is already brutally defined in white, male, Eurocentric terms that are optimally middle-class (see also Greene Wade, 2017). The clash of the anti-colonial struggle is, for Wynter, the desire to challenge the belief system on which our societies are founded; the belief that 'the fact of blackness is a fact of inferiority and that of whiteness a fact of superiority' (Wynter quoted in Scott, 2000: 132). The Other – the jobless, poor and Black (and to which we would add disabled) – are afforded a 'narratively condemned status' (Wynter, 1992: 18). The normative order of what it is to be human – this is the normalcy of the human category – is defined through whiteness and coloniality. And the Other to this normative sameness is not simply a passive opposite, a benign hidden referent nor powerless empty identity position. And, just as importantly, those that sit in the gaps left by binaries live as liminal identities (ones associated with deviance) and hold promise – as 'existential liminalities' that speak from the margins (Wynter, in Scott, 2000: 149) ... to create new imaginaries (Ibid:153) and new humanisms. For Gilroy (2018: 7) this reclaiming of humanness from colonial humanist moorings (that frame and misrecognise blackness in decidedly infrahuman ways) is one significant postcolonial imperative (Gilroy, 2018: 7). In other words, 'how might we become more comprehensively estranged from the Anthropos in the Anthropocene in order to salvage a different, and perhaps re-enchanted human?' (Gilroy, 2018: 12)? How might we, following Wynter, *secure* 'the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves'? (Wynter, 2003: 260). The answer offered is a productive one 'a cautious, post-humanist humanism capable of grasping the relationship between human and non-human is beginning to take shape' (Gilroy, 2018: 16). And this politicisation struggles 'to endow a sense of reciprocal humanity in Europe's proliferating encounters with vulnerable otherness' (Gilroy, 2018: 19) in the search for new humanisms in 'the ongoing work of salvaging imperilled humanity from the mounting wreckage' (20).

We share this ambition to seek out new humanisms in our posthuman times. This might involve us rethinking traditional or normative idealisations of politics, resistance and activism. And it should definitely start from the premise that Black, postcolonial and Critical Disability Studies are already working the edges of the posthuman condition. The work of Greene-Wade (2017) is useful here as it draws attention to the workings of virtual-physical assemblages found in the Twitter activism associated with. Green-Wade (2017) explains #Blacklivesmatter as an example of viral blackness. This she argues provides one example of a new genre of being human that challenges hegemonic technologies of the self. The potency of #Blacklivesmatter was its ability to disrupt the notion of humans as purely organic/genetic content and, instead, reboot Black humanities through the practices of virtual-physical assemblages that

subverted social hierarchies and placed the needs and desires of Black bodies at the centre of this twitter activism. Viral Blackness is but one example of new humanisms being refashioned in the posthuman circulations of social media.

Just as Black Studies and activism should inspire us to reach out for new human relations and formations of the human then we should also draw in the contributions of critical disability studies. Questions of the human have always been central to the politics of disability. And we write this observation at a poignant time in the history of critical disability studies. The death of one of the founding fathers of the social model of disability – Professor Mike Oliver – in 2019 has inevitably unleashed numerous obituaries and declarations of gratitude to his important work. Like the postcolonial scholarship of writers such as Fanon and Wynter, Oliver's work can be historically judged as a defining moment in critical writing by disabled people, for disabled people, in social, economic and cultural conditions that denigrated and threatened to erase the lives, contributions and ontologies of disabled people. Oliver was a Marxist but also drew upon Neo-Marxist theories such as Gramsci and Althusser in order to interrogate the normative hegemony of capitalist society that upheld the dominance of non-disabled people and pathologised the lives of disabled people (Oliver, 1990, 1992. 1993a, 1993b, 1996). Just as Wynter and Fanon demanded us to consider the ways in which Black humanness is forced to misrecognise itself as not fully human in the (post) colonial registers of contemporary normative culture, so Oliver (1990) illuminated the alienation experienced by disabled people as a consequence of ideologies of individualism associated with non-disabled ontologies and ways of life. In his 1990 book *Politics of Disablement* Oliver described the physical, economic and material barriers to normative citizenship experienced by disabled people in education, work and their communities. People with physical, sensory and cognitive impairments are disabled – not by their bodies or minds – but by a capitalist society that excludes them from its labour and consumption. Moreover, disabled people become essential objects of normative human welfare services and systems: creating an industry of professionals (including psychologists, special educators, social workers, rehabilitative consultants, counsellors) whose main role is the restoration of normality (to get disabled people as near to normal as possible). Oliver's work built upon the intellectual legacy left by disabled activists such as Paul Hunt. In *A Critical Condition*, Hunt's famous chapter in his acclaimed edited book *Stigma* (1966), he writes:

> An impaired and deformed body is a 'difference' that hits everyone hard at first. Inevitably it produces an instinctive revulsion, has a disturbing effect … The disabled person's 'strangeness' can manifest and symbolize all

differences between human beings … for the able-bodied, normal world
we are representatives of many of the things they most fear – tragedy,
loss, dark and the unknown. Involuntarily, we walk – or more often sit –
in the valley of the shadow of death … a deformed and paralysed body
attacks everyone's sense of well-being and invincibility.

HUNT, 1966: 151–156

Like Blackness, disability is understood in terms of the failings and failures of
humanist humanity. But what is so enthralling to us is the idea that these fail-
ings can be rewritten as a politicised gift, as evidenced by the quotations from
Hunt and Fanon that we present together below:

For the disabled person with a fair intelligence or other gifts, perhaps the
greatest temptation is to try to use them just to escape from his disabled-
ness, to buy himself a place in the sun, a share in the illusory normal
world where all is light and pleasure and happiness … But if we deny our
special relation to the dark in this way, we shall have ceased to recognise
our most important asset as disabled people in society – the uncomfort-
able, subversive position from which we act as a living reproach to any
scale of values that puts attributes or possessions beyond the person.

HUNT, 1966: 158–159

Black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes. I am not a potential-
ity of something. I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for the
universal … My negro consciousness does not hold itself out as lack. It *is.*

FANON, 1993: 135

How might we reclaim new humanisms in these posthuman times that cel-
ebrate and harness the politics of Blackness and disability? What social mod-
els of disability can be developed that build on disability's 'special relation to
the dark' shadows of normative humanism? In what ways can education, edu-
cators, teachers and learners engage together in new humanist projects that
foreground the aspirations of those human beings who are often negated by
ethno-class able-bodied-and-minded man?

3   Six New Humanist Projects for Disability Studies and Education

Thus far we have exposed the problematics inherent within normative con-
ceptions of the humanist human and have provided critical responses from

the fields. We have broadly conceived of these fields as postcolonial and critical disability studies. Like Erevelles (2012) we are encouraged by the offerings of these perspectives; especially when they are brought together for generative reasons. We want to now consider the implications and applications of our analyses for research, scholarship and engagement in the areas of (critical) disability studies and education: the very focus of this journal. We posit six new humanist projects. We are taken with the possibilities of thinking through, with and across postcolonial and critical disability studies. Like Titchkosky (2015) we are excited by the possibilities of bringing together these potentially radical and disruptive modes of transformational thinking but, at the same time, are conscious of the frictional demands of each approach. It would be a mistake to assume that postcolonial and critical disability studies do not create fits of pique within one another. Moreover, one might argue that studies of disability have lacked racialised analyses – assuming whiteness (Miles et al., 2017) – while postcolonial scholarship continues to unproblematically draw on a host of disabling metaphors (Titchkosky, 2015). We acknowledge these limitations at the same time as we propose six new humanist intersectional projects.

The first project relates to *subjecting the normative, the hegemonic and the taken-for-granted to sustained analysis and critique.* Following Wynter (2006: 112), just as there is a need to exoticize Western thought – to render the familiar strange – so there is an urgent need to exoticize normative humanistic conceptions of valued humanness. This means, then, exoticizing the educational status quo. It means gathering penetrating insights gained from a 'wide range of globally subordinated peoples' (Wynter, 2006: 112). We would want to ask: what is this strange, freakish, normative education system that upholds the authority of a certain kind of learner; the white, middle class, heterosexual, reasonable, speaking-a-standard language, living in towns, Western European, settler subject with a deep rooted colonial ancestry (following Braidotti, 2002, 2013; Slater, 2015)?

The second project: *endlessly acknowledge and address the ways in which educational systems impose a collective ontological sense of 'wrongness of being'* (Wynter, 2006) upon disabled children and young people. When kindergartens, schools, colleges and universities are designed with non-disabled, autonomous, independent, white, capable, isolated, self-sufficient learners in mind then there is a risk that such normative conceptions of the human rewrite their hidden referents associated with disabled, dependent, non-white, incapable, reliant Human Others. How often do we hear from disabled children and young people that they 'do not belong' in educational settings? These are not simply calls for recognition. They are calling out the alienating tendencies

of educational institutions that actively resist the contributions of students who fail to fit the normative human that is implicitly centred in those institutions as the kinds of human beings we deal with here.

The third project is: *promote the sociogeny of disability and education*. Sociogeny is a concept developed by Fanon (1993) – and one elaborated by Wynter (2003) – that refers to the study of the development of a social phenomenon. In counter-distinction to phylogeny (the study of evolution of the species) and ontogeny (the biological development of an individual organism) – a sociogeny unpacks the social, historical and cultural constitution of race and humanness (see Gagne, 2007 for a helpful overview). Do not assume that education nor disability nor Blackness are pre-social, apolitical, objective, independent, universal phenomena. They are anything but this. When we read disability in through the methodologies of phylogeny or ontogeny we reduce disability to stories of evolution or biology.[1] Disability is fundamentally a social, cultural, political and psycho-social phenomenon through and through; and requires, therefore, sociogeny as a response.

The fourth project; *contest the epistemic privilege of global north disability studies through embracing a decolonising attitude and approach*. We are sure readers will be aware of radical approach to research proffered by Linda T. Smith's 1999 Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. Mignolo's (2009b: 13–14) appreciation is obvious when he writes of Smith's book 'the remarkable novelty comes when a Maori becomes an anthropologist and she practices anthropology as a Maori rather than studying the Maori as an anthropologist'. Mignolo (2009b: 14) writes that Smith 'is precisely shifting the geography of reasoning and subsuming anthropological tools into Maori (instead of Western) cosmology and ideology'. What is required in studies of

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1   It is worth, here, reading Wynter (2006: 116) here whose observations are really telling about the dominance of phylogenetic and ontogenetic perspectives (embodied in the DNA research revolution) contrasted with the lack of purchase of Fanon's sociogeny: 'Fanon's book was published in original French version in 1952, one year before the publication of the Watson/Crick paper cracking the DNA code specific to the genomes of all species, including the human being. This therefore helped to emphasize that, given the genetically determined narcissism that would be endemic to all living beings in their species-specific modality, the fact that a black person can experience his or her physiognomic being in anti-narcissistic and self-alienating terms … means that human beings *cannot* be defined in purely biogenetic terms-that is, from a purely phylogenetic *cum* ontogenetic perspective, or, in other words, from the perspective of the purely physiological *conditions* of being human (i.e., phylogeny and ontogeny), as we are now defined to be in terms of our present liberal or bio-humanist order of knowledge (Wynter, 2006: 116).

disability – and their relation to education – is a shifting of 'the geography of reason and enacting geo-politics of knowledge' that take seriously the contributions of researchers outside the dominant register of the global north and enact an epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009b: 15). The ambitions are lofty but aspirational:

> This is the point where de-colonial options, grounded in geo- and body-politics of knowledge, engage in both decolonizing knowledge and decolonial knowledge-making, delinking from the web of imperial/modern knowledge and from the colonial matrix of power.
>
>   MIGNOLO, 2009b: 15

The fifth project is: *disavow the category of the humanist human.* Here we would suggest reading the DisHuman Manifesto (developed Goodley et al. 2018; see also dishuman.com) which:

- Unpacks and troubles dominant notions of what it means to be human;
- Celebrates the disruptive potential of disability to trouble these dominant notions;
- Acknowledges that being recognise as a regular normal human being is desirable, especially for those people who been denied access to the category of the human;
- Recognises disability's intersectional relationship with other identities that have been considered less than human (associated with class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age);
- Aims to develop theory, research, art and activism that push at the boundaries of what it means to be human and disabled;
- Keeps in mind the pernicious and stifling impacts of ableism, which we define as a discriminatory processes that idealize a narrow version of humanness and reject more diverse forms of humanity;
- Seeks to promote transdisciplinary forms of empirical and theoretical enquiry that breaks disciplinary orthodoxies, dominances and boundaries;
- Foregrounds disability as the complex for interrogating oppression and furthering a posthuman politics of affirmation. https://dishuman.com/dishuman-manifesto/

The sixth and final project is a reflexive one and also signals a note of caution: *beware domesticating critical and politicised studies of disability and education.* Wynter (2006) provides a damning critique of self-styled radical Black Studies academics. She argues that as soon as these activists found themselves

working in the academia their original transgressive activist intentions were 'defused', their 'energies rechannelled' and their contributions 're-verified the very thesis of liberalism universalism' that they originally sought to contest in white society (Wynter, 2006: 109). This, she warns, heralds the domestication of 'studies of ___', the mainstreaming of '___ studies' and the 'cognitive and psycho-affective closure' (Wynter, 2006: 110) that accompanies the move in subject positions from from 'activist to academic'. A journal such as *Disability Studies in Education* must always keep a check on its own domestication. When our main focus becomes the inward contemplation of our disciplines or our studies – rather than the more externally focused objectives that we outline above in the other five studies – then we (the researchers, writers and arbiters of knowledge) become the subject and objects of our interventions. Let us remain mindful of the dangerous worlds we occupy and our responsibilities to seek social justice.

4   Conclusions

In this paper we have made a case for new humanisms that emerge out of an engagement with postcolonial and critical disability studies scholarship, Black and disabled activism. Our paper identifies six new humanist projects that clearly overlap with one another and provide us with a framework for contemplating the potential offerings of scholarship in critical disability and postcolonial studies. These relational overlaps are important to acknowledge because we cannot approach our work in isolation: community is everything.

Disability Studies in Education has the potential to offer a community of practice in which activists, researchers and practitioners contest the everyday educational practices of human life that continue to exclude disabled and Black students. We know that these practices exist but recognition is not enough. Our theory must always be aligned to praxis: sensitive to the push and pulls of social justice and inequity. Our aspirations should always be critical of those theoretical trajectories that appear to be more to do with style than content. And while we might concede that we live in posthuman times we also live in dehumanising times: marked by deep and widespread inequalities. Rehumanising theory, practice and politics would appear to be an urgent exercise requiring our energies and attentions. And theorisation is not simply an exercise taken up by well-meaning academics. Theory is entangled in the all kinds of practices whether they be educational, policy-making, activist or cultural. It is incumbent on contributors to this journal to ensure that we document these moments of theory and politics.

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