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Doesn't Your Work Just Re-Center Whiteness? The Fallen Impossibilities of White Allyship

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The Fallen Impossibilities of White Allyship

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OUR PURPOSE IS TO PRESENT A PERFORMATIVE DIALOGUE responding to a central question on White allyship in anti-racist scholarship and activism: Doesn't your work just recenter whiteness? Seeking to unravel the whiteness in our disciplines, we came together at the intersections-controversies in critical White studies (CWS) and curriculum studies (CS) to provide our performative dialogue. Via our performative dialogue, we grapple with but do not provide

answers, solutions, or implications to our question, but instead think through three convolutions articulating the fallen impossibilities of White allyship.

Performative Dialogue

Before we start, we need to define what we mean by performative dialogue and explain our purposes, representations, and aspirations. *Performative dialogue*, as definition, refers to Pauli and Jim's dialogic reading, rendering, and analyses of an open-ended, generative, yet revised exchange on a central question emerging from but with potential to transcend academic disciplines. Following this definition, our performative dialogue emerges from intersectional controversies in CWS and CS yet seeks to unravel, intervene on, and pedagogically work through both disciplines' historical and contemporary whiteness.

Working through, our performative dialogue is *non*-disciplinary in its deployment of experimental text as a conduit of aesthetic, moral, analectic, and revelatory reasonings rather than disciplinary research text following transmissive-administrative frameworks, methods, and other disciplinary whiteness machineries or prefab whitened cognition "formats." Emphatically, the performative dialogue is not a "research method" or any other means of exteriorizing data, experiences, or documents from our-"selves." Rather, our dialogue assumes critical inter- and intra-subjectivation processes, open-endedness, un-suturing, and identification intimacies (Jupp et al., 2022; Yancy, 2015, 2017). Our aspirations are that our dialogue *performs* critical whiteness pedagogies (Casey, 2016; Jupp & Badenhorst, 2021a, 2021b; Lensmire et al., 2013; Miller & Tanner, 2019; Tanner, 2018) that unfold anti-racist subjectivization processes necessary to inform alliance-oriented interventions in whitened disciplines like ours but also in anti-racist social movements, institutional work, and curricular-pedagogical praxes.

Organizing Statement

What follows is an organizing statement to scaffold readers' experiences of our non-disciplinary text. First, as mentioned above, we locate our performative dialogue as emerging from generative controversies at the intersections of CWS and CS. We recognize work in CWS and CS (but really *most-if-not-all* "disciplines," "fields," "divisions," "conferences," and "organizations") as either historically-and-presently constituted in or doubly-bound by resistances to a pervasive world-constituting whiteness, on all sides, implacable, *ontological*.

Second, we provide the performative dialogue narrated with the experiential, intellectual, and emotional panel exchanges of six CWS or CS scholars, including two scholars of Color and four White scholars. As the main section, the performative dialogue grapples with and works through our central question, seeking to instantiate whiteness pedagogy for readers.

Third*,* via the dialogues' emergent contours, Pauli & Jim discuss the politically-germane convolutions, or tension-filled coils, that reveal the fallen impossibilities of White allyship. We believe the convolutions might inform greater criticalities and reflexivities for White scholars and activists seeking to do alliance-oriented anti-racist work in historically White or presently whitened "disciplines" like CWS or CS, but we also hope that convolutions might inform social movements, institutional interventions, and anti-racist curricular-pedagogical praxes.

Finally, in our closing, we emphasize situated, relational, processual, and alliance-oriented anti-racism*s* for White scholars and activists. Via situated *topoi*, White anti-racism*s* allyship*s* are always historically-socially shot-through with and haunted by White supremacist subjectifications and disciplinary machineries yet also seek to ethically engage in anti-racist pedagogie*s*, recognizing the demands of this historical moment.

Authors' Positionalities

Each of this paper's eight authors—whose published order in the paper emerged across the dialogic process—work along the intersections of CWS and CS. The scholarship of Pauli, a White man, and Jenna, a 1.5 generation Korean-American woman, applies critical contemporary and anti-racist readings of psychoanalysis for CWS and anti-racism work in schools and society. Critical anti-capitalist anti-racism informs the CWS scholarship of Jim and Zac, both White men interested in whiteness pedagogies. Additionally, the CWS scholarship of Tim, a White man, and Veronica, an African-American woman, theorizes whiteness in historical, contemporary, social, pedagogical, and literary contexts. Finally, Sam, a White man, and Erin, a White woman, explore the tension-filled practice of whiteness pedagogies in schools and classrooms. We understand our lived experiences, subjectivities, and study of race and whiteness are all complexly and reflexively intertwined in this text.

"Controversies" in CWS and CS

Whiteness intersects with "controversies" (*read* Whitely) in both CWS and CS. Though instantiated in or doubly-bound against whitened disciplines, CWS and CS emblematize whiteness's controversies, briefly genealogized below. We trace whiteness's controversies in order to work through whiteness in both but also to conduct whiteness pedagogies, unraveling and loosening whiteness within and beyond CWS and CS.

CWS

CWS scholarship and related activisms overflow with controversy, seemingly carrying controversy in their DNA. The 2019 annual American Educational Research Association (AERA) Conference in Toronto provided a new flashpoint. Emblematic of conservative critiques, the Manhattan Institute's (Eden, 2019) coverage of the 2019 AERA Conference led with a flat dismissal of the four-hundred and twenty-two sessions across the AERA conference program that populated the reporter's search for the term *whiteness*. The dismissal accused CWS and related whiteness scholarship as "promoting a virulent new brand of racism" (para. 2).

From another direction, at another session on anti-racist scholarship (e.g., Tanner & Lensmire, 2019), some scholars of Color along with critical White scholars objected to CWS researchers as "re-centering whiteness" in an excoriating critique. More than the first, this second critique had a particular *sting* for the CWS White scholars and activists authoring this piece. This second critique insisted that our work reproduced the White supremacy we say we are fighting

against. Time has passed since Toronto 2019; nonetheless, the central question constituting our dialogue remains salient for CWS, White anti-racist scholars, or White activist subjectifications.

For those initiated in CWS, the controversy boomerangs from the past. Since the 1980s, conservative critiques (e.g., A. Bloom, 1987; H. Bloom, 1994; Hirsch, 1988; Kimball, 1990) like the Manhattan Institute's have sought to insulate "liberalism," the "Western canon," "the humanities," "academic disciplines," "race neutrality," "positivist social science," and "objectivity" from emancipatory human sciences born of Civil Rights and anti-colonial movements. These conservative critiques, antagonistic to the historically- and socially-situated work our dialogue advances, for us amount to but an encapsulated rearguard defense of neoliberal capitalism's *holy quaternity*: individuals, private property, "free" markets, and merit (Jupp et al., 2022).

Complicating conservative critiques, critical White-on-White critiques of White anti-racism are also a regular feature of CWS controversy. In these critiques, ostensibly "superior" conscientized White scholars paradoxically position themselves (clearly via class hierarchy of the White "Unwashed") to other White scholars or White research participants as singular oracular voices or "right reason." Taking their place on the whiteness observation deck (e.g., Hytten & Warren, 2003; Levine-Rasky, 2000; Thompson, 2004), these White anti-racist scholars, instead of recognizing they work from within the same problematic and contradictory and whitened social boundedness, simply critique other Whites' false consciousness in transmissive and oversimple ways, exteriorizing other Whites and whiteness, via heightened consciousness formulas.

From a different positionality (and more importantly), since the early 2000s some scholars of Color have waged a differently-oriented critique of CWS and related scholarship (e.g., Ahmed, 2006; L. M. Jackson, 2019; Matias, 2016; Yúdice, 1995), with Sheets Hernández (2000) especially encapsulating this argument. Commenting on the "White movement in multicultural education" (p. 15), Sheets Hernández wrote that CWS was potentially appropriative of Black anti-racist voices and texts, reductive of racialized complexity, politically-sterile, narcissistic for White scholars, and re-productive of White supremacy. Addressing this controversy of White subjectivizations in anti-racist work, our dialogue responds primarily to the critiques of scholars of Color and White scholars.

We also note contributions of, especially, Black scholars to theorizations of whiteness by activists like Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X; intellectuals like W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, and James Baldwin; historians like Carter Woodson and Arturo Schomburg; or decolonial theoreticians like Aime Cesaire and Franz Fanon, all of whom are frequently left out of so called "controversies" as Black "originators" of CWS who wrote for both Black and White audiences. Moreover, we understand our dialogue certainly proceeds against-the-grain and under the threat of the neoliberal quaternity looming large within the rising tide of interlocking-multinational White nationalist fascisms (Amin, 2014; Grossberg, 2018). We see the performative dialogue here as necessary to working through CWS' pedagogical moment (Jupp, 2013; Jupp & Badenhorst, 2021b; Shim, 2018, 2020) or pedagogical analytical arc (Jupp & Badenhorst, 2021a) that necessarily deploys the complexities and contradictions of psychoanalytic revelatory reasonings within Europeanized *and* non-European subjectivization processes (Cheng, 2001; Fanon, 1964/2004; Gaztambide, 2019; Said, 2004).

CS

CS' whiteness controversies have also served as a flashpoint in conference space over the last two decades, when not smoldering silently under the surface. The 2006 Purdue Conference (Malewski, 2010) provided a specific conflagration courageously led by scholars of Color that continued in Curriculum and Pedagogy Conferences in Akron, Ohio, between 2009 and 2011 but also repeated at Curriculum Studies Summer Collaborative Conferences in Savannah 2014 and 2015. Many of us also grew up in whiteness's conflagrations, trying to sort out CWS within CS.

It is worth recalling the protagonic and courageous forays of Gaztambide-Fernandez (2006) who indicted CS as "an overwhelmingly 'white' space" (p. 60) and emphasized that in CS "white colleagues rarely have to consider what it means to be White and how they are implicated in the racialization of the field" (p. 63). Within the project called the Browning of Curriculum, Gaztambide-Fernandez and Murad (2011) excoriated established curriculum histories as "genealogies of White supremacy" (p. 14) and laid out a newly organized multi-critical field, following critical reading of race, class, gender, ability, and other differences.

Brown and Au (2014) also identified "the predominance of whiteness at the center of the narrative arc of the foundations of curriculum studies" (p. 360), and Au et al. (2016) proposed racialized curriculum genealogies of African American, Mexican American, Asian American, and Native American traditions of educational and cultural criticism as areas of curriculum scholarship. Extending these directions, Grant et al. (2016) also critiqued the deployment of "mostly White European male scholars to illustrate the complex and implicit ways that schools reproduce inequities" (p. x). Grant et al. countered with a tradition of Black intellectual thought in education to promote differently organized understandings and curriculum praxes.

Preceding and extending these publications, Paraskeva (2011, 2018) followed anti-racist decolonial positions in critiquing curriculum epistemicides and argued for "going beyond the Western epistemological platform, paying attention to other forms of knowledge and respecting indigenous knowledge within and beyond the Western space" (2011, p. 152). Following decolonial Marxian foundations in multiply located discursive swirl, Paraskeva has ambitiously and consistently laid out alternatives to CS' whiteness or what he has called the curriculum epistemicide. Resonating with and preceding Paraskeva's work was an anti-imperialist body of Latin American curriculum studies (De Alba, 1995/2006, 2007; Diaz Barriga, 1985; Puiggrós, 1983/2016, 2004), well aware and resistant to curriculum studies' Global North and Anglophone epistemological whiteness. All of these directions pointed out not only that White or Anglophone scholars occupied privileged positions in CS academic economies but also how whiteness was imbricated in the realities of conference space and CS' historical and ongoing knowledge production.

Embroiled in CS' history and present, we sustain that working through the conflict over the field's whiteness remains unresolved and will likely remain so as whiteness extends beyond concerns about scholars' "identities" into notions of disciplinary histories along with research writing genres, language, cognition, and ultimately, Europeanized cosmovisions implied even in social and educational research terms like frameworks, methods, findings, implications, and conclusions. Controversies in CS will continue because many White scholars and some scholars of Color are content with race-based work remaining as one or two "discourses" within a largely pan-Europeanized multiply discursive field. Contrastingly, many scholars of Color and some White scholars understand CS as always already being a racialized-whitened field and, as a

consequence, push for an historically re-organized and transformed race-based field against whiteness's grain.

De facto, the former group of scholars advocate for a continuation of a predominantly-whitened multiply discursive field documented in Pinar et al. (1995), Schubert et al. (1980/2002), and other subsequent compendium volumes and guidebooks (Connelly et al., 2008; He et al., 2015; P. Jackson, 1992; Malewski, 2010; Morris, 2016). In contrast, the latter group of scholars drive at a radically transformed decolonial and race-based field that requires differently organized historical-documentation, theoretical production, empirical conceptualization, and work on critical race-based pedagogies. The latter group *decenters* the whiteness of the U.S.-based field as but one genealogy of curricular-pedagogical praxes instead of the "historic Roman metropolis" to which all roads must lead.

Working through CS' controversy, we think our performed dialogue below differently resonates with notions of many-sided psychoanalytic autobiography in CS from Pinar (1975, 2004) and feminist colleagues (Miller, 2005; Grumet, 1988) along with students (e.g., Casemore, 2008; Jewett, 2008; Whitlock, 2007), especially students who began to read race psychoanalytically through located critical understandings of place. Nonetheless, here we place special reference on the historical complexities and social multidimensionalities of critical race feminist autobiography in Berry (2014), Guillory (2012), and Baszile's (2010) instantiations. Though not conceived of as collective critical race *currere* at the time of the panel presentation, we believe our performative dialogue adds to *currere* and other approaches imbued with the tensions of Europeanized (Britzman, 1998, 2011; Butler, 1990; Freud, 1958a, 1958b) and non-European psychoanalysis (Cheng, 2001; Fanon, 1964/2004; Gaztambide, 2019; Said, 2004).

The Performative Dialogue

At the intersection of CWS and CS, we present the narratives of six CWS scholars, two scholars of Color and four White scholars, who variously respond to, grapple with, and work through our central question: Doesn't your work just recenter whiteness?

Tim

I gave a talk last February that included a discussion of scapegoating rituals performed by White people in order to reassure ourselves of our own whiteness and superiority. Ralph Ellison (1953/1995, 1986) thought that everything from racist humor and stereotypes to lynching were examples of these violent rituals. After the talk, a woman raised her hand and said that as a Black woman, she didn't know what she was supposed to learn from my presentation. She already knew that White people wanted to do violence to her, and where were the experiences of Black people in my work?

I think that this woman's response to my talk is akin to the question organizing this article. That is, doesn't your work just recenter whiteness? And my answer to this question is yes, *this work does re-center whiteness. However, what I cannot say* yes *to is that this work* just *or* only *re-centers whiteness.*

The woman's response to my talk focused on things I had shared about Norman, who was the troubled and intolerant uncle of one of the key participants in my study on race and identity in

rural Wisconsin (Lensmire, 2017a). *When Norman was drunk, he sometimes wept and said that he worried that he might have been the person who assassinated Martin Luther King, Jr. The woman said that my discussion of Norman and scapegoating repeated things that she already knew and had experienced.*

This is a serious point. The decolonial scholar, Katherine McKittrick (2014), in commenting on her own and other's attempts to make sense of slavery using the available "documents and ledgers and logs that narrate the brutalities of this history," worries that these archives simultaneously "give birth to new world blackness as they evacuate life from blackness" (p. 16).

I draw two morals from the story of my February talk. The first is that work on White racial identity is dangerous and that it will often repeat and participate in violence done to people of Color. The second moral is that we need to be aware of and humble about who might then benefit from this work. On the one hand, I have had students and colleagues of Color who have told me that critical whiteness studies work is important to them because it helps them theorize and respond to a violent White supremacist world. On the other hand, that does not mean that our work will always be helpful, and sometimes the violence of this work will overwhelm its possible benefits.

I tend to assume that any story, or discourse, or theory, performs various kinds of violence. Sometimes, this will be in the recounting of violent actions and events, but at all times, there is another kind of violence that has to do with the partialness of any story or theory. To focus on something means to not focus on something else. This seems undeniable to me and also unavoidable. To focus on White racial identity or whiteness in the United States means that we are not focusing on, say, the experiences of people of Color.

Too much work on race in education has focused on persuading White people of the fact of White racism, the fact of violence against oppressed peoples, the fact of White supremacy. While such work is necessary, I think that it might be more helpful—or helpful at least at this moment— to assume that White people already know that they live in an unjust society. What they don't know is how *and* why *this is so, how and why they continue participating, in so many different ways, in the reproduction of this unjust society.*

On the night of that talk, I took a long time responding to that woman's questions, but, boiled down, I said basically two things. First, I said to her that it probably was not my place as a White scholar to try to tell White people about Black people's experiences. I watched as her body seemed to relax as I said this. Second, I said that I wasn't sure that my work would actually help her learn new things. I can't remember if I said that I was sorry that she experienced parts of my presentation as violences against her. I hope that I did.

Jenna

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the question, doesn't your work recenter whiteness, *may be a defense against what's difficult about our work—anxiety over ambivalence, unknown, and complexity in the work (Britzman, 2011). I see the work on White racial identity as an emotional situation, and emotions are difficult to handle, let alone to understand. As Freud (1913/1958b) has taught us, emotions have meaning, and not only emotions have meaning, but emotions are always about someone or something even if we may not always understand. Leaning on Deborah Britzman's (2015) assertion that the more fluid and open you are about your own*

emotional life, the more welcoming you will be about emotional lives of others, my discussion will focus on the exploration of my own emotional world in engaging with the work of White racial identity in a predominantly White institution and state.

According to Freud (1917/1958a), unlike mourning, which has a resolution by declaring the lost object as finished, melancholia resists a separation with the lost object. Therefore, melancholia is a form of grief without end. The contemporary scholar, Anne Anlin Cheng (2001), adapted Freud's (1917/1958a) concept of melancholia to group identifications for Asian-American groups living in America and called it racial melancholia. Cheng (2001) also discusses internalization of a set of dominant norms and ideals often proposed to the Asian-American groups that continually evokes the unattainability of ideals of whiteness, hence, the racial melancholic framework.

Some other scholars have noted that, despite the long history of Asian immigration in this country, the myth of Asian-Americans as forever foreigners is still pervasive (e.g., Takaki, 1989; Tuan, 1998). In trying to locate the trigger points where I am most susceptible in race discussions, teacher candidates' frequent questions about my origin and asking me, "Where are you from? And where are you really *from?" invoke disgust in me. Teacher candidates' repeated comments on how I should be teaching them about different cultures, while seemingly denying their whiteness and making comments like, "It's a human nature to marginalize others as they are pretty sure if they went to Korea there exists Korean privilege," arouses feeling associated with racial harassment—something I knew not what gets under my skin and makes me furious with my students.*

When some teacher candidates confess that I'm easier to understand than most other Asian instructors that they have had previously, I often feel I have been put back into my proper place—that of an Asian foreigner with an accent in a White land. Then I ask myself, "What is being displaced in my emotional response to my students' comments and questions, and what do those comments and questions trigger within me?" An attempt to better understand my seemingly irrational affective response to teacher candidates is encouraged by Freud's (1913/1958b) notion of working through *an experience as I'm putting together pieces of life by symbolizing what may have been forgotten.*

Cheng (2001) proposes that racial melancholia must be understood both as a sign of rejection and as a psychic strategy in response to the rejection. Then, am I interpreting the teacher candidates' questions as an enactment of their rejection to see me as one of them? What do I feel is being enacted in the whiteness work by emotionally responding to the students in ways that I do? What I know for sure is that these exchanges with my students have the power to get inside of me in a most disturbing way and eat into my being.

Through racial melancholia, I begin to see a very blurry glimpse of what teacher candidates' comments and questions may represent for me and what may be intolerable about what they represent—a sense of alienation and difference even though in my mind I am embracing who I am and my heritage. I'm a Korean-American, and my parents immigrated to the U.S. over 40 years ago. My memories of childhood schooling include wanting to speak English with no accent and disliking my appearance as it was very different from that of my peers.

Cheng (2001) proposes that racial melancholia is the inevitable consequence of hegemonic power and racial hierarchies, and reflecting on how I must struggle with and negotiate lost objects demonstrates the incredibly complex dynamics of White racial identity work and the implicated-ness of myself as a teacher educator of Color. In my case, the psychic process in which the loved ideal object to which I unconsciously desired to belong was shattered, and this troubled me.

While recognizing that my analysis is at best partial, what I learned is this: rather than asking whether or not the work on critical whiteness re-centers whiteness, perhaps we may wonder more about what can be understood and worked through from various sides of the work on critical whiteness and why we must continue this work.

Erin

In 1993, the African American writer and social critic, Toni Morrison, responded to a question posed by the White journalist, Charlie Rose. Rose asked Morrison what it felt like to be a victim of racism, and Morrison pointedly responded, "That's the wrong question. Don't you understand that the people who do this thing, who practice racism, are bereft?" She continued, "There is something distorted about the psyche. And my feeling is that White people have a very, very serious problem, and they should start thinking about what they can do about it. Take me out of it."

There are two points I wish to make in my response to the question, doesn't your work recenter whiteness? *The first has to do with the question itself. The second has to do with the serious problem that Morrison indicates White people have. I believe the question with which we are engaging, like Charlie Rose's question to Toni Morrison, is the wrong question.*

It's the word whiteness used in the question that worries me the most. It worries me because I do not think we share a common enough understanding of the term whiteness. So, let me be clear. I don't hold whiteness to literally mean "White people" or "structural White supremacy." I imagine whiteness as a normalized way of being, a shared cultural understanding among people who know themselves to be White, a way of being that is predicated upon the on-going oppression of persons of Color globally, nationally, and locally.

In a recent critique of whiteness studies, whiteness was metaphorized as a "poisonous plant" (Ohito & Collective, 2020). Poisonous, yes, I can agree. But whiteness, to me, is not a thing we can objectify and easily locate. It is both within and outside of the consciousness of White people and perpetually shaped by interactions with each other and the world. At one moment it is a conversation between White children playing with an English castle and imaging sailing to Africa to "get land"; the next, it manifests as anti-blackness when a White person, driving down the road, pities the homeless Black people she sees. Whiteness is not as much is as it is evoked.

I studied the ways whiteness is evoked among White children in small interchanges in familial contexts. I found whiteness is evoked when White children walked down a church hallway to learn about God's love for humanity and, on the way, interacted with a bulletin board that, without mentioning people of Color, stated the inferiority of people of Color while, without mentioning White people, stated the godliness and holiness of White people. Whiteness spilled out of picture books and history books and curricular materials, and while those books and materials conjured *whiteness more than they* contained *whiteness, they nonetheless left White children to make sense of its wake.*

I'm not only interested in studying this surreptitious phenomenon but the enigmatic forces that compel it. Why—when whiteness is evoked—do White people run with it? Why don't White people close the books ... challenge the systems ... question the messages? What drives White people to set the colonial monsters loose and then throw our hands up as if we played no part? What makes our psyches so distorted? Like the others on this panel, I do not believe the answers

to those questions lie in concepts of privilege alone but have more to do with our internal longings and our deepest fears.

In these conversations, I think we sometimes miss our potential to be in relation to each other, to have productive dialogue, because we aren't clear about what we mean. If I translated the question at hand according to my understandings of whiteness, I might ask instead: "Do studies about White peoples' distortions bring into focus the ways that White people—against our apparent own desires—work with other White people in everyday moments to cause harm to people of Color? I think the answer to this question is, "Yes. Yes, they do." And, that is the point: to understand whiteness transacts and why it transacts.

Veronica

I have never been asked, doesn't your work re-center whiteness. *Never. Which leads me to wonder why the question is put to others.*

Perhaps there is a presumption, a willingness to give me, as an African American woman, the benefit of the doubt. Maybe no one imagines that my work would be anything other than critical*, located in the heart of someone who wants to see change, participate in change, to be a path through which change is made possible (me, my body, my experiences, my knowledge, as a path through which change is made possible). Perhaps there is just a way of reading* me*, in this skin, that looks for and anticipates a certain content that is laser-focused on* de*-centering whiteness.*

But maybe that's also about the fact that my experience and my critique are not located only with me. My engagement with whiteness is through the work of Black intellectuals and artists, our collective thinking, theorizing, dreaming, and world-making. My foundation, the scholars I cite, the approach I take, is to ask the question, "How have Black people tried to de-center whiteness?" Perhaps there is less chance of being confused as one who "re-centers whiteness" when I start with the thinking, voices, and experiences of people of Color.

I suppose, "Doesn't your work simply re-center whiteness," could be offered as a genuine question, from a place of real concern that the efforts to dislodge racist and colonial logics are undermined when we focus our scholarship on the very source of much of that oppressive thinking. But on the face of it, that seems an unlikely position for a scholar to take. So, it leads me to wonder what anxieties might be fueling the question. Was something offered or theorized that activated a desire to shut down or debunk the analysis? Did I say something that called into question your sense of yourself in the world or your sense of the world itself?

*I'm also cognizant of what pondering the question activates in me as a person doing this work. I would feel misread, misheard, mis*recognized *if I were on the receiving end of that query. I would wonder, "What did I say or do that makes this person think that my work is about shoring up the tenets of an exploitative and destructive whiteness?" Would I even want to continue if I felt there was a real possibility that it could be perceived as part of the problem rather than part of the solution?*

In short, I'd want to know the "why" of the question—to know more about the motivation of the particular person *who offered the question—which suggests to me that, at the heart, the question really is (or perhaps, could be) about relationships. So, the best reply I can imagine now is simply to ask, "Why do you ask the question?" Maybe that follow up could build a bridge upon which the questioner and I could begin a dialogue.*

To my White colleagues and friends who are shoulder to shoulder in this work, I am reminded of the now almost apocryphal exchange between Malcolm X and a young White attendee at one of his lectures (Columbia U). Excited and fired up to help after hearing Bro. Malcolm speak, she asks, "What can I do [to help]?" His response, which was heard by young White liberals everywhere: "Go back to your own community" to do anti-racist work. Malcolm was not concerned about re-centering whiteness; he was concerned with creating White allies and activists. Like him, I want to hold a space of hope as we do this work.

There was never a time when whiteness was not in the center. But the work of attacking its strongholds to weaken its foundations should not be seen "re-centering." We who do this work are disrupting the hold whiteness has in our lives. We are freeing our own minds for emancipatory work and joining, partnering, even collaborating with those who are doing the revolutionary work.

Zac

For me, whiteness has never left the center. George Lipsitz (2006) provides the definition of whiteness as "the unmarked category against which difference is constructed … Whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations" (p. 1). This conception of whiteness, as a conceptual standpoint coupled with material advantage, has come to be the dominant way in which whiteness scholars approach the study of White racial identity.

So, what of the question of "re-centering" whiteness? One might start with a temporal argument: when was whiteness not at the "center," and what is new or unique about present work that calls for it to not be "re-centered?" We could thus answer a question of "re-centering" whiteness with an historical inquiry: when was whiteness not at the center of our social experience? Perhaps we could argue over 17th century laws from the Virginia colony that stipulated particular protections for "Christian" slaves and contrasted them with "African" slaves and whether or not whiteness was centered in such policies. But, of course, "Christian" was synonymous with White, and thus a legal system that centers "Christians," in this context, is one that centers "whiteness." We would likely be forced to look to other continents to find a moment when "whiteness" was not the hegemonic racial location before settler colonialism, though Nell Irvin Painter's (2010) work would leave us with little recourse—from the time of the Ancient Greeks, inklings of whiteness as the ideal, as the "unmarked category against which difference is constructed" have been present. And thus, we are left with a significant limitation on the framing of the question of recentering whiteness: if we can't find a moment when whiteness was ever not central to the social organization of the modern world, why would we be concerned about notions of "re" centering what has never left the center?

From my perspective, recentering whiteness is a misnomer—it seeks to address a tension that is real but locates it inaccurately, and thus, the critique becomes absurd. Having been engaged in the field of whiteness studies in education for a while now, I have become accustomed to hearing questions of whether my work "re-centers" whiteness. What I actually think such questions are concerned with is largely to do with who is offering a particular analysis of whiteness. Roediger (2007) was concerned about this almost immediately after his book, Wages of Whiteness, was released and subsequently identified as the seminal text in the new interdisciplinary field of whiteness studies. Roediger (1998) was explicit in his rejection of this characterization of his work: he pointed to Black scholars from W.E.B. DuBois, to Anna Julia

Cooper, to Ralph Ellison, to James Baldwin, and many others who had theorized whiteness for decades prior to his work. He even took the step of editing a collection called <u>Black on White</u> to make clear that his work built on at least a century of analyses of whiteness authored by Black scholars.

When Black authors or other scholars of Color theorize whiteness, are they centering it? Are they re-centering it, or is the "re" something only White authors are capable of? If White supremacy as a hegemonic global order is so vast that no one individual could ever dismantle it, what are we actually critiquing when we argue a work is "re-centering" whiteness?

Re-centering should be renamed. I think something closer to "invisiblizing" captures more of the actual risks and speaks to more of the actual violence that academic work can do, to further limit what is possible for anti-racism. Invisiblizing whiteness sounds very different from the kinds of work in which my comrades and I engage—because there is no mention of White supremacy and structural racism in work that actually re-centers (that is, invisiblizes) whiteness.

So, when we see studies that make arguments like "80% of teachers …" or "2/3rds of students …" with zero engagement with race, these are the moments that are deserving of significant criticism for recapitulating to and invisiblizing whiteness. Work that names White supremacy as the dominant logic of our global order is not "re-centering" whiteness; it is resisting White supremacy as a totalizing system of domination.

Sam

The question, "doesn't your work re-center whiteness," makes me think of two things. First, I think about the considerable media attention my teaching about whiteness received in 2013. I'd spent the year working with a group of mostly White high school students to study whiteness. The students wrote and produced a play as the culmination of the project. A local newspaper published an article about the production, and a morning radio program got hold of the article. The conservative hosts spent a segment eviscerating the idea that a White teacher and a group of mostly White students would study or create a play about whiteness. They described my teaching as "gross," my students as "disgusting," and concluded that I was a scruffy, gay man trying to destroy America with my teaching (Tanner, 2018). A few days after the radio segment, a national blog associated with conservative pundit Glenn Beck published a story about the teaching project. The comment section was filled with threats directed towards the students and me. My approach to whiteness pedagogy enraged conservative, White radio hosts, bloggers, and commenters—sent them into hysterics.

Next, I think about participating in a panel on critical whiteness studies at an academic conference in 2019. I sat in front of the room with two White colleagues, excited about the size of our audience. We each shared talks about our work to create pedagogy informed by a second-wave of critical whiteness studies. I placed a story about my traumatic childhood in relation to the work of one of my White students. The student theorized whiteness in relation to her own history of depression. The intention of my talk, as I said at the time, was to wonder what teachers can learn from and with their students in explorations of whiteness. Indeed, I had been inspired by my student's work to tell and interpret stories from my childhood as a way of understanding how my whiteness was abnormal, chaotic, and weak. I remember thinking that the talk was one of the more powerful ones I've given at an academic conference. At the end of the talk, one of the audience members, a Black scholar, asked the first question. I can't remember exactly how they phrased it,

but it was essentially the question this piece addresses. The room seemed to collectively exhale and nod after the question was asked. I left wondering why my approach to whiteness scholarship—an approach that attempts to make the history of white supremacy and contemporary evocations of whiteness visible to White people—seemed to create anxiety for some members of that academic audience. They seemed so worried about a White person talking openly about whiteness.

In the stories above, I was surprised that such different audiences, conservatives and critical scholars of Color, had similar responses to my work. They both seemed to share the conviction that I shouldn't be talking, writing, teaching, or thinking about whiteness. Maybe these responses shouldn't be surprising to me. My work is guided by The Reverend Thandeka's (1999) research. Thandeka (1999) claimed that: "whenever the content of this White racial image is exposed, White self-consciousness can feel shame—and rage" (p. 26). In other words, the act of centering and consciously confronting *whiteness is extremely difficult for many White people and often results in violence and harm. This idea is useful in thinking about the reaction to my work by the White radio hosts or blog commenters. Thandeka is less helpful in understanding the anxiety of the Black scholar, other than they might have been so accustomed to White people who center whiteness* without *consciously confronting, or they might want to drive White grapplings with White identity back underground, to silence.*

My experience in improv theater deeply informs my work as a teacher and scholar. I've spent years training performers to work without scripts. It seems to me that there is something almost scripted about the question being considered in this piece. I wonder if the unscripted nature of the sort of whiteness work described here creates similar apprehension, in part, because it doesn't follow more familiar patterns of anti-racism. Put differently, there is little precedent for White people consciously and openly confronting whiteness with criticality in teaching or educational research, while the usual script is one about White silence.

So does my research just re-center whiteness? I'd remove the reductive word "just" from that question and say that yes, such research does center whiteness. But, borrowing from the improvisational ethic of "yes, and," I'd add an "and" to my response. I'd say yes, and consciously and critically confronting whiteness provides one direction for White people to resist and disrupt White supremacy in our work and living. Of anti-racism, DuBois (1968/1997) wrote that "simple knowledge" will not "reform the world," and instead, people "must be changed by influencing folkways, habits, customs and subconscious deeds" (p. 222). I suspect that on some level White people know they (we) are White in a White supremacist society and have advantages, privileges. They (we) are complicit in the death and destruction of people of Color. I worry more is needed to understand and transform the folkways, habits, customs, and subconscious deeds that influence the way White folks act. I also worry that the apprehension in the question considered in this article can obstruct conscious and critical confrontations with whiteness and, in such a way, affirm White supremacy.

Convolutions, Through-lines, Unresolved

Our grapplings uncover significant convolutions—complex tension-filled coils implicating epistemological incongruity, ontological paradox, and axiological entanglement—pervading anti-racist work and White subjectifications doing this work. Our working through the responses above, along with our own experiences, readings, desires and longings, dreams and nightmares, and day-to-day beings have led us to emergently and subjunctively read the convolutions below as thematic through-lines, *unresolved*.

Epistemological Incongruity

Epistemological incongruency implicates positionality, unintelligibility, and incommensurability, providing through-lines in the dialogue. Veronica, an African-American woman CWS scholar, states that she has never previously been met with the insinuation that her whiteness work recenters whiteness and ascribes such to the possibility of a perception that her African American *skin* by default positions her as *laser-focused on decentering whiteness*. Sam, a White man engaged in anti-racist teaching and research, in turn, recounts a very different reaction to his work on whiteness during a CWS panel at a CS conference where a Black scholar questioned whether in fact his work on whiteness was re-centering whiteness, whereafter he left wondering why the audience seemed so worried about a White person talking openly about whiteness. Of course, it is incorrect to assume that resistance to anti-racist work conducted by White people stems exclusively from people of Color. On the contrary, in the experience of Tim, Jim, and Pauli, some of the most vocal resistance to anti-racist work conducted by White people often emanates from other White people who regard themselves as liberal, non-racist, colorblind, and even critical anti-racists and who on such grounds either deem anti-racist work unnecessary or otherwise experience other Whites' racialized narratives as transgressing correct, racialized consciousness and, therefore, violating "white middle-class moral goodness" (Sullivan, 2014, p. 5). This said, significantly, both Veronica and Sam claim to ground their work in prior Black scholarship, and yet their engagement with whiteness evokes very different reactions across racial lines ranging from unquestioning acceptance to dismissive suspicion.

The positioning of anti-racist work in CWS or CS, especially regarding who is deemed to possess epistemic authority and, on such grounds, who is granted right of utterance, is determined less by ideological affinity and more by the racial collective that the scholar embodies (Ellison, 1953/1995, 1986; Fanon, 1952/1967) relative to shared prior racial experiences. Consequently, racialized epistemic authority and right of utterance involves much more than ideological alliances or citational practices, irrespective of how deeply White scholars have read and embedded their work in Black anti-racist traditions or that the category *White people* is a heterogeneous, social-identitarian agglomeration often contingent on place and demographic context (Badenhorst, 2019; Jupp, 2013; Jupp & Badenhorst, 2021a, 2021b; Winddance Twine & Gallagher, 2008). At issue is relational trust across racial lines demarcated by skin—a racial-relational *mistrust* experienced by many scholars of Color; a suspicion that representations of people of Color are being used, to quote bell hooks (2015), as little more than "spice that can liven up the dish that is mainstream white culture" (p. 14). Mistrust of White scholars by Black and Brown peoples is amplified by the recursive tendency of whiteness to at times reinscribe itself in progressive White discourses through disingenuous forms of White anti-racism (Hook, 2011) that foreground self-centered

disavowals of racism, self-promotion, and supposed benevolence and heroism as narcissist badges of anti-racism (Badenhorst, 2021; Jupp & Badenhorst, 2021a, 2021b; Matias, 2016).

Furthermore, vast is the epistemic gulf that separates what people of Color and Whites actually know about each other. As demonstrated by Roediger (1998) and Watson (2015), the Black anti-racist archive reveals profound insight into whiteness in contrast to the habitus of White subjectivity for which actively choosing not to know has historically comprised a viable historic epistemology with contemporary reach. Simultaneously, CWS work, incorporative of its pedagogical analytic arc (Jupp & Badenhorst, 2021a, 2021b; Lensmire et al., 2013; Shim, 2018, 2020), when conducted by White scholars, is often forthrightly dismissed by Black and Brown scholars as essentialized *non-performative*, *White-on-White pontificating* (Ahmed, 2006; L. M. Jackson, 2019; Sheets Hernández, 2000). Such reaction, in particular, leaves White people earnestly desiring to engage in anti-racism work and solidarity between the proverbial rock-and-a-hard place of either guilt by association or non-engagement and creates a *damned if I speak, damned if I don't* quandary.

Finally, the people of Color/White epistemic gulf ensures that discourses across racial lines are often experienced as unintelligible, so eliminating both the trope of *dialog* and transmissive educational approaches as go-to, cure-all humanist panaceas, and further reifying an interracial incommensurability alluded to so hauntingly by Fanon (1952/1967) and also recounted recently by Matias (2016). At its heart, such interracial incommensurability is not one of ontological "genetics"—as scientifically discredited White supremacist eugenic pseudo-science claims—but rather of epistemology, of how and what we come to *know* based on racialized differences in experience. Such epistemological fissure and the divisive manner in which it grounds racialized identities has so far proven extremely difficult to navigate in curricular contexts (Miller & Tanner, 2019) and, furthermore, negates opportunity for gender-type (Butler, 1990) transgressive transracial identity viscosity attempted by, among others, Jessica Krug, Rachel Dolezal, and Grey Owl. And, yet, paradoxically, the epistemological rather than ontological nature of such rift begs a larger enduring question: Can anyone lay claim to a universally guaranteed positionality, or are positionalities forged within crises and struggles? As White subjectivizations in CWS and CS scholars, we came to understand that our positionalities are in no way guaranteed, and instead, to the contrary, we necessarily work through an epistemological incongruency, one that must continually instantiate unintelligibility and incommensurability.

Ontological Paradox

Ontological paradoxes in the social structure of the psyche provide through lines in the dialogue. If our racialized experiences inform what we know as a collective embodiment, our *feeling* responses to such experiences serve as the experiential nexus between the domains of self and social, personal and political. After all, raced skin comes charged with a range of accompanying feelings and emotions (Ahmed, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2019; Matias, 2016) that either connect or estrange us in relation to others. In their accounts, several authors report either experiencing adverse feelings and emotions in response to their work on whiteness or becoming aware that it was in fact their work on whiteness that was evoking feelings of anxiety and trauma in others. For instance, Tim—a White male CWS scholar who often works in CS forums—reports on an interracial encounter during an academic conference when a Black woman audience

participant reported feeling his talk to be violent. Then, following his response, he observes, *I watched as her body seemed to relax as I said this.*

A complex array of feelings/emotions are both constitutive of and relevant to White anti-racist work in CWS and CS require deeper analysis. Jenna, in turn, identifies anti-racist work informed by psychoanalysis as essential to her coping and survival as a Korean-American teacher educator working at a predominantly White institution in a mostly conservative state. Here, she often experiences being Othered by her White teacher candidates in a manner that leaves her feeling alienated and put back into her *proper place—that of an Asian foreigner with an accent in a White land.* She continues: *What I know for sure is that these exchanges with my students have the power to get inside of me in a most disturbing way and eat into my being.* In response, she strategically mobilizes Cheng's (2001) racialized melancholia rereading of Freud (1917/1958) to make relative sense of her painful feelings and emotions that represent the paradox of racism against her, comprising the very bedrock of her racial identity.

The significance of the psyche for anti-racist work continues to prove especially important in the account of Tim who complicates the oversimplified view of Whites as essentially race-evasive when he notes:

> *White people already know that they live in an unjust society. What they don't know is how and why this is so, how and why they continue participating, in so many different ways, in the reproduction of this unjust society.*

Likewise, Erin, a White female teacher educator, poses a number of provocative questions that further uncover the psycho-affective *enigmatic forces* underlying whiteness:

> *Why—when whiteness is evoked—do White people run with it? Why don't White people close the books ... challenge the systems ... question the messages? What drives White people to set the colonial monsters loose and then throw our hands up as if we played no part? What makes our psyches so distorted?*

Responses so far presented indicate a key ontological reality, namely, the social structuring via affect of the human psyche, and underscore the need for deeper anti-racist psychoanalytic scrutiny of whiteness as a complex and violence-inflicting social-identitarian phenomenon (Jupp & Badenhorst, 2021a, 2021b; Lensmire, 2017b; Watson, 2015). Of course, in spite of the emergence of a sophisticated body of redirected anti-racist and decolonizing psychoanalytic work (Cheng, 2001; Fanon, 1952/1967, 1963/2004; Hook, 2011; Matias, 2016; Shim, 2018, 2020), psychoanalysis continues to be dismissed as a colonialist, racist project (Brickman, 2018). Additionally, contra anti-racist thinkers like Fanon (1952/1967, 1963/2004) and Baldwin (1962, 1998), criticisms of more contemporary incarnations of psychoanalysis in relation to work on race and racism have sought to devalue the idea of psychoanalytic self-transformative work as antithetical to work focused on societal, structural, and institutional change, implying that a focus on the *personal* distracts from the *public.* Bearing this in mind, why does the unrealistic bifurcation between self and social persist and especially so in relation to whiteness-related work?

This reaction may partly relate to the all-too-easy means whereby some Whites use CWS- or CS-related venues to resort to autobiographical cul-de-sac confessions of racialized shame and guilt (Bonnett, 1997). Such confessions ultimately leave the unreasonable onus of emotional appeasement on the shoulders of Black and Brown peoples desiring to avert further puppy cries

for acceptance and validation stemming from White people's battle with a fear of abandonment and desire to belong (Lensmire, 2017b). Clearly, here, CWS pedagogical moment's (Jupp & Badenhorst, 2021a, 2021b; Lensmire et al., 2013; Shim, 2018, 2020) goal of actively dismantling White supremacy, racism, and anti-blackness is a helpful step away from White privilege confessional piety and "allyship" toward ongoing self-social inner-outer psychoanalytic work.

White supremacy, racism, and anti-blackness are violent phenomena fueled by both public and psychic performances of whiteness that cannot be undone by mere passive acknowledgement or confession of White privilege (Lensmire et al., 2013). Crucially, the social structure of the psyche is a key ontological constituent of human being, albeit an ontology at tension relative to self/social bifurcation, the "variety of pathways" (Bonnett, 2000, p. 114) inhering anti-racism work, and subsequent "dilemma" as intrinsic to relationally-strained anti-racist debate (p. 145).

Axiological Entanglement

Axiological entanglement also provides through-lines in the dialogue. Taking into account the incongruent nature of how and what we come to *know* based on racialized differences in experience, as well as the reality that humans across racial lines share an ontological socially structured psyche that is nevertheless bifurcated and contested along the paradox of a self-social binary in anti-racism work, the possibility of alliance-oriented, anti-racist solidarity and work across racial lines becomes an open question—one pertinent to CWS, CS, and related White anti-racist scholars and activists.

While White participation in #BlackLivesMatter protests surged in the summer of 2020 following the murder of George Floyd, Black suspicions regarding White motives abound (see, for instance, Fowler, 2020). Such suspicion also clearly persists in relation to the work of White anti-racist scholars (Ahmed, 2006; L. M. Jackson, 2019; Sheets Hernández, 2000) where a perception that CWS or critical CS work "recenters" whiteness endures in spite of the reality that this scholarship is characteristically heterogenous (Jupp & Badenhorst, 2021a, 2021b). Such perception is intimately related to the aforementioned epistemological incongruity and ontological paradox and can be read into a set of questions tendered by Zac, a White male CWS scholar: *When Black authors or other scholars of Color theorize whiteness, are they centering it? Are they re-centering it, or is the "re" something only White authors are capable of?* Zac insightfully goes on to recognize that whiteness *has never left the center* and instead proposes *invisiblizing* as a more accurate concern relating to an active attempt to obscure and disguise White supremacy and structural racism as extensions of capitalism (Casey, 2016). Bearing in mind that the White psyche itself is structured with internalized racist scaffolding deeply embedded in the invisible realm of the unconscious, the same realm occupied by other capitalist desires of consumption, does such reality perhaps further negate the possibility for durable, abiding, interracial, anti-racist alliance and solidarity?

Fiedler (1963)—referring to White subjectivity and echoing Baldwin (1962, 1998), Memmi (1957/1967), and Morrison (1992)—avers that, for the slim possibility of racial conciliation to commence, "it is with the projection of our rejected self, which we have called 'Negro,' that we must be reconciled" (para. 35). The desire for interracial relationship, alliance, and solidarity is, therefore, a deeply nuanced and fraught fantasy in which White subjectifications' "impaired core sense of self" (Thandeka, 1999, p. 127) is implicated beyond anything multicultural education with its well-intentioned yet limited listen-talk-and-hold-hands approach has hitherto

recognized. The racial divide is a relational divide that cuts deeply, historically, and presently across the psyche, and White people must confront their own inability to simply "heal" it with so-called good faith or, its converse equivalent, maudlin sentimentality (Cheng, 2001).

White subjectivizations cut the historical sociogenic lesion with an unspeakable ontic, epistemic, and axiological White gaze in colonial genocide, massacres, and all manner of ongoing unforgivable crimes too many to fathom (e.g., Fanon, 1963/2004; Yancy, 2017). Nonetheless, all the while contradictorily and hypocritically, Oedipal White subjectivizations have also disfigured and dehumanized themselves (e.g., Douglass, 1845/1982; Thandeka, 1999), historically *blinding* themselves, gouging their own eyes out and violating their lineages in a sadistic ritual understood by Whites as virtue (Fanon, 1963/2004; Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/2002; Matias, 2016). We need to see White subjectivizations' rituals as inextricably linked to the relentless machineries of capital and greed (Casey, 2016; Echeverría, 2010/2016; Jupp et al., 2022; Scheurich, in press) while impossibly desiring union (Coetzee, 1980/1999), often blithely referred to as White allyship.

Of course, a profound and problematic ethical impossibility also underlies the idea of *White people healing themselves* from psychic pathologies that harm others and themselves. On a superficial level less mindful of interest convergence (Bell, 1980), such initiative may appear shamelessly self-serving. Yet, at a more fundamental level, the excavation and renovation of White psyche in anti-racist work is dangerous in that it possesses the dire potential of hurting peoples of Color. Tim provides us with a prescient caution:

> *Work on White racial identity is dangerous ... we need to be aware of and humble about who might then benefit from this work. On the one hand, I have had students and colleagues of Color who have told me that critical whiteness studies work is important to them because it helps them theorize and respond to a violent White supremacist world. On the other hand, that does not mean that our work will always be helpful, and sometimes the violence of this work will overwhelm its possible benefits.*

Perhaps the possibility of greater, alliance-oriented, anti-racism work lays cocooned in an insight offered by Veronica who paints an alluring image of what such interracial *embrace* may look like. Consequently, it is only appropriate that this section draws to an end with her poignant articulation:

> *To my White colleagues and friends who are shoulder to shoulder in this work, I am reminded of the now almost apocryphal exchange between Malcolm X and a young White attendee at one of his lectures (Columbia U). Excited and fired up to help after hearing Bro. Malcolm speak, she asks, "What can I do [to help]?" His response, which was heard by young white liberals everywhere: "Go back to your own community" to do anti-racist work. Malcolm was not concerned about re-centering whiteness; he was concerned with creating white allies and activists. Like him, I want to hold a space of hope as we do this work, that we will find a language that can be critical of the role that whiteness has played in this world while offering new possibilities for anti-racist identities among people who identify as white.*

Malcolm X's refrain, *Go back to your own community*, remains one, overarching, contemporary concern of work interrogating whiteness still necessary in CWS or CS work, undeniably built into

both Black and White authors' attempts to intervene on White psyches. Here we find the impossibilities of White allyship, embedded within alliance-oriented CWS and CS.

The Fallen Impossibilities of White Allyship

The foregoing performative dialogue and its discussion presented the complex, nuanced, narrativized subjectivization of six scholars at the intersections of CWS and CS, responding to the central question: Doesn't your work just re-center whiteness? We grappled with and worked through contortions, rather than providing "answers," "solutions," "implications," or other absurdities tied to instrumentalist understandings of social or education sciences, always-already-dyed-in-the-wool with whiteness and whitened cognitions to begin with.

Via contortions, we found only epistemological incongruencies, ontological paradoxes, and axiological entanglements that emerged as we worked through and attempted to perform whiteness pedagogies in CWS and CS, two disciplines emblematizing the legion of disciplinary machineries differently instantiating ongoing whiteness shot-through, imbricated, constituted in doing and thinking. Indicted in the subtitle of this piece, we worked through our aspirations to perform alliance-oriented anti-racism, directly taking on notions of facile White allyship, and instead we zero in on the concept's fallen impossibilities.

White allyship in anti-racism remains an unresolved tension and open question across CWS, CS, whitened disciplines, and even social movements within larger, anti-racist alliances with intellectuals and activists. At its heart, the racial divide is incommensurable and complicated by contorted, blinded Oedipal White subjectivizations, desires, and sentimental fantasies. Paradoxically, our acknowledgement of the convolutions articulating the fallen impossibility of White allyship might seem to postpone or negate the alliance-oriented work embodied in our performative dialogue. To the contrary, we find our acknowledgement as absolutely fundamental to the authentic, ongoing, situated, alliance-oriented anti-racism*s*, specific *topoi* of anti-racism*s*, rhizomatic, impossible to regulate yet whose grand critical arc is unifying against whiteness, unraveling whiteness, and as Jupp et al. (2022), Casey (2016), Kendi (2019), and Scheurich (in press) insist, *destroying capital*.

A rejoinder, articulating analectic subjectivizations, may be Sylvia Wynter's (1995, 2003) epochal vision—closely aligned to that of Fanon (1963/2004)—centering on the invention of a *new* human:

> a shattering of the imperial concept of Humanity based on the ideal of White Man … to reconceptualize it not by providing a new definition or image but by starting with the question: What does it mean to be Human? (Mignolo, 2015, pp. 121–122)

Ironically, initiating greater movement towards this vision would require enhanced non-disciplinary collaboration*s* between CRT, CWS, CS, decolonial, and other race-critical traditions—a requirement that reintroduces the necessary acknowledgement of persistent convolutions or racial-relational chasms and re-exposes the inadequacies of oversimple assumptions of White allyship, contorting yet again.

Via the convolutions—epistemic incongruity, ontological paradox, and axiological entanglements—emerging from the dialogue, White allyship is a fallen and impossible concept, yet such acknowledgement underscores the need for tentative, subjunctive, modest, situated,

process-oriented, locally-meaningful, and psychoanalytic White anti-racist scholarship and activism grounded in ongoing, unrelenting self-social criticism that might result in transformative praxes *in situ*. Such praxes will prove messy, risky, emotionally exhausting, recursive, (im)possible, with *no* identity-position guarantees.

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