FROM THE ALIENATION OF NEOLIBERAL GLOBALIZATION TO TRANSMODERN WAYS OF BEING: EPISTEMIC CHANGE AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE MODERN WORLD-SYSTEM

Glen D. Kuecker

This paper proposes that humanity has entered a new historical epoch in the evolution of the world-system, one defined by the collapse of the modern world-system. It conceptualizes neoliberal globalization as the final historical phase of the modern world-system. In extreme overshoot and oscillation, the modern world-system's rule-set has become unstable, making for an epistemological 'Time of the Posts'. The instability raises questions about how the deep structural changes of the modern world-system's collapse will affect the meaning of human experience. The essay considers the experience of alienation, one of modernity's defining features, and its relationship to the forms of knowledge and experience held by those consigned to the periphery of the modern world-system. Building from a post-colonial perspective, the essay advances the idea of 'transmodernity' as the condition and 'other knowledge' of the peripherals that emerges from modernity's alienation. It concludes with consideration of how the collapse of the modern world-system will liberate peripherals from alienation and allow transmodernity to flourish.

Keywords: *historical epoch, evolution of the world-system, modernity, transmodernity, alienation, modern world-system's collapse.*

Introduction

Writing in the June 7, 2011 issue of the *New York Times*, op-ed columnist, Thomas Friedman, states:

> You really do have to wonder whether a few years from now we'll look back at the first decade of the 21st century – when food prices spiked, energy prices soared, world population surged, tornados plowed through cities, floods and draughts set records, populations were displaced, and governments were threatened by the confluence of it all – and ask ourselves: What were we thinking? How did we not panic when the evidence was so obvious that we'd crossed some growth/climate/natural resource/population redlines all at once?

True to form, Friedman, the global village idiot, mistakenly frames the issue. Friedman's (2008 and 2005) recent embrace of the multiple, large-scale, and global crises facing humanity amazingly masks the fact that he was once a leading pundit praising the triumph of neoliberal globalization (2000), which he now frames to be a cause of the crises that is the central theme of his current punditry. The erasure illustrates

the flaw in Friedman's thinking, especially how the question of our times is not 'what we were thinking', but a deeper, epistemological question of 'how we are thinking'.

This essay explores the problem of 'how we are thinking' by proposing that humanity has entered a new historical epoch in the evolution of the world-system, one defined by the collapse of the modern world-system. It conceptualizes neoliberal globalization as the final historical phase of the modern world-system. In extreme overshoot and oscillation, the modern world-system's rule-set has become unstable, making for an epistemological 'Time of the Posts'. The instability raises questions about how the deep structural changes of the modern world-system's collapse will affect the meaning of human experience. The essay considers experience of alienation, one of modernity's defining features, and its relationship to the forms of knowledge and experience within those consigned to the periphery of the modern world-system. Building from a post-colonial perspective, the essay advances the idea of 'transmodernity' as the condition and knowledge of the peripherals that emerges from modernity's alienation. It concludes with consideration of how the collapse of the modern world-system will liberate peripherals from alienation and potentially allow their transmodernity to flourish.

The Perfect Storm

Walking from the eco-tourism cabins to the community of Junín, Intag region, Ecuador, I was having a conversation with the parents of a former student who was working in the community as a human rights observer. The *comuneros* of Junín had been in successful resistance against plans to build a large-scale, open-pit copper mine on their lands, and a transnational mining company, Ascendant Copper, was escalating violence against the community (Kuecker 2007b, 2010). During the walk, one of the parents asked, 'are you a Marxist?' I immediately replied that it was a moot point, because we now lived in a new historical epoch, one defined by catastrophic systemic collapse. As we walked, I outlined the basics of what I now call the 'Perfect Storm' thesis, how multiple, interconnected, large-scale, global crises are converging to cause the collapse of the modern world-system.

The 'moot point' response was very much spontaneous, the result of simmering ideas that came out with the parental prompt. At the time, I had just finished writing an essay about Latin American resistance movements during the 'Time of the Posts' (2004), which placed me within the globalization paradigm. I was also finishing an essay entitled, 'Fighting for the Forests' (Kuecker 2007b), which deploys the globalization paradigm in analysis of Junín's remarkable resistance movement. I was starting to see, however, that the globalization paradigm, despite producing important social science analysis, was somehow lacking. My hunch was that globalization offered analysis of a symptom, as against the cause, of a major transformation in the human condition. I began to think that globalization was the symptom of the larger process of catastrophic systemic collapse. This thinking led me to write a template essay, 'The Perfect Storm', (Kuecker 2007a), which outlines the argument that humanity has entered a new historical epoch, one of long duration, that will be defined by the collapse of the modern world-system.

The 'perfect storm' argument presumes that the world-system is a complex adaptive system that operates within a four-step cycle of change – exploitation, conservation, release, and reorganization (for details on this process of change see Salt and Walker 2006; Gunderson and Holling 2002). The exploitation phase occurs when a system grows rapidly toward increasing connectivity and order. The successful adaptations within this phase become the system norm, which marks the transition to the conservation phase. Using the successful adaptations, the system during the conservation phase needs to find increased levels of efficiency in order to reproduce. Over time the need for greater efficiency makes the system rigid and leads it to an unsustainable state of overshoot, which is when a system, out of the need for continual growth, deploys creativity and innovation in the attempt to maintain it beyond normal limits of reproduction (Clark 2002: 114). Rigidity and overshoot make the mature conservation phase prone to disruptions that can tip it into the release phase. In the release phase, the system's propensity for disorder pushes it to a bifurcation point between a path of innovative system renewal, a 'soft landing', or the 'hard landing' of catastrophic collapse. If it encounters collapse, the system moves to the reorganization phase. At this point, the system is in a chaotic state where uncertainty and novelty rule. Eventually, innovation moves the system back to the first step of the cycle.

As a complex adaptive system, the modern world-system has long passed its exploitation cycle, and, depending on one's interpretation, it is either in the climax of the conservation phase, in a state of extreme overshoot, or it has crossed a threshold and entered the release phase. The universal epistemic of modernity is the conservation phase in its relentless pursuit of efficiency. Deep in overshoot in the conservation phase, modernity's structures can only be a prison, Foucault's panopticon of self-regulation (1995), incapable of scaling back its complexity toward a more sustainable state of system equilibrium. In this analysis, neoliberal globalization is the ultimate pursuit of the modern world-system's rule-set, as well as the final act of the mature conservation phase in extreme overshoot. It pushes the modern world-system toward the release phase, and causes it to become highly unstable, as the tipping-point approaches. A key indicator of the modern world-system's demise is the instability within its ways of being, seeing, thinking, and acting, what Steven Best and Douglas Kellner (1997) call 'The Time of the Posts'.

Time of the Posts

The corporate driven, free market globalization of the 1990s and 2000s generated a deep historical moment of transformation that was rooted in changing structures of daily life associated with globalization's time-space compression, especially as it pertained to the communication revolution. The process called to mind Marx's 'all that is solid melts into the air', and gave rise to social science explorations into the meanings and significance of the experience. In my essay (Kuecker 2004), 'Latin American Resistance Movements in the Time of the Posts', for example, I review social science approaches to globalization and the big changes in analysis of Latin America's resistance movements. 'Time of the Posts' captured the idea of dislocation and loss of epistemological footing that came with the plethora of 'posts', led by post-modernism but also accom-

panied by post-Marxist analysis of the human condition. Changes in lived experience were extensive enough that the social sciences struggled with generating the ideas, concepts, and theories necessary for capturing what was happening. While reality had moved a full step, at least, our epistemological frames only took the half step of hinting at the new condition while still referencing the old. As our epistemologies melted into the air, our understandings of reality remained referenced to all that was once solid.

The globalization paradigm became a steadfast anchor for social science thinking within the instabilities of the 'Time of the Posts'. It offered a powerful discursive frame that provided a one-size-fits all paradigm that explained what was happening to the world for the world. The paradigm was deep enough to serve as a meta-narrative for almost all ideologies, and generated analysis ranging from Thomas Friedman, to former proponents turned radical critics like David Korten (1999). During the 1990s globalization became the necessary referent point for the social sciences, and was the central concept for literature reviews in introductions for monographs in Economics, Sociology, Politics, and Culture. The globalization paradigm was also the referent for how we thought about the new wave of social movements from India to Latin America, and was the key focus to a growing anti-capitalist, global resistance that dared to challenge the World Trade Organization, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund. Movements like the Zapatistas appeared to be new forms of revolution in response to the new realities created by globalization, so much so some observers dubbed the Zapatistas the first 'post-modern revolution' (Burbach 1994).

The globalization paradigm maintains that crises in late capitalism drove a process of free market reforms that replaced the Post World War Two Keynesian political economy with a regime of orthodox free-trade economics, which is called 'neo-liberalism'. This economic transformation resulted in global networks of capital that spawned an unprecedented transnationalization of the ruling elite, corporations, and financial institutions. The transnational triad was paramount to a shift in sovereignty from the modern nation-state to global networks of capital. The shift caused the emergence of the 'post-social' (Rose 1996, 2008) a radical disarticulation of state and society that spawned a diverse range of societal pathologies that has gained the attention of social scientists whose analysis generates the globalization paradigm. Neoliberal globalization's formation of the 'post-social' constitutes a deepening of one of the modern world-system's most significant human experiences, alienation.

Alienation

John Holloway's *Change the World Without Taking Power* (2002) opens his consideration of alienation by discussing the 'scream'. He writes (*Ibid*.: 1), 'In the beginning there is the scream... faced with the mutilation of human lives by capitalism, a scream of sadness, a scream of horror, a scream of anger, a scream of refusal, NO.' With the brutalities of globalization's final 'great transformation' of the world's most distant tribes, a process of alienating primitive accumulation that is linked through perverse commodity chains of production and consumption to the 'post-social' destruction of community within great sweeps of the global minority and majority already subsumed by capitalism, we have heard the scream with greater frequencies throughout the great

divides of capitalism's uneven development. We hear it in the factory worker displaced by flexible accumulation, thrust into the race to the bottom, now waiting, with homes expropriated, to learn just how deep the bottom just might be. We hear it from the displaced peasant in Latin America, forced to migrate to cities and foreign lands. We hear it from another migrant dying of dehydration in the Sonoran desert (Urrea 2004), or within the millions of peasants turned urban laborer, the so-called 'floating population' in China. We hear the scream from workers as they fall to their deaths in suicides resulting from the trauma of alienation caused by China's twenty-first century's iteration of Engles' Manchester during the Industrial Revolution. We hear it in the Wal-Martized bargain shopper. We see it in the need for militarization of society, especially the increased policing both private and public, in the walls we build, and the wars we fight, all physical barriers of a global apartheid emerging from the need to contain and control globalization's dislocations and mobility (Davis 1998; Kuecker 2007a). Indeed, modernity's fluidity, as Marshall Berman (1982) illustrates in his analysis of Marx's 'All that's Solid Melts Into the Air', generates the need for control, and that control prolongs the scream coming from the original sadness and horror. At what point, however, does the modern world-system's scream reach a threshold, a tipping point where it becomes something new to the human condition?

Sometimes alienation, in its extreme forms, out in the far reaches of the periphery of the modern world-system and within the soul of the marginalized, is a mournful sob that wells-up from a vortex of despair, loss, trauma, bewilderment, and anger. I have seen it twice, at least, and both times were some of the deeper moments in my life, which this essay, in part, shows my continued effort to comprehend.

The first was in March 2000, during a Mexico Solidarity Network fact-finding trip to the La Montaña region of Guerrero, Mexico. We were making community visits with Tlachinollan, a human rights center (http://www.tlachinollan.org). The delegation took a day trip with Dr. Abel Barrera, Tlachinollan's founder and director, to Metlatónoc, which at the time was the poorest town in all of Mexico. La Montaña is one of those places with exceptionally heavy migration, where almost all of the men have gone to labor in agricultural fields in northern Mexico as well as countless 'race to the bottom jobs' in the United States. That day we meet with the women's organization. They came and gave testimony to their struggle. One elderly woman, taking her turn, spoke. She told us how her son had migrated to the United States. She explained that he ended up in Virginia, where he had been arrested and put in prison. She had no idea what had happened to him. The situation was, perhaps, beyond her capacity to imagine, as suggested by the bewildered way she said 'Virginia'. All the words conveyed the worry of a mother: Was he safe? Was he in trouble? Would he return home? Why was he arrested? As she spoke the weight of reality crashed down upon her. She collapsed before us in a flood of tears, the sobbing of a mother unable to protect her son. The women's husband had died years before, and all her children had left the community. She was alone.

The second was in January 2009 during a field research trip to Papua New Guinea. I was there as part of a collaborative project led by Dr. Yaso Nadarajah, a senior researcher at the Globalism Research Centre, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

We were visiting the KuKuKu tribe, which has been engaged in a multi-year struggle against and ever expanding gold mining operation. Over the years, the expanding mine had pushed the tribe further and further off of its ancestral lands, and now they had reached the end point. During our visit the tribal youth presented a play portraying their struggle against the destruction of their tribal lands. The theater was powerful, and the chief took the word after its presentation. He spoke to us about their struggle, but more specifically about the responsibilities of the chief to his people and especially the environment. He explained how they had tried everything in their powers, him and the elders and shamans, to counter the strange world that brought the mine to their lands. While the chief certainly understood the underlying reason for mining, it was clear that his cosmology balked at truly comprehending why it is that the world requires the destruction of his people. The illogic of the situation, combined with its injustice, combined with the frustrated powers of thousands of years of knowledge came to a climax. Then it began. The chief released a long, mournful sob, a whaling of pain from the depths of his soul for his people and the living beings on their tribal lands. It was the most profound sound I have ever heard a human being make. After what must have been five minutes of whaling in a trance-like state, the chief returned to his alienated land and people. He turned to them and said, 'I no longer have any power'. There with the others, I was a witness to a slow-motion culturicide.

In two recent writing collaborations, I have explored the problem of what happens to community in the process of the modern world-system's collapse (Kuecker, Mulligan, and Nadarajah 2010; Kuecker and Hall 2011). Two findings come forward. First, people turn to community in times of crises. Second, the meaning and practice of community differs within the diverse geographies of the modern world-system's core, periphery and semiperiphery. Kuecker and Hall (2011) posit that with the modern world-system's demise, community in the core is least prepared to weather the perfect storm, while community in the marginalized periphery exhibits the best capacity for resilience within collapse. Kuecker and Hall also maintain that the semiperiphery's informal sector constitutes potential social forms of resilience during collapse. Informing this work is the basic notion that humans are social beings who form community, and argument forcibly made in Rifkin's *The Emphatic Civilization* (2009), as well as Solnit's study about how people turn to community during catastrophic events. At this critical juncture in the world-system's historical evolution there are two dominant alienations. The one is the final assault of global capitalism's 'great transformation' (Polanyi 2001), what we call globalization, and it plays out mostly within communities of the periphery. The second is the alienation of the post-social as experienced in the global north, but increasingly in the more developed parts of the semiperiphery. In both, however, it is clear that neoliberal globalization's assault on community has left it torn to shreds right at the historical moment humanity needs community the most.

While we can sort-out the contexts and meanings of Holloway's treatment of alienation when operating with the globalization paradigm, it is less certain what alienation might mean in the radically different context of the 'Perfect Storm'. If the 'Time of the Posts' was defined by the dislocation and instability of social science epistemologies, which carried with it a questioning of the truth claims of modernity, then the 'Perfect

Storm's' new epoch is defined by a new reality that awaits explanation. Here, we might learn from the last time such change took place, that being the emergence of modern world-system's epistemic, the Enlightenment. It was a time when a new way of being human came into formation, largely the product of large-scale structural transformation in Europe in the late 1400s and as product of the 'discovery' of the 'new world' (Mignolo 2000a). The core of the Enlightenment epistemic is that society works best when individuals are free to pursue their rational self-interest. Enlightenment thinkers maintained that the rule reason would result in the perfectibility of the human condition, especially as science revealed the laws of the universe, which allowed humans to boldly think they could now control nature. They conceptualized the sovereign individual, which made the modern citizen possible as well as constitutional democracies. Private property and free markets became the basis for the pursuit of self-interest in the economy, which spawned the innovations of the early Industrial Revolution.

Known as the 'Frankfurt School', scholars at the Institute for Social Research developed critical theory as a way to understand why the Enlightenment's promise of liberation has been so often betrayed by totalitarian regimes, human alienation, and widespread inequity and inequality. Horkheimer (2002 [1937]), in his 'Traditional and Critical Theory', established the idea that theory is not an objective description of reality, as assumed by 'traditional theory', but rather a process of subjective constructions. Critical theory aims to understand the constructed nature of theory itself as well as the constructed nature of the realities it attempts to explain. The basic premise is that a constructed reality can also be deconstructed and such deconstruction could result in emancipating social transformation (Castro-Gómex, González, and Moskowitz 2001; Jay 1996 [1973]). From these premises, the Frankfurt School undertook the critique of the Enlightenment's universal truth claims, especially those advanced by Bacon's deployment of science in a 'war against nature'. In their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002 [1945]), Adorno and Horkheimer challenge modernity's progressive narrative by arguing that instead of creating human liberation through the control of nature, science and technology's war against nature is the source of modernity's many pathologies. A necessary casualty in this war was mimesis, the ways of being and thinking among 'pre'-modern peoples that was derived from imitating nature. This casualty constitutes disenchantment, a destruction of many forms of other knowledges (Berman 1981).

Critical theory opened the door for social science explorations of the dilemmas, paradoxes, and predicaments of how humanity can liberate itself from the modern world-system. Important in these developments is the work of Said (1979), especially his analysis of how Western projects of colonialism produce knowledge – what he calls 'orientialism' – about the colonized that become part of modernity's universal truth. Likewise, Foucault's (1980) analysis of the modernity's iteration of the relationship between power and knowledge enhanced critical theory's approaches to the problem of liberation. Joining these critical theory foundations were ideas generated from colonialism's post World War Two national liberation struggles. Works by Bhabha (2004), Fanon (1965, 1967), and Memmi (1965) constituted the canon in post-colonial studies, which focuses on how domination, exploitation, repression, and marginalization become constitutive of the ways of being and thinking of subordinated peoples throughout

the global south, which is to say the vast majority of the human population. Although epic moments of liberation, which should have delivered the promise of the modern world-system's progress to the subordinated, fundamentally altered the context and condition of those signified by modernity as subordinate, those experiencing liberation encountered the challenge of becoming 'post' colonial, which means their ways of being and thinking never escaped the initial, internalized mark of subordination. The inability to transcend colonialism ultimately frustrated the promise of liberation, so much so the Enlightenment project itself has been rendered tragically compromised. The post-colonial *problematique* mirrors and informs the problem of escaping the modern world-system during the tipping point of the late conservation phase, and its insights allow us to further consider the possibility of a release phase transcendence.

Alienation and the Post Colonial Problematique

In *Grassroots Post-Modernism: Remaking the Soil of Cultures* (1998), Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash, offer one of the more compelling analysis of alienation because they bring together consideration of nature, community, and the human condition for the global majority, a term they embrace as replacement for the entirely inadequate concept of 'first' and 'third' worlds, as well as the more fashionable 'global north' and 'global south'. They illustrate how people maintain their connection to nature through food, and through the act of eating that food they reproduce the commons, one largely void of the societal pathologies of late capitalism's alienating machine of neoliberal, globalized industrial food production. Esteva and Prakash, influenced by Wendell Berry, discuss the links between memory and human ecology, and how these counter the forces of destructive modernity, especially the deeply alienating construction of the sovereign individual, the egotistical protagonist of all that is modern who steals from the commons the capacity of humans to self-actualize through being social. They state (Esteva and Prakash 1998: 86):

> In the worlds of the 'marginals', people are continually rediscovering the nets in which they are knots; the many relations crossing through them. They are continually trying to repair the painful and damaging transmorgrification they have suffered when being individualized in the course of colonization and development. In recent years, they have started to regenerate themselves in their own spaces, by demonstrating what is involved in abandoning the fundamental assumptions of the alphabetized mind.

The colonized mind is the industrial eater alienated from the commons and separated from nature. For Esteva and Prakash liberation is found in remembering the stories of the community, the long history of people as told through oral traditions conveyed by elders. Liberation is the 'remaking of communal soil' (*Ibid.*: 94). But it is not accomplished easily as the struggle to remake and remember is a labyrinth of false paths, traps, and deceptions that make cultural recovery possibly impossible. Postcolonial theorists confirm their analysis: once the colonized are signified by the colonial signifier it may not be possible to erase the sign (Sandoval 2000). The scar of colonialism rests at the core of alienation as it is the denial of self-actualization.

An illustration of Esteva and Prakash's thesis is shown in the example of the Pariet Project in Papua New Guinea. The Pariet Project sought to overcome tribal conflicts over issues like land as a way to better organize in resistance to clear-cut foresting, commercial fishing, and extractive mining by an extensive process of cultural recovery. In particular, the project focused on re-constituting historical memory through their oral traditions. As Esteva and Prakash's grassroots postmodernism struggling to remake the soil of culture within the murkiness of the post-colonial condition into 'their own spaces', then the Pariet Project offers us insight into the 'transmodern'. Here we find the post-colonial problem of hybridity resulting from the complicated stew of indigeniety in resistance to the alienation of colonial signification. Hybrid cultures allow for a liminal state, what theorists like Yaso Nadarajah (2007) call 'in-betweeness' that allow for the negotiation between the conflict and alienation of signifier and signified. Despite the inequity and inequality of colonial power relations, hybridity means that the conquest was never complete, the colonial project limited, and as George Orwell's (1936) story about shooting an elephant reminds us, the relations of power never so simply drawn between ruled and ruler. The geography of 'their own spaces', is found here in the in-between places of culture and community, the nooks and crannies of life where the 'great transformation' and subsequent alienation have not visited, and when they have, where they have not won.

The post-colonial condition, especially in the form of a colonialism and its legacies' unresolved disparities in the relations of power, is a frustrated experience with the liberating promise of the modern world-system, where efforts to be a fully actualized individual in pursuit of one's rational self-interest is stunted by poverty, racism, and sexism. The resulting structural violence (Galtung 1969) generates alienation and social pathologies of marginalization. Unequal relations of power can become a trap, especially when false consciousness prevails, or when people give up at their efforts at escaping their reality. The defeat of being the global majority – from slum dweller to campesino – becomes part of the post-colonial condition, a societal norm that's nearly impossible to transcend. The lack of efficacy that is one of the foundations of modern world-system's construction of citizenship is a key characteristic of alienation.

The lack of efficacy points to the troubled story of sociology's structure and agency relationship, and how it informs our understanding of alienation and the post-colonial condition. The schematics of modernity – the rule-set and internal logic that constitute the structures of everyday life (Sewell 1992) – are historically constituted in such a way that the global majority fall within the alienation of post-colonial structures. As discussed above, the violence of these structures can squash the human spirit. Yet, people remain active in the reproduction of society simply through their acts of surviving, day in and day out. The extent of human agency required for survival is extensive, perhaps more than that generated by mass consumers of the global minority. Marginals like Carlonia Maria de Jesus (1962 and Levine 1995), for example, work long days searching for garbage they can recycle so they can scratch together cash needed for a daily meal. Creative strategies are often required to make it through each day. This agency, however, is often a reactive form, one that will not change relations of power driving the soul crushing brutality of the modern world-system. Yet, it has the potential, in what

Hardt and Negri (2004) call the multitude, to become transformative. The Zapatistas offer such an example, as some of the most marginalized people on earth mobilized their collective skills of surviving and turned them on the structures of their oppression, and became the cutting edge of resistance during the 1990s. Those who have spent time with the Zapatistas know there is a profound level of knowledge in their struggle. Most know it is a knowledge shared by the Carolina Maria de Jesus's of the world. Understanding this knowledge is the key to getting at the 'transmodern' epistemic.

Transmodernity

The global majority's knowledge before the 'great transformation' is perhaps the deepest area of human alienation. When the KuKuKu chief told his people he no longer had his powers, the knowledge of six thousand years yielded to the forces of modernity. The sobbing wail he gave forth at that moment was the alienation of the 'great transformation'. Yet, the knowledge carried by the chief persists, despite the encounters with modernity that leave the polluting mark of the post-colonial condition. The chief is part of the Pariet Project, and its work of cultural recovery. It is a form of transmodernity, and excavation and unearthing of Esteva and Prakash's 'soils of culture'.

Among post-colonial currents, transmodern theory offers promising ideas for this task. The transmodern represents both a theoretical position within post-colonial critical theory and a lived reality. As a theoretical position, it seeks a conceptual escape from the modern world-system through the transcendence of the Western epistemic. As a lived experience, the lived condition of highly marginalized, exploited, and repressed peoples – what Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) term 'the multitude' – constitutes a transmodern ontology, a way of being human that transcends the modern world-system and generates its own ways of seeing and thinking.

In seeking the escape from the modern world-system, transmodern theory posits a particular transcendence. It is derived from the analysis of post-colonial relations of power that emerged from debates within the Latin American Subaltern Studies group (Grosfoguel 2008). The divide was between scholars from the global north, such as Mallon (1994) who tended to have an ironically eurocentric critique of eurocentricism, and those from the Global South, especially a group of Latin Americanists, led by Anibal Quijano (2007 and Quijano and Ennis 2000), Enrique Dussel (1980, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2002, and 2004; Dussel, Krauel and Tuma 2000; and Dussel, Moraña, and Jáuregui 2008), Walter Mignolo (1995, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2005), and Rámon Grosfoguel (2008) who seek a critique derived from the truly subaltern perspective – its 'other knowledges' – created by the colonial and post-colonial experience. Their perspective was influenced by Dussel's (1996) philosophy of liberation, which 'sets out from non-Being, nothingness, otherness, exteriority, the mystery of no-sense' (Dussel 1980: 14) generated by colonialism. Liberation, however, confronted what Quijano (2007) terms 'coloniality', which is the way historically rooted colonial hierarchies generate deeply embedded legacies that endure after independence and become fundamental parts of the post-colonial condition. Echoing the post-colonial work of Bhabha (2004), Fanon (1965, 1967), and Memmi (1965), Quijano (2007: 169) highlights the 'colonization of the imagination' as an important colonial legacy. Colonial repression

aimed to eradicate other knowledges, and replace them with the modern world-system's epistemic. Quijano (2007: 169) writes, 'The repression fell, above all, over the modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification, over the resources, patterns, and instruments of formalized and objectivised expression, intellectual or visual'. Transcendence within the conservation phase, therefore, requires untangling all of the complex webs of deeply embedded and interrelated relations of power within economy, authority, gender, and subjectivity and knowledge (Mignolo 2007: 157) that are each defined by the modern world-system's inequities and inequalities. As post-colonial theory suggests, escaping such engrained ways of being may not be possible within the confines of modern world-system. Liberation, however, may be quickly approaching through the collapsing structures of the modern world-system's release phase.

Facing the challenge of the post-colonial reality, transmodern scholars turn to the 'other knowledges' generated by the lived experiences of the oppressed. Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2005 [1999]), for example, shows that decolonizing knowledge requires not just a critique of Western research method in order to deconstruct Said's orientalism, but also a method that places the power of knowledge production within the communities we study. 'Other knowledges' take three key forms. The first knowledge derives from the reality of being post-colonial. The second knowledge is produced from the everyday life struggles of marginalized peoples. It is the knowledge about being human acquired from the internal conflicts and dilemmas of people in resistance. The third form of knowledge is legacy knowledge, those precolonial epistemologies and cosmologies that survived Bacon's war on nature, whether in fragments or in entirety. As post-colonial theory warns, legacy knowledge is tricky, as the purity of such legacy is contaminated by the interactive process of signifier/colonizer and signified/colonized.

The three transmodern knowledges are characterized by their diversity. They offer a 'pluriversal' truth as against the modern world-system's universal truth. The transmodern embrace of difference is rooted in its critique of modern rationality that is informed by the Frankfurt School's critical theory (Dallmayr 2004; Mignolo 2007: 155). It finds the universalism of the modern rule-set to be an oppressive mechanism that obliterates difference through colonial relations of power (Quijano 2007). Transmodernity instead sees diversity as anchored in the way many communities in the global south have de-centered, localized, and plural ways of being, acting, and thinking that have persisted despite the homogenizing ways the modern world-system has historically constituted difference as binary oppositions such as modern *vs.* traditional or developed *vs.* backward. The transmodern theory shares with critical pedagogy the understanding that the modern world-system's institutions structurally reproduce unequal relations of power through the construction of a homogenized other (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 2003). Inspired by Freire (1993), critical pedagogists like Giroux (1991) emphasize the importance of pluralistic difference and fluid, crossable borders as ways to breakdown the modern world-sytem's homogenized other. The third World feminists, such as Mohanty (2003) emphasize the liberating potential of border-crossing in the struggle to decolonize relations of power. Diversity and border-crossing, from a transmodern per-

spective, challenges the Cartesian mind-body split that is at the core of the modern world-system's rule-set, especially by rediscovering the worlds of knowledge embedded in the sensual (Abram 1996; Hooks 1994; and Stoller 1997). Luyckx's (1999, 2010) iteration of transmodernity, for example, argues for the 're-enchantment' of our modern ways of being and thinking by finding and restoring those 'other knowledges' that were obliterated by modern world-system's evolution or survived within the periphery or persisted in subaltern forms. The transmodern emphasis on diversity also parallels the use of border-crossing by anthropologists, especially the notions of 'in-betweeness', the 'outsider within' (Ang 2001; Collins 1991; Nadarajah 2007; Tuhiwai 2005), and hybridity (García-Canclini 1995) that captures the complex pluralities of identity positions that human subjects have as they navigate a globalized modern world-system that is rapidly moving toward the release phase tipping point.

Transmodernity is a lived experience for many of the global majority, and for many of them the modern world-system's conservation phase can be a brutish hell of alienation and desperate survival. It is the release phase of the complex system that is the time for transmoderns to flourish. Dussel (2002: 221) states, that transmodernity 'will have a creative function of great significance in the twenty-first century'. The diversity of transmoderns, their lived experiences, and legacy knowledges that form the base of the transmodern epistemic is uniquely matched for the moment of creativity and experimentation of the release phase. It is the time of the global majority, when the meek will inherit the earth. In the release phase, the modern world-system's bag of hegemonic tricks will be less able to contain transmodern alternatives. Dussel (*Ibid*.) states, 'modernity's recent impact on the planet's multiple cultures (Chinese, Southeast Asian, Hindu, Islamic, Bantu, Latin American) produced a varied "reply" by all of them to the modern "challenge". Renewed, they are now erupting on a cultural horizon "beyond" modernity. I call the reality of that fertile multicultural moment "trans"-"modernity"'. Beyond the modern world-system the transmoderns return 'to their status as actors in the history of the world-system' (*Ibid.:* 224). As reconstituted agents unmarked by the condition of coloniality, transmoderns will be their own protagonists in the making of the history of the release phase. Transmoderns 'retain an immense capacity for and reserve of cultural invention essential for humanity's survival', Dussel states (2002: 235). His version of transmodernity promises a new humanism, where 'these cultures, in their full creative potential… constitute a more human and complex world, more passionate and diverse, a manifestation of the fecundity that the human species has shown for millennia' (*Ibid*.: 237).

Conclusion

Once the process of collapse begins to lift the structural restraints of modern world-system, the alternatives, if they survive the collapse, have their opportunity to flourish in the new spaces of innovation and creativity. Despite neoliberal assertions that 'there are no alternatives', as the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher rationalized the neoliberal destruction of the commons (Berlinski 2008), the late conservation phase has generated many alternatives that posit another world is possible (McNally 2006). The destruction of the commons has spawned new social formations that set the

foundations for what may transpire during the twenty-first century's release phase. The new social formations emerged from multiple social movements that filled the void of the conservation phase's post-social. These were pockets of resistance to neoliberal globalization, especially the billions of people who live deep in the margins of global capitalism. They are the multitude who already live in collapse, and constitute the first social formations of the modern world-system's release phase. While the social fabric was torn apart during the late conservation phase, new forms of resistance took place. The uneven geographic spread of the post-social left those communities far in the periphery intact, especially indigenous communities, and the encroachment of neoliberal globalization stimulated their ability to organize and fight back (Kuecker and Hall 2011). These communities constitute important 'fire-climax cultures' (Swanger 2005) – those seeds in the forest that lie dormant until the heat of a forest fire causes them to germinate – that become creatively active in the late conservation phases crises and the transition to the release cycle. These fire climax cultures hold the promise of restoring resilience by reconstituting the commons through a return to community. The release phase of the modern world-system is the space, place, and time for transmodernity. It is the time of the global majority, when the meek will inherit the earth. In the release phase, the modern epistemic will be a hindrance and its bag of tricks will not be able to counter the transmodern insurgency.

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