

What It Means to Belong in the Global South: A Coda to Two Special Issues on ‘Wrestling With (Not) Belonging’

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[B]elonging expresses a desire for more than what is, a yearning to make skin stretch beyond individual needs and wants. (Probyn, 1996, p. 6)

Belonging, as this special issue demonstrates, is no simple matter. Indeed, the complexity of the topic demanded a double issue to make space for the many and varied ways in which (not) belonging can make itself felt. Notably, the (not) of (not) belonging in this collection transcends the rationalist reduction of ontology to negative difference, whereby we know what something is through its relation to what it is not, which Savva’s (2024) work on the posthuman turn unpacks in the first issue. Belonging figures as a dis/continuous phenomenon, indeterminate outside of relations, with each configuration of (not) belonging haunted by all the other im/possibilities (Ramirez & Pasley, 2022). The one thing the contributions have in common is a sense that (not) belonging can be traced in relations of difference, of becoming-with and becoming-otherwise. To return to the questions that we posed at the end of the introduction to the first issue (Ramirez et al., 2024)

– why is (not) belonging a thing, and why is it seen as it is here and now? – our response must be, (not) belonging is a thing for the contributions because it expresses a desire for becoming-with and -otherwise, for things to be different ... and to be different in ways that recognise that, paradoxically, *what we have in common is difference*. And it is seen as such here and now in the contributions because they share a sense that difference in their context of the Global South is both denied and very much alive: denied by the ‘one-world world[ers]’ of the Global North (Law, 2011) and alive in the many-world worlds of the Global South (De la Cadena & Blaser, 2018).

Many contributions acknowledge the injustice of colonial concepts of belonging, beginning in the Canary Islands, where the initial seeds of the Modern/Colonial order were sown (Ramirez, 2024; Ramirez, this issue; Ramirez & Pasley, 2022). It is there in ‘Africa’s triple heritage’ (Amuzu & Addae, 2024) by which foreign religions and other colonialities are imposed on African births, marriages and deaths. And it is there even in ‘post’-colonial contexts. The colonial drive to dis/qualify belonging risks the epistemicide of Krymchak people in Crimea (Montenegro, Newsom & Lengel, 2024) and Dalit worlds in India (Mohandas, this issue). The same drive is at work in ethnic (mis)categorisations in ‘post’-colonies: for mestizaje in Abya Yala (Jaramillo-Aristizabal & Albarran Gonzalez, 2024), for those who are part of the Indian diaspora in Aotearoa (Shingade, this issue) and for multilinguals in Anglocentric academia (Benton Z. & Marwah, 2024).

Such injustice, often grounded in what Silvia Wynter (2003) has called the Modern technologies of the ‘genre’ of Man (‘the assuming-of-“Man”-to-be-the-Human’ [p. 311]), also haunts configurations of (not) belonging, as it were, beyond the well-known territory of the colonial. Pasley (this issue) attends to how the colonialities of gender (Lugones, 2007) extend beyond the cisheteronormative society that they were designed to uphold by disciplining queer and trans communities. Ward and Fang (2024) demonstrate how dis/embodied relationships with menstruation constrain dis/obedience in ways that confound neat disciplinary narratives of ‘adequate’ bodily performativity. Kelly (2024) explores what literary works say about not belonging and the available ways to cope in a society that seems to prefer a different kind of being than the one a figure exists in within his/her/their body. Furthermore, Yang and Rowe (2024) attend to the hijacking of demands for belonging by capitalism, taking ‘inclusion’ as a selling point or being corrupted by hierarchical models of competition to drive profit. All in all, these contributions echo Pasley’s (this issue) account of reterritorialising strategies that redefine the terms of in-/exclusion to deny the agency of those who belong differently.

While injustice can neither be erased nor resolved once and for all, the works in this double issue demonstrate how attending to these spectres of coloniality offers the possibility of different – and possibly more just – worlds. Gaerlan (2024) explores how the Filipino concept of kapwa offers alternatives to cisheteronormative constraints on belonging. Romero (this issue) argues that decolonising education,

informal learning and subculture studies constitute ‘decolonial underground pedagogies’ (Romero, 2024), fostering critical consciousness, inspiring decolonial praxis, and the possibility of an analytical framework for decolonising approaches to social justice research and praxis, troubling colonialities of dis/placement. Garcia-Lazo and Appelgren (2024) meld Mapuche notions of *azmapu* and posthuman entanglement to decolonise Chilean intercultural education through the art of not belonging, foregrounding the fundamentally relational interdependence of becoming. Similarly, Harvey (2024) brings together *mātauranga Māori* (‘Māori knowledge’), Western theory and three artworks to attend to the tensions embedded in the interwoven *whakapapa* (genealogy) of Māori-Pākehā relations of (not) belonging. Sturm (2024) explores how *iwi Māori* (‘Māori’ or ‘Indigenous peoples’) *mana whenua* (‘place’ or ‘land power’), enduring in the face of *iwi Pākehā* (‘settler peoples’) ontocide of *iwi Māori* belonging, offers a different, cosmopolitical model of politics that allows for different ways of being and knowing to co-exist in the same place.

Several other contributions also explore strategies for knowing and being differently. Boland (2024) explores (not) belonging through esotericism, a position historically denied in the Western rationalist academy. Boumechal, Bayani and Collins (this issue) employ autoethnography and dialogism to navigate the tension between identity and belonging. Castillo (this issue) contests a Levinasian ethics of responsibility built on notions of community, given community’s constitution through commonality, suggesting greater potential lies in an ethics of responsibility built on social difference.

Some strategies for tending to the wounds of injustice involved more practical enactments. Through their art ‘kinstellation,’ created with a group of *bakla*, *irawhiti* and *takatāpui* artists and founded on Indigiqueer, Black Trans* Feminist and land epistemologies, Luna-Pizano (this issue) contests the logic of diaspora for those who belong through their original lands and waters. In its place, they illustrate the Indigi-Trans* capacity to overturn inherited colonialities of body/land sovereignty. Videla et al. (this issue) explore (non-)digital modes of preserving cultural heritage in ways that foreground the agency of communities at risk of being subsumed into Western ‘one-world’ ontologies (Law, 2010). Rousell et al.’s (this issue) reading group praxes implement Manning’s (2023) notion of the impersonal – the co-constitutional forces that affect configurations of relations, in this case, group subjectivity – to resist the atomisation of individual identity without erasing or oppositionally defining the personal. Ramirez (this issue) responds to her thinking in the first issue (Ramirez, 2024) after a visit to the Canary Islands, feeling her way through the structure of the void left behind by Spanish colonisation and the im/possibilities for belonging to reconfigure her sense of Canarian im/possibility and shed new light on what it meant for her to (not) belong. She recounts the tangible ways in which she was able to resurrect *pasados que (nunca) fueron y futuros que (nunca) pueden ser* (‘pasts that were [not] and futures that can [never] be’) through *manaakitanga* (‘practices of care’) for the Indigenous *wairua* (‘spirit’)

that lives in the whenua ('land'), whānau ('family'), whanaungatanga ('the cultivation of extended family-like relationships'), languages spoken in the islands and cultural practices that emerged through this re-turn.

What we sensed when we reread the contributions to write this coda was that the contributions – although differentiated by the contributors' experiences as people(s) and those of their peoples – had something in common. We saw that they expressed a sense that (not) belonging could be traced in relations of difference, of becoming-with and becoming-otherwise. We saw that (not) belonging, as Elspeth Probyn (1996) puts it, is about 'a desire for more than what is, a yearning to make skin stretch beyond individual needs and wants' (p. 6). All the contributions demonstrated a desire that eludes the colonialities of 'truth/power/being/freedom' (Wynter, 2003), through which categories the powers-that-be attempt to dictate the 'genres of Man' to which all peoples belong, to subsume their (not) belonging, their becoming-with and becoming-otherwise, under the authority of an all-powerful 'one-world world' ontology (Law, 2011). But we – and the contributors – knew in our being(s), it seems to us, that all it takes to slip the noose of onto-epistemological totalitarianism is one example of (not) belonging differently. Across this double special issue, we – we editors and contributors – have offered *twenty-four* examples of becoming-with and becoming-otherwise that proffer alternative configurations of the world – other worlds in a world of many (De la Cadena & Blaser, 2018) – to which people(s) can (not) belong in their own ways and on their own terms.



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