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Justice "to Come"? Decolonial Deconstruction, from Postmodern Policymaking to the Black Horizon

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This article explores the importance of what we call "decolonial deconstruction" for contemporary global politics and policy discourses and develops a critique of this approach. "Decolonial deconstruction" seeks to keep open policy processes, deconstructing liberal policy goals of peace, democracy, or justice as always "to come". It emerged through a nexus of postmodern and decolonial framings, well represented in the critical Black studies tradition, where theorists have focused upon identity construction, rejecting static conceptions. These approaches have increasingly been taken up in international policymaking approaches and International relations theory, particularly in the field of peacebuilding and the broad policy approach of resilience. After highlighting the ways that processual understandings of deconstruction have transformed these policy areas, we suggest an alternative deconstructive approach. In doing so, we draw upon the critical Black studies tradition but emphasize the need to critique underlying ontological assumptions about the world. We heuristically set out this approach as the "Black Horizon."

Cet article s'intéresse à l'importance de la ≪déconstruction décoloniale≫ pour la politique mondiale et les discours politiques contemporains avant de développer une critique de cette approche. La ≪déconstruction décoloniale≫ cherche à maintenir des processus politiques ouverts afin de déconstruire les objectifs de paix, démocratie ou justice de la politique libérale toujours ≪ à venir ≫. Elle est apparue à la jonction de cadres postmodernes et décoloniaux, bien représentés dans la tradition des études noires critiques, où les théoriciens se sont concentrés sur la construction identitaire, en rejetant les conceptions statiques. Ces approches ont été de plus en plus reprises par les approches politiques internationales et la théorie des relations internationales, notamment dans le domaine de la consolidation de la paix et l'approche politique de la résilience au sens large. Après avoir souligné les façons dont les compréhensions procédurales de déconstruction ont transformé ces domaines politiques, nous suggérons une approche de déconstruction alternative. Ce faisant, nous nous fondons sur la tradition des études noires critiques, mais soulignons le besoin de critiquer les hypothèses ontologiques sous-jacentes quant au monde. Sur le plan heuristique, nous caractérisons cette approche ≪ d'horizon noir ≫.

Este artículo estudia la importancia que tiene lo que llamamos ≪deconstrucción decolonial≫ para la política global contemporánea y los discursos políticos y desarrolla una crítica de este enfoque. La

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≪deconstrucción decolonial≫ busca mantener abiertos los procesos políticos, a través de la deconstrucción de los objetivos de las políticas liberales de paz, democracia o justicia como algo que siempre está ≪por venir≫. La ≪deconstrucción decolonial≫ surgió a través de un nexo de unión entre encuadres posmodernos y decoloniales, bien representados en la tradición crítica de los estudios de la cultura negra americana, donde los teóricos se han centrado en la construcción de la identidad, rechazando las concepciones estáticas. Estos enfoques se han adoptado, cada vez más, tanto en los planteamientos de formulación de políticas internacionales como en la teoría de las relaciones internacionales, en particular en el campo de la consolidación de la paz y en el amplio enfoque político de la resiliencia. Destacamos las formas en las que las comprensiones procesuales de la deconstrucción han transformado estas áreas de política con el fin de, posteriormente, sugerir un enfoque deconstructivo alternativo. Para llevar esto a cabo, partimos de la tradición crítica de los estudios de la cultura negra americana, pero enfatizamos la necesidad de criticar los supuestos ontológicos subyacentes sobre el mundo. Definimos este enfoque, de manera heurística, como el ≪Horizonte de la cultura negra americana≫.

Introduction

This article examines the contemporary centrality of "deconstruction" in international policy understandings.[1] In seeking to analyse this processual approach to governance, increasingly prominent among international interventions in the Global South, we highlight the transformation of deconstructive approaches from an anti-colonial to an increasingly hegemonic positionality. These initiatives aim to foster peace and resilience, addressing the effects of war, poverty, natural disaster, and other forms of crisis, generally working through the auspices of development agencies, international NGOs, and international organizations. These policy concerns arose in the aftermath of the Cold War and the triumph of a liberal global order and were originally seen as a way to re-create Western, liberal, forms of government, society, and life. However, they have increasingly moved away from this vision towards an approach of "ungoverning" that holds off any settlement or completion,[2] aware of a future horizon that always places the present framework in question.

Today it is hard to avoid policymaking centered upon the deconstruction of fixed identities, mind-sets, and policy goals—the horizon of "justice "to come"" (Derrida 1992): a promise of a more just, more peaceful, more resilient society—that drives a processual engagement with the world that recognizes that to fully achieve these goals would be not only impossible but, more importantly, undesirable. We suggest that key to these processual, relational policy frameworks is the prioritization of the process over any specific solution or end goal. This openness is grounded in "decolonial deconstruction," the understanding that closure or finality is problematic, setting up new hierarchies and forms of exclusion, marginalizing potential opportunities for a more inclusive peace, more adaptive forms of resilience, or more enabling modes of justice.

This deconstructive horizon has increasingly come to the fore as universal liberal forms of understanding and representation have become discredited; being seen as responsible for reproducing blind spots and prejudices and lacking sensitivities to feedback effects and the warning signs of emergent problems from global

[1] Derrida originally developed "deconstruction" in problematizing "logocentric" approaches, which assume that there is an objective or true approach to the world independent of contingent and contested interpretations (see Turner 2016 for a brief overview).

[2] See, for example, the special issue of *Transnational Legal Theory* on "Global Ungovernance" (Desai and Lang 2020).

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warming to conflict and infectious disease. It is for this reason that discourses of "ungoverning" (Pospisil 2020), "unsettlement" (Kastner and Trudel 2020), "unmaking" (Lassen and Moreira 2014), and "unlearning" (Law and Williams 2014; Keating 2021) are rising to the fore in policy debates. The rapid shift in discursive framings in the space of intervention from the 1990s to the present is linked to the broader crisis of modernity and its underpinning ontology, as approaches to problems in the world seek to expand and deconstruct the rigid conceptual tools of liberal universalism. Thus, the consensus in critical International Relations, and increasingly in the world of policy, has begun to see universalism as a problem rather than a solution to our current multiple and overlapping crises.

In this approach, which we heuristically frame as "decolonial deconstruction," the world of representation, of categories, of fixed essences and meanings is put into question, becoming seen as too abstract, too reductionist and too exclusionary in the drive to gain ever-greater levels of inclusion and differentiation. This deconstructive horizon, very much informed by anti- and decolonial literatures, has come under little sustained critical analysis. There tends to be an assumption that "decolonizing" our understandings and practices is a matter of continuing to keep the process open, of continuing to prize movement, mobility, transformation, creativity, contingency, spontaneity, and difference over fixity and closure (Rojas 2016; Tucker 2018; Hutchings 2019; Tickner and Querejazu 2021). This tendency towards process, difference, and complexity is evident in much of the recent literature in *International Political Sociology* (IPS) on diverse subjects from resilience to the Anthropocene to international labor migration (Ryan 2015, Rojas 2016; Tucker 2018; Chee 2020). Indeed, in their influential conceptual work on IPS, Jef Huysmans and João P. Nogueira argue for a fracturing approach to research, one that deconstructs the international and focuses on heterogeneity, fluidity, and creativity (2021). We see the IPS of fracturing as partaking of the same impulses as "decolonial deconstruction."

This article seeks to take some initial steps in questioning this horizon of policy-openness. In doing this, we do not seek to invert the argument to defend closure, fixity, essences, or homogenizing universals. Instead, we argue that "decolonial deconstruction" does not follow through on the radical potential of deconstruction highlighted by contemporary work in critical Black studies and suggest an alternative approach of the Black Horizon. We sketch out this critical approach in dialogue with scholarship in critical Black studies and the work of Jacques Derrida. This alternative critical approach challenges the increasingly prevalent set of approaches in IPS that work with process, difference, and complexity as the basis for an affirmative politics, by directing our attention to more foundational forms of critique.

One of the core elements of our argument is the focus upon the role of Jacques Derrida and his accounts of both "deconstruction" and "justice to come". In our discussion of deconstruction, we understand it loosely as a form of critique that unpacks and undermines accounts of pure, singular meaning, essence, and identity (Derrida 1992). In our heuristic framing of "decolonial deconstruction," we wish to highlight the particular mobilization of deconstructive methods running through the anti- and decolonial tradition of thought, and increasingly defusing into mainstream policy discourses. We are not arguing that the diverse approaches we work with here all draw explicitly on Derrida (although some do), but rather that the method of deconstruction, and its use to promote processual political and policy approaches has become central to contemporary debates. Similarly, our argument here draws on Derrida's account of "justice to come," which has also been influential in the thinking of many contemporary theorists on the nature of justice and governance, and the promotion of arguments for a processual move towards justice, rather than seeking a just end-state of society. Again, Derrida's argument is both explicitly and implicitly worked with in contemporary critical thought, in ways that our argument seeks to contest and critique. Ultimately, our contention below sets out

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an alternative reading, both of deconstructive critique and "justice to come," drawn from a particular interpretation of Derrida. This approach, which we term the Black Horizon, comes out of Black studies, and a range of thinkers who were influenced by Derrida, but takes his arguments further, by centring the role of Blackness as an outside to modernity and a core element in modern accounts of the world.

The first section of the article illustrates the ways that decolonial thinkers have deconstructed identity, through taking up processual, mobile, fluid, and open-ended approaches. Drawing on the work of thinkers like Sylvia Wynter and Edouard Glissant, we unpack the ways that Blackness is understood as a way of being that deconstructs identity and allows for a relational, emergent form of becoming, opening up the possibility for contemporary postmodern forms of policymaking. The second section provides a brief survey of two conceptually linked international governance discourses in which identity and goal deconstruction play a key role. It addresses peacebuilding as a policy field and resilience as a broader approach, highlighting the ways that fixed understandings and identities have been problematized in the study of conflicts and the rise of adaptive and processual approaches to disaster in resilience.

The third section of the article takes an alternative approach to the nexus of postmodern and anti- and decolonial thought, rethinking the power of deconstruction in our contemporary moment. It introduces the Black Horizon as a form of deconstruction that moves beyond the focus on problems of identity and processes of enablement. Here we draw on Black studies scholars like David Marriott, Nahum Dimitri Chandler, and Denise Ferreira da Silva, to provide a reading of the work of Jacques Derrida, which offers a deeper critique of modernity, moving beyond decolonial deconstruction to analyse the foundational violences of modernist conceptions of the world and subjectivity.

Decolonial Deconstruction

Recent discussions of the decolonial drive have largely focused on questions of knowledge, power, and future-focused worldmaking. The decolonial turn across academia has drawn on a much longer tradition of thought, but has more recently cohered around a project of epistemological redress, analysis of the coloniality of the present, and the pluriversal drive towards future-facing politics drawn from the many others of modernity (Grosfoguel 2007; Mignolo 2009; Cusicanqui 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015). However, less attention has been paid to the role of identity and its deconstruction at the heart of decolonial thought. Here, we focus on the anti- and decolonial traditions coming out of Black studies, which have interrogated notions of diasporic Blackness[3] and, in doing so, draw out its distinctive deconstructive features. These approaches do not all explicitly draw on Derrida but are part of a wider inclination to interrogate and take apart key elements of modernist social and political thought. These approaches drew from a particular stream of critical Caribbean and Black thought, focusing on drawing on Black experiences in the wake of slavery, the Middle Passage, and the plantation, to critique unitary ideas of identity. We see this as the meeting of anti-colonial, and other forms of Black thought, with the deconstructive approaches arising from continental philosophy in the mid-twentieth century.

One of the most influential thinkers for contemporary discussions is Sylvia Wynter, whose account of notions of the human as over-represented "Man" in modernity is crucial for much decolonial critique. This very much builds upon her conception of Black diasporic identity, outlined in the seminal unpublished manuscript "Black Metamorphosis" (Wynter n.d.). This manuscript methodologically grounds

[3]There are also other traditions of decolonial thought, including significant work by Indigenous scholars; see, for example, Tuck and Yang 2012; Whyte 2017.

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her powerful deconstructive approach via the study of Blackness as lacking a solidified mode of identity-formation. For Wynter, the process that created Black Caribbean identity uprooted African slaves from their original cultural traditions, to become re-rooted in the new world. This horticultural metaphor is key to her understanding of the ways that Blackness challenges conceptions of identity in modernity, where rootedness remains attached to a space of origin. Instead, Blackness allows for a transformation into a processual subject. Indeed, Wynter says of the inhabitants of the slave ships, on their way to the new world:

> …with the rupture, the mutation of their reality, the many tribes flung together in the holds of the slave ships, already orthodoxy began to take new forms. Tribal orthodoxies began to melt, to be refashioned into an orthodoxy in which change and adaptation were the central element of the pattern. (Wynter n.d, 69)

She terms this "indigenisation," highlighting the importance of the Middle Passage as a form of break that untethered African slaves from their traditions and notions of belonging, requiring them to be re-rooted in the Americas. However, this new form of subjectivity was not a mere transplant, but a transformative, creative form of becoming, both becoming indigenous to the Americas, but also a ceaseless transformation and re-becoming, an imaginative engagement with the world (see also Ferdinand 2021). This was an adaptive and additive form of Black creativity, which produced a new cultural vocabulary. According to Katherine McKittrick, this form of being involves "re-imagining the black biologic as creative knowledge, disobeying the disciplines, viewing black texts as verbs rather than nouns, engendering interhuman relationalities—provid[ing] intellectual spaces that define black humanity outside colonial scripts." (McKittrick 2021, 52)

A core element of this conception of Blackness is provided by the idea of creolization, which focuses on the flux of Caribbean culture, where identity is continually emergent, through the churn of African, European, and other influences that swirl through it as a space of modernity and transit. For Edouard Glissant (1997), this creolization was crucially linked to the opacity of Caribbean culture, its inability to be fully seen, and, in this hiddenness, the ability to cultivate resistance. It is in this opaque space that creolization arises from the chaos of Caribbean existence, creating a form of identity that is produced through de-territorialization. Crucially, this form of subjectivity was created through the violence of the Middle Passage, the "abyss" which slaves crossed before reaching the Caribbean, which induced the alienation necessary to produce such a processual subjectivity. Identity in this reading of Blackness is constituted by excess, it is always more than, it can never be fully perceived, never fully known, nor can it be static (Drabinski 2019). As Louiza Odysseos argues, Glissant's approach urges us towards "new forms of "education" as an ethical, "unfinished" and incessant project." (Odysseos 2017, 464)

One illustration of this approach is Robbie Shilliam's work on what he calls a "decolonial science of deep relation" (Shilliam 2015; see also Blaney and Tickner 2017; Querejazu 2022), where he draws out the relations between different forms of Indigenous and Black resistance and decolonial action. This decolonial science, in opposition to its colonial counterpart, seeks a reparative practice that re-knits the connections that tie the world and its peoples together. He argues that:

> A science of deep relation allows us to reason and walk some way with Black Power and young Māori warriors, with Panthers of the Polynesian type, with Black liberation theologians as they encounter indigenous struggles and spirituality, with Black thespians and RasTafari musicians as they attempt to catalyse the soul powers of Oceania, with the RasTafari of the House of Shem, with prophetic movements that chant down Babylon but that are indigenous to Oceania. (Shilliam 2015, 12)

Thus, for Shilliam, the identity of various Indigenous and Black peoples is not static, there is no primordial state that he wishes to return to. Rather, it is the

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relations between these traditions that must be cultivated and worked through, allowing Polynesians to become panthers, for Māori to become RasTafari, and for Black Power activists to learn from and with Indigenous peoples. He focuses on the relationality and mobility of identity, that flows against colonial ways of thinking, refusing modernist conceptions of static African traditions or Indigenous people in the "State of Nature," to highlight how different decolonial traditions become enfolded within each other. In these distinct approaches, we see Blackness as being at home with contingency, requiring openness and the ability to change.

It is this focus upon mechanisms and practices that enable identities of becoming, in opposition to essentializing discourses of bordering and division, that is key to what we are calling "decolonial deconstruction": a merging of a tradition of continental philosophy and the critical Black studies tradition.[4] This "decolonial" focus, on identity as a product of fluid practices and relations of adaptation, is central to our thesis, as it is this aspect that enables deconstructive approaches to inform contemporary policy approaches. Rather than abstract or metaphysical perspectives, often prevalent in continental thinking, decolonial deconstruction enables policymaking to be grounded in individual and community behavioral interaction. Once policy questions—from peacebuilding to resilience—are understood as tied to community identities and concomitant blind spots, habits, and beliefs—a new policy field appears, understood as one of enablement, facilitation, and processual opening; a field that continues to challenge and to work upon closures (both on the ground and in international institutional practices). We seek to argue here that the binary construction of decolonial fluid and adaptive identities running counter to the destructive and essentializing identities of Eurocentric colonial assertions of power is thereby a potentially misleading one. In the policy areas we go on to briefly examine, contemporary framings of policymaking in the international arena appear to operate through the deconstruction of identity, often framed in terms of fixed mindsets, habits, and prejudices that form a barrier to developing adaptive, resilient, or peace-making capabilities.

Postmodern Policymaking

In the previous section, we examined some of the main decolonial critiques that sought to deconstruct mainstream conceptions of identity, in the context of colonial modernity. These arguments largely played out either in critical corners of academia or in debates among anticolonial scholars and activists. However, these ideas are increasingly relevant in contemporary policy discourses, as the more traditional modernist frameworks of policymaking are seen as inadequate to address contemporary challenges (Chandler 2018). We argue that the theoretical foundations set out by anticolonial and decolonial theorists, discussed above, have important affinities with more recent work in political science, humanitarian policy, and peacebuilding. The processual theoretical tools that are now common in contemporary policy framings take a similar deconstructive approach to the work discussed in the previous section but operationalize it in more practical and concrete ways.

This section considers how "decolonial deconstruction" increasingly operates as the driver of policy frameworks, deconstructing identities, mindsets, goals, and fixed metrics of policymaking and using the understanding of the processual subject, always in the process of becoming, to keep open policy frameworks of intervention. This is not an unusual or marginal position, but one taken up by leading international institutions, including the United Nations Development Programme; its 2020 annual report stating: "The Report questions the very narrative around "solutions to a problem," which frames solutions to discrete problems as somehow

[4]For example, Sylvia Wynter references Lacan, Deleuze, and Guattari, Foucault, Baudrillard and other continental theorists on numerous occasions (Wynter n.d.).

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external, somewhere "out there," disconnected from ourselves and from one another." (UNDP 2020, 5) The link between the closure of individual and community identities and assumptions and the inability to adapt to changing policy contexts could not be clearer once we are aware that the causes and consequences of even "natural" disasters are socially shaped and contingent.

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding, as an intervention to rebuild societies in the wake of violent conflict, from its beginnings in the 1990s, has always been linked to a liberal conception of the state and society. It arose as one of the key planks of the emerging liberal consensus following the end of the Cold War, as the hegemony of liberal thought allowed international organizations, NGOs, and Western governments to move beyond peacekeeping in the Global South, towards more ambitious projects that aimed to construct liberal, democratic nation-states. However, the modernist imaginary of social contracts in the domestic political sphere and formalized peace agreements in the international sphere, while initially understood to be restoring unity and homogeneity, has become increasingly problematic. Constitutional settlements and peace agreements now seem to be coercive and violent rather than potential solutions to violence. Contemporary understandings view these political instruments as overreliant on the artificial construction of political identities, with fantastic stories of pure origins, clear differences, and homogenous interests and needs (Desai and Lang 2020).

This critique of imaginaries of national, ethnic, and cultural differences came to the fore in the international interventions to achieve a settlement and to redraw the constitutional borders of the former Yugoslavia (for earlier critical discussion, see Anderson 2016 [1983]). For many critical theorists, perhaps foremost among them, David Campbell (1998), the policies of international peacemakers and peacebuilders were problematically constructing and cohering ethnic nationalist identities rather than problematizing them as the cause of conflict. The Dayton accords, based on ethnic identification, were seen as freezing the Bosnian conflict on multiple governmental levels. However, as Pol Bargués-Pedreny emphasizes, what was important about Campbell's intervention was that while problematizing local ethno-nationalist identities, Campbell was also keen to reject and to deconstruct Western liberal internationalist imaginaries of universal ethical and political solutions. Campbell therefore refused to distinguish between the "ontological totalitarianism" of both Bosnian nationalists and international interveners who sought the moral high ground (Bargués-Pedreny 2015, 118). Campbell's solution was "ethical communities," an open-ended rejection of any final form of representational framework: "Justice, democracy, and emancipation are not conditions to be achieved but ambitions to be strived for; they are promises the impossibility of which ensures their possibility; they are ideals that to remain practical must always be still *to come*." (Campbell 1998, 207, emphasis in original) Campbell here draws explicitly on Derrida to propose a particular deconstructive politics, but one that provides a practical path forward for politics, rather than rejecting modernist politics or continuing to critique its foundations.

Thus, as Bargués-Pedreny (2015, 118) notes, Campbell provides a model that "proposes to think of peace in Bosnia as a "promise"—in the Derridean sense—that remains yet "to come"; something that can never be "institutionalized"". This suggests an iterative practice, where the unfulfilled promise to do justice to the Other becomes the guiding force of peace interventions, and the liberal internationalist framing of peacebuilding is reversed. Instead of seeking universalist, pluralist forms of liberal governance, which smooth out the problematic conflicts created by culture, peacebuilders have moved to critiquing universalism itself (Bargués-Pedreny 2015, 125). Peace can only ever be a goal that is constantly

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deferred, pursued through an infinite process of adaptation (see, for example, Bargués-Pedreny 2018, Paffenholz 2021). This approach is reflected in the contemporary shift to processual peacebuilding, grounded in a set of ontological concepts drawn from complexity theory and cybernetics. Post-conflict societies are framed as complex, non-linear, and dynamic, with events being dictated by the constant interaction of ever-changing constellations of actors and disparate groups (Salehi 2023). Thus, events are viewed as emergent, and phenomena as self-organizing, making these systems impossible to engage through linear, modernist forms of intervention. These societal formations are not amenable to the construction of static, liberal, institutions through statebuilding approaches, nor can they be understood through extrapolating forward from past events.

Instead, the only way to navigate a world of complexity is by developing an ethos of openness, working with it, attempting to channel the flows of self-organization, and to adapt to the constantly shifting currents of relations. As Gearoid Millar argues, in this way, peacebuilding can be seen in everyday activities, which are understood as "pre-political," as the quotidian interaction and movement of people in society gives rise to "emergent creativity and innovation" (Millar 2020). Thus, in a deconstructionist or postmodern ontology, both peacebuilding work and analysis must become processual, and interlinked. No longer can peace interventions, evaluations, and recommendations be undertaken in a linear fashion, but instead should work in an interlinked series of feedback loops. As De Coning argues:

> Peacebuilding in the sustaining peace context is about stimulating those processes in a society that enable self-organization and that will lead to strengthening the resilience of the social institutions that manage internal and external stressors and shocks. It is not possible to direct or control self-organization from the outside; it has to emerge from within. However, peacebuilding agents can assist a society by facilitating and stimulating the processes that enable self-organization to emerge. (De Coning 2018, 307; see also De Coning 2016)

Both understanding and acting in this processual world becomes a creative endeavour, of experimentation, refinement, and innovation. Peacebuilding in a complex world requires a movement from the international and national perspectives focused upon institutional frameworks of closure and towards the "local," and eventually the "everyday" (Richmond 2011; Mac Ginty 2020). It is in the quotidian space of the relations of the everyday that interaction is imagined to be free from representational fixity and the constraints of bounded identities. Thus, open-ended approaches seek to build upon the immanent powers of "organic, emergent creativity and innovation" that result from the self-organization, relations, and interactions of ordinary people (Millar 2020). The horizon of peace or of "justice to come" is keeping open, suspending cuts, with no closure, finality or solution, the process remains adaptive and open-ended (see also Lederach 2005; Andra 2022). The liberal problematic of how to achieve closure, of how to restore unity, is inverted. From this perspective, the problem is the desire to impose solutions and the liberal imaginary that is the precondition for peace agreements, based on the assumption of pre-set entities with interests. Crucially, the identity of those in post-conflict situations is no longer understood as fixed but becomes fluid and processual, in a framing that is barely distinguishable from the "decolonial deconstruction" approaches discussed earlier.

Resilience

Resilience initially arose in policy circles as a novel framework for addressing crisis, disaster, and vulnerability, both in the Global South and increasingly in the Global North. It offered the promise of an elastic conception of "bouncing back" from hardship, through drawing on and strengthening the existing capacities of

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individuals, communities, or states (Rodin 2015). However, resilience understandings have shifted from an emphasis on the return to equilibrium to modes of coping with constant change. This is reflected in the work of critical scholars, with the first wave of work on the concept focusing on critique of "top-down," "coercive," and neoliberal forms of resilience (Evans and Reid 2014; Joseph 2016), before more recent approaches began to develop their own positive, productive conceptions of grassroots, transformative resilience (Milliken 2013; Jon 2019; Grove et al. 2020; Juncos and Joseph 2020).

As with peacebuilding, the new, transformative approaches to resilience are grounded in work with communities, challenging fixed identities and cultural practices, and a processual framework where resilience is always understood as relational and thereby always "to come," never achievable as an "end state."[5] Thus, resilience is not something that is imposed, guided, or built by external actors, but emerges through self-organization, resulting in flexible, innovative, agile processes of adaptation in the face of crisis (Bahadur and Tanner 2014; Bourbeau and Ryan 2018). This form of resilience can be seen as disruptive to governance, producing new forms of ground-level, almost imperceptible agency (Wandji 2019). Communities are understood to already be in the process of building resilient capacities, autonomously organizing and reacting to crises in ways that are more productive than the technical interventions of distant policymakers (Jon and Purcell 2018).

In this framing, resilience is a process of removing preconceived and dominant understandings, or "decolonising" our minds as a precondition for practicing resilience; enabling innovation and creativity in interactions with the world (Bargués-Pedreny 2020; Jon 2022). The ethos underlying these "radical" approaches to resilience is one that keeps the process open, one that "ungoverns" resilience or forwards an understanding of "resilience to come." Summer Gray argues, therefore, that resilience is necessarily forward looking:

> …resilience is best understood as "cultural work" that mirrors our collective grappling with the unprecedented uncertainty of climate change. This grappling also mirrors systemic injustices that privilege the values and needs of some groups over others. Recognizing this simple fact is essential to confronting limitations of conspicuous resilience. By making the root problems of social vulnerability more visible than the illusion of recovery, the transformative potential of resilience can be reclaimed. (Gray 2022, 16)

Key to the critical resilience discourse of deconstruction is this aspect of skepticism, of always being open or sensitive to contingencies, to new understandings of risk, relation, and vulnerability. As with processual peacebuilding, this form of resilience requires creativity, and cultural exploration. The approach of bouncing forward is essentially a process of self-understanding and promise of transformation, undoing, unsettling, and disrupting barriers, enabling a better "respons-ability" (Kenney 2019) to relational interactions, unseen feedback effects, and unintended consequences of contemporary modes of social, economic, and political existence.

Overall, we have shown how recent work in the field of peacebuilding and the broader policy framings of resilience has increasingly argued for a deconstructive approach to identity, one that relies on a processual, creative, adaptive way of working towards a justice that remains out of reach. Our argument is not addressed to the mainstream or policy focused work that co-opts or dilutes decolonial thought in peacebuilding or resilience policy work. Rather, we wish to highlight the affinities between the turn to process, the diffusion of identity and ceaseless adaptation in contemporary policy work, and the form of decolonial deconstruction that we set out in the previous section. Our concern is that there is a compatibility between these two, seemingly disparate forms of theory, which limits the impact of this form

[5]"Resilience is not an end state—it is a practice." This is a common trope; resilience is a way of being and relating, not a property (see, for example, Rosenberg 2015).

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of decolonial deconstruction. Thus, whilst the critical peacebuilding and resilience approaches in this section address many of the critiques of modernity provided in the decolonial account, in the following section we argue that we can take deconstructive critique further, engaging in a more foundational deconstruction of modernist policy making. We suggest that a different form of decolonial construction is possible, drawing on important recent strands of Black studies and an alternative reading of Derrida.

The Black Horizon

The previous sections have demonstrated the importance of a particular form of decolonial deconstruction, which focuses on the level of the subject and identity, understanding peace, justice, and resilience in processual frameworks of becoming rather than as fixed categories or classification. This approach is that of "justice-to-come," where the goal is to be always open to the emergence of new potentialities and sensitive to limits and tipping points, aware that closure or institutional settlement can never be fully achieved. This processual framing resists the finality of a "solution" or an endpoint, the authoritarian imaginary of a final vision that can be fully realized in the world. However, this deconstructive impulse, which commentators have read through the work of Jacques Derrida, among others, can be reframed towards a more radical critique of the world of modernity. This critique moves, beyond the focus on identity and the subject, to questioning the ontological grounds that enable us to think in these terms. Here we begin to outline this project by drawing on the work of critical Black studies scholarship, engaging with the ontological implications of Blackness as a problem for thought. We call this approach the Black Horizon, drawing on Nahum Dimitri Chandler's (2013) interrogation of the emergence of Blackness and its' relationship to the world. This perspective requires a centring of the foundational violence of the world, that is, the modern planetary existence that is the staging ground for critiques of the human, of peacebuilding, and resilience.

It is important to note that there is already a rich literature in political science, law, and international relations that explores the obscured, violent foundations of political, social, and legal order. In his influential critique of the move towards global politics, RBJ Walker highlighted the crucial role of a constitutive outside to the international order and more broadly to the modern subject (Walker 2010). Similarly, Roberto Yamato's work on Carl Schmitt focuses on the role of the outsider as foundational to political order, arguing that Schmitt's figure of the "pirate" acts as a "negative asymmetric counterconceptual position" that is constitutive of the international (2019, 220, see also 2021). Indeed, much of the work in these debates has been drawn to the necessity of drawing legal lines that exclude those that exceed the acceptable forms of being that are required for a political community (Lindhal 2013). What is distinctive about the Black Horizon, and our reading of it through Derrida, is the specificity of the Black outside, drawn from critical Black studies.

The fundamental difference in a Black Horizon approach to deconstructive critique, of the logics of policy intervention, and the field of work upon subjectivity and identity is that the Black Horizon seeks to take deconstruction further in its refusal to countenance the disavowal of the constitution of the world and the human simultaneously through violence. The fact that Blackness operates from a non-ontological space outside of being, provides a particularly effective vantage point to make this critique. The relationship of Blackness to nothingness is crucial, as David Marriot argues in his discussion of Afro-pessimism:

> To be black then is to be subjected, not by who one is, but by what one is not and never can become but which one must have, must assume, or delude oneself into

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> imagining, namely, a being who is infinitely more than being because it is expelled. Being thus unable to grasp the happiness of being nothing, blackness can only resent the nothing which enjoins it to being while at the same time it is overwhelmed by the despair of never having been, a never-having that makes difference recognisable, irremediable, and manifest. (Marriott 2021, 150)

Blackness, on this account, is at a point of radical "estrangement" from the world, both outside of being and also unintelligible, remaining beyond the reach of epistemological tools from within the world (Ewara 2023). It is this disjunction from the world that creates an opening for something more than a deconstruction of group or individual identities or mindsets for their lack of malleability or openness to the world as the normative horizon for self-critique (Beck 2015, 83). The Black Horizon does not engage in a critique of identity, like the decolonial deconstruction discussed earlier, as it is engaged on a more abstract level in considering the conditions of possibility for subjectivity. As Denise Ferreira da Silva argues, we require a method that: "Activates the negative capacity that the captive body has gifted blackness which is to bring out the juridical to disarrange the symbolic and its constructs, such as *Nature* and *world*." (Ferreira da Silva 2022, 44)

Thus, for Da Silva, Marriott, and many other Black studies theorists, it is not a matter of a critique of the human, and the identities that are projected on to constructs of "Man," as much as the need to problematize the objective assumptions of a "world" that these constructs of the human draw upon and that enable the construction of a subject distinct from it (see also Wynter 2003). Crucially, it is the negativity that is attached to Blackness that allows for this critique (see also Sexton 2008; Wilderson 2010). This resonates with a current tendency among critical theorists to attend to the power of critique attached to lack, what Eugene Thacker calls the "paradoxical thought of the unthinkable" (Thacker 2011, 9), or indeed the "less than human geographies" that are foundational to the world (Philo 2019).

We can follow this logic through in Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*, first published in 1993 (and in English in 1994). Our engagement with Derrida's vast work is targeted rather than exploring the many nuances of his approach. His deconstructive work has provided a wealth of theoretical tools for interrogating the foundational conceptual and semiotic building blocks of modern thought, (Derrida 1981, 1997, 1998). However, we wish to focus specifically on his work on the law, justice, and deconstruction to develop an alternative reading to that set out in the previous section. As a key influence on Black studies theorists like Nahum Chandler, Derrida's analysis of justice and modern ontology demonstrates the importance of a negative space in the critique of the world. He argues that modern ontology problematically needs to continually produce a world that is assumed to exist naturally or objectively. Thus, modern ontology is necessarily productive, with this violence of "preservation" at the same time producing the possibility of ontological unraveling:

> Repetition *and* first time: this is perhaps the question of the event as a question of the ghost. *What is* a ghost? What is the effectivity or the presence of a specter, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum. Is there *there*, between the thing itself and its simulacrum, an opposition that holds up? Repetition *and* first time, but also repetition and last time. Altogether other. Staging the end of history. Let us call it hauntology. This logic of haunting would not be merely larger and more powerful than an ontology or a thinking of Being (of the "to be," assuming that it is a matter of Being in the "to be or not to be," but nothing is less certain). It would harbour within itself, but like circumscribed places or particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves. (Derrida 2006, 10)

The haunting of modernity is the gap between signifier and signified, the violence of abstraction and representation that seeks to contain, to hold, entities in place. The world of the modern ontology, the world of the actual, is the world of containment and constraint, of force and homogenization. Hauntology here can

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be read as a way to understand being that emphasizes it as entailing a spectral element, a destabilizing echo of its creation that nullifies the drive to stability and unity. For Derrida, at least in this articulation, this is the spectre of the violent abstraction of the world, but we can read this hauntological critique alongside a key theme in critical Black Studies, the spectre of the disavowed antiblack origin of the world. This is what Calvin Warren calls "ontological terror," the fear of a loss of security that destabilizes human subjectivity, the same fear that is projected outwards onto the figure of the Black, which stands in for nothingness (Warren 2018). We can read these two haunting, disavowed violences together, with Derrida elucidating a broader foundational violence, fleshing out and augmenting the critique of the Black Horizon.

Derrida recognizes that this haunted world remains inward facing, providing no purchase or raw materials for developing an alternative form of living. Thus, he draws upon a figurative non-ontological space, a space with no being for itself, "before the "world," before creation, before the gift and being… perhaps "before" any "there is" as *es gibt*" (Derrida 2005, xiv–xv):

> No politics, no ethics, and no law can be, as it were, *deduced* from this thought. To be sure, nothing can be *done* [*faire]* with it… On it, perhaps… a call might thus be taken up and take hold: the call for a thinking of the event *to come*, of the democracy *to come*, of the reason *to come*. This call bears every hope, to be sure, although it remains, in itself, without hope. Not hopeless, in despair, but foreign to the teleology, the hopefulness, and the salut of salvation. Not foreign to the salut as the greeting or salutation of the other, not foreign to the adieu ("come" or "go" in peace), not foreign to justice, but nonetheless heterogenous and rebellious, irreducible, to law, to power, and the economy of redemption. (Derrida 2005, xv)

The instrumentalisation of Derrida's "justice to come" in much of the literature in critical International Relations (see, for example, Campbell 1998), can be seen in the way that Derrida's account is often counterposed to particular "cuts" that are made to reproduce imaginaries of homogeneity and difference. These cuts can then be read as problematic closures, as part of the ongoing process of violence, what Derrida describes as "preserving" violence (Derrida 1992), the quotidian violence of the everyday that maintains the violent nature of the world. This reading of Derrida brings the "to come" into the world, as always the next step, always requiring the opening in response to the cut of "solution," of "settlement" of "decision." This desire to ontologize Derrida's non-ontological space, to bring critique into the world, is what enables the "to come" of policy discourses of international intervention. Deconstruction becomes indistinguishable from the work of international policy processes seeking to continually bridge the gap between liberal ideals and local realities. Thus, radical critique of the actual becomes an affirmation of the promise of liberal institutionalism. International intervening actors and agencies become the bearers of deconstructive critique. This process can be seen clearly in policy calls to push "beyond" problematic territorial or fixed forms of identity in discourses of peacebuilding and post-conflict development (see Schomerus 2023) as in calls for the replacement of technical, "top-down" resilience interventions with open-ended programes of community empowerment (United Nations 2020). Thus, the powerful critique provided by decolonial deconstruction is tamed and instrumentalized to enable more policy work, more interventions, and more of the activities that were the subject of the critique in the first place.

Derrida's justice to come is based on a figurative, founding non-ontological space, which can be used as a vantage point to critique. It is figurative in that it is prior to the world, a space from which the world was created, and not one that can be brought into it. By reading Derrida's figurative move not as a call to processual pursuit of justice in the world but rather to attend to the problematic founding of the world, we can understand his argument as an important explication of one of the

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key insights of the Black Horizon, the importance of attending to the foundational moment of the world. "Decolonial deconstruction" is available for assimilation into international policy regimes when it is framed in ways that disavow the radical import of Derrida's critique and the "mystical" violence that he argues grounds modernity itself. Derrida is describing the world of modernity, the world that is "haunted" by its violence. Derrida is not describing the world as if it was literally present before us, somehow freed from its mystical foundation in the grounding violence of chattel slavery, primitive accumulation, colonial dispossession, and racial domination. The human as subject and its "world" as universal object become reified rather than understood as always already the historical product of domination (Wynter 2003; Ferreira da Silva 2007; Weheliye 2014; Jackson 2020). To mistake the ideological or veiled world of modernity for the world per se would be to reify the productions of grounding violence and to disavow their occlusions. This is why Derrida's grounding in a non-ontological "before" and a "to come" is so essential to his (and to our mind, to any) critical thought. What appears to be lost in the focus upon Derrida's "to come" is the refusal to deduce politics, ethics, or law upon a figuration of otherness "before the "world". As Derrida states:

> Deconstruction, while seeming not to "address" the problem of justice, has done nothing but address it, if only obliquely, unable to do so directly. Obliquely, as at this very moment, in which I'm preparing to demonstrate that one cannot speak directly about justice, thematize or objectivize justice, say "this is just" and even less "I am just," without immediately betraying justice, if not law (droit). (Derrida 1992, 10)

Democracy, justice, reason, or peace "to come" cannot have any relation to these concepts as expressed in the "world." It is the ending of this "world" rather than its creative extension and expansion that is suggested by Derrida. In our reading of Derrida's justice "to come," there is not a call to pursue an endless journey towards these unattainable goals, but rather an acknowledgement that they cannot be sought from within the world that currently exists. This insight directs us towards further foundational critique of the world itself, rather than a path forward from within it. This works with the perspective of the Black Horizon, which focuses on a critique grounded in the condition of Blackness as non-being and on the inability to gain justice in a world that is predicated on antiblackness. Derrida's insight contributes to this critique by turning our attention to the mythical founding moment of modernity, which confirms the inability to seek justice "to come" beyond that founding moment.

This fundamental distinction between what we have described as "additive" work, affirming a "reality" beneath or other to modernist constructions of a human/world divide (Chandler and Chipato 2021; Chipato and Chandler 2023), and the Black Horizon, which seeks to foreground the ontological violence of world-making, comes to the fore in Derrida's essay on "The Mystical Foundation of Authority" (1992). Derrida makes the point that at stake is not the status of exclusion or inclusion within the authority of law but the regime of law itself. The necessary but disavowed grounding of law is non-law:

> This moment of suspense, this *epokhe*, this founding or revolutionary moment of law is, in law, an instance of non-law. But it is also the whole history of law. *This moment always takes place and never takes place in a presence.* It is the moment in which the foundation of law remains suspended in the void or over the abyss, suspended by a pure performative act that would not have to answer to or before anyone. The supposed subject of this pure performative would no longer be before the law, or rather he would be before a law not yet determined, before the law as before a law not yet existing, a law yet to come, *encore devant et devant venir.* (Derrida 1992, 36)

The point that Derrida is making is that law and non-law come into being at the same time, but all that appears is law. Non-law or non-being does not preexist the

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mystical grounding violence of the modern ontology. From within this world, of the "coloniality of being" (Maldonado-Torres 2008), "Every "subject" is caught up in this aporetic structure in advance." (Derrida 1992, 36). From within the world as constituted, it is difficult to challenge the arbitrary violence of this "ontological" violence (Warren 2018). The erasure of the simultaneous creation of law and non-law is a crucial element of Derrida's critique, but can be pushed further through the Black Horizon, which highlights the importance of a figure to embody the non-legal. As Calvin Warren argues, Blackness acts as this figure, a disavowed outside that is imperative for the existence of the legal order. This process of unseeing is what he calls "outlawing," which "entails (1) censuring the ontological seeing of black beings' holocaust, which continually obliterates there-ness, and (2) the not of law, as the outside/inside formulation of the imperative" (2018, 71). A Black Horizon reading of Derrida's non-law, understands the erasure of this double founding as being produced through outlawing. Derrida argues that here we are dealing with a double bind or a contradiction that can be schematized as follows: On the one hand, it appears easier to criticize the violence that founds since it cannot be justified by any preexisting legality and so appears savage. But on the other hand, and this reversal is the whole point of this reflection, it is more difficult, more illegitimate to criticize this same violence since one cannot summon it to appear before the institution of any preexisting law: it does not recognize existing law in the moment that it founds another (Derrida 1992, 40).

Thus, read through Derrida, the analytic of the Black Horizon brings to the surface the foundational violence of modernity, a violence that is both world-making and at the same time seemingly cut apart or veiled from a modernist gaze. In clarifying the ontological stakes involved, the Black Horizon thereby enables an alternative form of "decolonial deconstruction" one that is not assimilable into contemporary discourses of international policy intervention. This is a critique that operates at a metapolitical level, not engaging in a politics within the world that seeks to influence policy, work within civil society, or in the relations between states, but instead interrogates the foundations that make politics possible. Thus, it is not a modernist politics but a means of questioning the disavowed grounds enabling and constraining modern conceptions of the political.

Conclusion

We have argued that work in the broad paradigm of "decolonial deconstruction" has had an important impact on contemporary critical understandings and upon policy discourses, particularly in the fields of peacebuilding and resilience. Traditional liberal political understandings of both the universal individual as a rational autonomous subject and of communities with presumed essences and shared interests have been fundamentally problematized through decolonial problematics and the critique of fixed grounds and origins. Where our article seeks to take the argument forward is in making two moves.

Firstly, we highlight how decolonial deconstruction, in its emphasis on the malleability and relational shaping of individual and collective identities, provides a new field of policy intervention. A field that has the agency of individuals and communities at its center. This agency both registers social and relational processes and also provides a point of traction for international policies seeking to reorient behavioral outcomes through the enabling work of capacity-building. Further, we argue that this focus on the deconstruction of identity and fixed or essentialist understandings of community has facilitated a policy framework of international intervention that is articulated in open-ended and processual terms of the policy goals of peace, democracy, justice, resilience, etc. "to come." This framework of "justice to come" focuses on limits, exclusions, and blind spots both in communities intervened in and in those engaged in policy advocacy.

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Secondly, we have argued that another and quite distinct way of bringing together decolonial and critical Black studies with deconstruction could be heuristically framed in terms of the Black Horizon. "Justice to come" approaches provide an open-ended framing legitimizing external intervention, seeking to shape, enable and capacity-build societies, reproducing colonial hierarchies of both power and (therapeutic or capacity-building) knowledge. In contrast, the Black Horizon relocates Derrida's account of "to come" in a framework of deconstruction, which does not position justice, peace, development, resilience, etc. as tractable for governing imaginaries of interventionist power. We argue that Derrida can be read more in terms of negation than of affirmation, avoiding the lure of imaginaries of extending the liberal project and instead fundamentally questioning the grounds of human and the world that enable these open-ended and processual policy imaginaries. In reading Derrida in this way, we argue that contemporary work, largely located in the broad field of Black study, can radically challenge the impulse to do generative or reparative work within the policy worlds of peacebuilding, resilience, and cognate spheres, suggesting a decolonial approach that refuses engagement rather than seeking to extend it.

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