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An Autoethnography of Hybrid IR Scholars: De-Territorializing the Global IR Debate

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Who can speak from the perspective of the Global South? In answering this question, Global International Relations (IR) finds itself in a *cul de sac*: rather than globalize IR, Global IR essentializes non-Western categories by associating difference and knowledge to place (countries, regions, and civilizations) which occludes de-territorialized forms of knowledge production. To reach out for these forms of knowledge, we develop the concept of "hybrid subjectivity," and propose a shift from the macro to the micro. We propose autoethnography as a method to proceed with this move and present two case studies based on our experiences as hybrid IR scholars to illustrate it. In doing so, we demonstrate the relevance of our self-reflexive exercise in deconstructing reified categories and rendering visible new forms of knowledge in the Global IR debate. This article's conceptualization of hybrid subjectivity enables the recasting of Global IR in a relational, hybrid, and truly global framework for analysis. The argument goes beyond the confines of Global IR and adds essential analytical value to critical, decolonial, and pluriversal critiques of wester-centrism in IR; in the sense of opening new theoretical and empirical possibilities, as an alternative to current intellectual efforts to recover non-colonial or precolonial forms of non-Western authenticity.

Qui peut parler du point de vue de l'hémisphère sud ? Pour répondre à cette question, les RI mondiales se trouvent dans une impasse : au lieu de mondialiser les RI, les RI mondiales essentialisent les catégories non occidentales en associant la différence et la connaissance à l'emplacement (pays, régions, civilisations), ce qui barre la route aux formes déterritorialisées de production de connaissances. Pour nous intéresser à ces formes de connaissance, nous élaborons un concept de ≪ subjectivité hybride ≫ avant de proposer un passage du niveau macro au niveau micro. Nous proposons l'autoethnographie comme méthode pour permettre ce passage et présentons deux études de cas basées sur nos expériences de chercheurs en RI hybrides pour l'illustrer. Ce faisant, nous démontrons la pertinence de notre exercice d'autoréflexion pour déconstruire les catégories réifiées et rendre visibles de nouvelles formes de connaissance dans le débat des RI mondiales. La conceptualisation de la subjectivité hybride de cet article permet de replacer les RI mondiales dans un cadre d'analyse relationnel, hybride et réellement mondial. L'argument dépasse les limites des RI mondiales et ajoute une valeur analytique essentielle aux critiques décoloniales et pluriverselles du centrisme occidental en RI ; dans le sens d'offrir de nouvelles possibilités théoriques et empiriques, comme alternative aux efforts intellectuels actuels pour retrouver des formes non coloniales et précoloniales d'authenticité non occidentale.

¿Quién puede hablar desde la perspectiva del Sur Global? Las RRII globales se encuentran en un callejón sin salida con relación a la respuesta de esta pregunta: En lugar de globalizar a las RRII, las RRII globales esencializan las categorías no occidentales y asocian la diferencia y el conocimiento al lugar (países, regiones, civilizaciones), lo cual dificulta la existencia de formas desterritorializadas en materia de producción de conocimiento. Desarrollamos el concepto de «subjetividad híbrida» y proponemos un cambio desde la dimensión macro a la dimensión micro con el fin de poder alcanzar estas formas de conocimiento. Proponemos la autoetnografía como método para poder proceder con este movimiento y presentamos dos estudios de caso basados en nuestras experiencias como estudiosos de las RRII híbridas para ilustrarlo. De esta forma, demostramos la relevancia que tiene nuestro ejercicio autorreflexivo para deconstruir categorías cosificadas y visibilizar nuevas formas de conocimiento dentro del debate global de las RRII. La conceptualización de la subjetividad híbrida que llevamos a cabo en este artículo permite la refundición de las RRII globales dentro de un marco relacional, híbrido y verdaderamente global para el análisis. El argumento va más allá de los confines de las RRII globales y agrega un valor analítico esencial a las críticas esenciales, decoloniales y pluriversales del centrismo occidental en las RRII, en el sentido de que permite abrir nuevas posibilidades teóricas y empíricas como alternativa a los esfuerzos intelectuales actuales para recuperar formas no coloniales o precoloniales de autenticidad no occidental.

Introduction

A recent development in international studies is Global International Relations (IR)'s renewed focus on expanding the discipline's reach beyond Western/US-dominated perspectives. What became known as Global IR, launched by Amitav Acharya at his presidential address to the annual meeting of the International Studies Association (ISA) in 2014, was a project that called for the diversification of the discipline beyond the West. While calling for the "non-West" to develop its concepts, the Global IR project (GIRP) is also wary of claims of exceptionalism, namely of theorists claiming monopoly over culture to pursue their own agendas (Acharya 2014, 651). This is a key concern raised by Acharya and Buzan throughout the years (2007; 2017) and has been framed as a problem of "national ghettoing," that is, in Hurrell's words (2016, 151), of "ghettoising the contributions of the 'non-West' through "unhelpful macro units of analysis ("Islamic" ideas, "Chinese" values')". Given this caveat, it is curious that the categories "Western" and "non-Western" remain intact in the GIRP, only to be semantically replaced with the rather synonymous "Global North" and "Global South" (Gelardi 2020). Thus, while, on one hand, Global IR scholars recognize that "Western" and "non-Western" experiences, as well as their various interpretations, have, over the years, clashed and fused in so many ways (Bilgin 2008, 6; Shilliam 2010; Hobson and Sajed 2017; Tucker 2018). On the other hand, despite this recognition, the West/non-West binary remains used as a heuristic tool, leading to criticisms of essentializing elitist, nationalist, and cultural narratives (Karkour and Giese 2020, 5), 250). This leads to two questions that we take as our starting point: firstly, why did the GIRP reach this dead end? And secondly, what can be done about it?

The reason for this dead end is the GIRP's association of difference and knowledge to place (countries, continents, regions, and civilizations) which occludes what is (or should be) instead de-territorialized forms of knowledge production. As Krishna recently noted, the current focus on non-Western geo-cultural spaces in IR

reproduces Eurocentric logics of geographical reification and cultural nativism (2021, 3). Alejandro shares a similar view,

> Not only does the idea of "geo-cultural" diversity not match empirical research, it also partakes in a post-colonial Eurocentric fantasy that needs to be interrogated. We need to be vigilant that initiatives to diversify IR do not in fact reproduce the problems they aim to address (2021, 284).

To reach out for forms of de-territorialized and non-Eurocentric knowledge, we argue, the GIRP would benefit from making a shift from the macro to the micro. Such "micro move" in Global IR entails the reconstruction of so-called "non-Western" agents' subjectivity as cosmopolitan, or even non-national, across boundaries and multidimensional. We introduce the concept of "hybrid subjectivity" to define such agents. Hybrid subjectivity is ubiquitous in IR and yet a concept that has so far been invisible. Indeed, many of the founding figures in the "isms" in IR were, in fact, hybrid subjects. From Hans Morgenthau, a German Jew who taught in Switzerland and Spain before moving to the United States, to Edward Said, a Palestinian American whose earlier years were spent in Cairo, we see hybrid subjects. Neither they, nor their scholarship, had a national or territorial basis. As such, our aim is to demonstrate how hybrid subjects, whose knowledge has no or weak territorial affiliation, unveil a different picture—than the current emphasis on "national schools" (e.g., Yan et al 2011; Qin 2016; Hwang 2021)—of how IR is experienced and taught as a global discipline. Current literature in IR teaching beyond the West focuses on how IR is taught in various cultural contexts, for example, in Morocco (Saddiki 2021), Kuwait (Alnloshi 2021), and Egypt (Abou Samra 2021). While these works bring new insights into the diverse "non-Western" ways of teaching IR, they omit an important nuance: IR is also taught and experienced by hybrid subjects. Hybrid subjects challenge the cultural and territorial assumptions that such contributions to "non-Western" IR teaching essentialise. Hybrid subjects are what Said refers to as "out of place," namely always simultaneously inside and outside a particular context or territory. Such a position of unsettlement renders these subjects at once within and outside IR's current institutional structures.

We develop next a conceptualization of hybrid subjectivity as a form of post-Western agency. The "post" in post-Western refers to a narrative that rejects the distinction of the "Western" from the "non-Western" agency, heuristically or otherwise, and the substitution of both by an agency that has "hybridity" as its core feature. We outline a conceptual framework that captures the transient nature of such hybridity, its manifold manifestations and the tensions and contradictions that emerge, as we navigate across institutional settings. This conceptualization of hybrid subjectivity, anchored in the empirical examination of our lived experiences, offers an important challenge not only to the GIRP debate but also to recent non-Western/decolonial/pluriversal scholarship in IR, which often assumes (analytically or/and ontologically) a binary distinction between opposing Western and non-Western locations, modernities, subjectivities, and sources of knowledge production (e.g., Blaney and Tickner 2017, 303–4; Gruffydd Jones 2006, 12, 225–6; Inayatullah and Blaney 2004, 15–6; Shilliam 2015, 19–20, 25–6; Rojas 2016, 370–2; Capan 2017, 5–6, 8). As Vieira argues elsewhere, these perspectives "still uncritically conflate the condition of the marginalised with an absolute ontology of non-Western agency" (2019, 151). Notwithstanding their crucial critique and contribution to the diversification of knowledge production and the problematization of Western universalism (Chakrabarty 2000), we contend in this article that non-Western subjectivity cannot be analytically detached from what is in fact post-Western (amalgamated, multiple, and hybridized) configurations of selfhood. Our conceptualization of hybridity as a form of post-Western agency offers an alternative emancipatory discourse of global entanglements to current theorizations in IR that rely on territorial thinking and/or neat macro-level distinctions. This discourse is emancipatory in two senses: first, it

is our bulwark against national ghettoizing. Second, it offers a voice to the many IR scholars who currently identify with it but remain invisible under reified categories.

The method we propose to proceed with this "micro move" and render the hybrid subject in IR visible is autoethnography. While autoethnography can be classed as a "reflexivist" method, as per Jackson's (2011) typology, it is different from conventional critical approaches in that it does not only locate the researcher within the research, but also allows the research to "fully explore the insights that may be developed from [the researcher's] experiences" (Briggs and Bleiker 2010, 784), and make the researchers' "inner worlds" accessible to the readers (Dauphinee 2010, 813; Lowenheim 2010, 1029). The merit of this method is assessed on the basis of whether or not it disrupts knowledge and incorporates those who have been so far invisible (Naumes 2015, 822), particularly in areas that "would not have been possible through other, more conventional accounts" (Briggs and Bleiker 2010, 792). Thus, specifically, the merit of this article's use of autoethnography should be judged on the basis that it incorporates de-territorialized forms of knowledge production and assimilation that are not only invisible from this framework, but also cannot be visible by other conventional methods in social science research. This way the use of the autoethnographic method not only present a challenge to the existing status quo in the GIRP (Doty 2010, 1050), but also demonstrates how Global IR, and non-Western/decolonial/pluriversal scholarship in IR more broadly, can go beyond the current *cul de sac* that fixates scholarly identity in macro units that essentialize "Western" and "non-Western" categories.

Situating the Hybrid Subject

In this section, we theorize how in our understanding the hybrid subjects under analysis (ourselves) have been constituted by (and granted legitimacy to operate) in academic institutional settings. We work at the juncture of the macro level of analysis, understood as the symbolic and political space of structured relations, represented in this article by the general field of IR academia, and the autonomous space of the individual subject, which, in our view, maintain a level of independent agency yet permeated by relations with others. We theoretically anchor the subsequent analysis on a Lacanian-inspired interpretation of ontological security, meaning the subjects' attempts to provide existential meaning to otherwise conflicting identity markers and positionalities.

Lacan's emphasis on what Epstein calls the "fundamental tragedy" of humans' (Epstein 2010, 11) provides the cue for how we conceptualize ontological security. It conveys the idea that humans (or subjects) are essentially motivated by the desire to be integrated and recognized as members of a symbolic order, which is never fully sufficient as an expression of selfhood. According to this interpretation, the relational element of subjectivity relates to the ever-frustrated pursuit of identity stability within the symbolic order of social relations. Individual agency, therefore, is driven by a continuous process of symbolization which is ultimately lacking or incomplete. In Lacan, "the making of the self is a perpetual attempt to make up for an original lack" (Epstein 2010, 12). In that sense, the drive for self-coherence, order, and unity—even when it is ultimately a discursive fantasy—is a fundamental element of human agency. In our autoethnographic examination, we conceptualize ourselves as subjects in seeking of ontological security through navigating and trespassing symbolic orders beyond and across fixated territorial boundaries. In this sense, our hybrid subjectivities are the dynamic (and provisional) outcome of our lifelong and never-fully complete journey toward self-understanding.

In contrast to this Lacanian understanding of the subject, Chris Rossdale argues that "aspirations toward (or claims of) ontological security enact significant limitations on political critique and possibility, insofar as they close down the question of the subject precisely at the point where it might more productively be kept open"

(2016, 369). "The aspiration to ontological security" Rossdale argues, "tends to de-politicise the subject, to close the (political) question of being" (2016, 373). From our Lacanian standpoint, the mistake Rossdale makes is that he conflates the political with the agency. In other words, Rossdale's critique is pertinent if one conceives ontological security as a definitive closure that negates experimentation. However, for Lacan, the desire for "closure" does not close agency; in fact, it does the opposite. It enables the agency to be enacted. The basic misunderstanding in Rossdale's account of agency is his omission of the dilemma agency faces in the necessity, yet impossibility, of ontological security. Agents act politically particularly, and paradoxically, through their ever-frustrated attempts toward depoliticization.

While "opacity" and "contingency" is our starting point as hybrid agents (2016, 376), this does not mean that our agency speaks or acts on their basis. They indeed "offer a fruitful space from which to begin to think about ethics and responsibility" (2016, 376) but once thinking has begun, we are no more in their realm. Rather, we are in the realm of the pursuit of unity and order, underlined by impossibility, contingency and necessity. Rossdale is thus correct to state that "attempts to impose coherent narratives over this opacity run the risk of foreclosing important ethical resources, privileging that which accords with dominant narratives" (2016, 376). However, the process of seeking closure is inevitable and the actual motor of agency, no matter how opaque and contingent one may believe oneself and their narrative to be. In any case, an ethics of responsibility, which Rossdale following Butler calls for, does not deny the aim of closure. It is precisely the presence of such closure that makes such ethics necessary in the first place. For example, the subject who seeks "ceaseless experimentation" (2016, 380) begins with a narrative of ceaseless experimentation in order to ceaselessly pursue various narratives. Taken to its extremity, such a narrative of ceaseless experimentation may itself turn into a totalizing move from which agency can find no escape.

Whilst conducting our (self-)examination, we are open to the theoretical possibilities of both relationalist and substantialist approaches to agency, albeit centering the analysis on the former. Unlike Rossdale's critique of ontological security, the relational approach we propose does not outrightly refuse substantialist accounts, with their focus on coherent and autonomous subjects. Following Lacan, we view "existential coherence and autonomy" (in other words, ontological security) as necessary, though, paradoxically, unattainable ideals. According to this interpretation, human agency is the result of the always frustrated pursuit of those idealized fantasies of self-coherence. The meaning of our idealized self-conceptions is found in the broader socio-cultural and political networks of relations we are embedded in. We develop an account of "ourselves" which claims,

> a level of internal durability and consistency that arises through time as an effect of external relations. In other words, we adopt an approach to selfhood that refuses both the sovereign and autonomous modernist subject and the dispersed and fragmented post-modernist subject (Brigg and Bleiker 2010, 797).

By drawing from Lacan's theory, we thus situate ourselves in an intermediate position between Rossdale's relational openness and experimentation and his critique of the depoliticizing effects of fixity/closure in ontological security's conceptions of how self-identities are produced and sustained. According to our account, the hybrid subject is an amalgam of dynamic processes of discursive self-identification built through relations within symbolic orders and driven by the desire to fulfill existential coherence and closure. Contrasting with Rossdale, we do believe those forms of self-identification, albeit fleeting, have a level of necessary intransience as ordering devices assisting subjects while they navigate different symbolic settings. What we show in the subsequent analysis is how we enact agency through producing (and performing) these hybrid self-identifications within (and in the interstices of) the institutional and symbolic orders we associated ourselves with.

While we accept territoriality as a core element of our subjectivities, we dispute accounts that identify our places of birth and other forms of geographical presence, such as Global South/North and West/non-West, with fixed and neatly separated conceptions of identity (Hobson and Sajed 2017, 551). We understand territory as a spatial notion and empty signifier, without inherent meaning, but which is given meaning by a particular and dynamic cultural-social-political symbolic environment. Territoriality, on the other hand, relates to the meanings created in that symbolic environment. We reject the reification of "non-Western" identity by assigning it a form of territoriality that associates it with geographical presence and, instead, understand the construction of our subjectivities through territoriality as a dialectical process of hybridization. The dialectical understanding of territoriality is a "methodological strategy" (Thomason 1982, 145), to protect hybridity from the extreme ends of territorial reification and the paralysis of de-reification we identified in our critique of Rossdale above. With its meaning neither exhausted by the geographical presence of territory nor diluted by the endless socio-cultural possibilities inherent in territoriality, hybridity sits, temporarily, in a middle ground. In this middle ground, hybridity is both a temporary product and part of a production process; a subjectivity objectified that is ready to be once again subjectified as part of a dialectical process. The dialectic is, therefore, our device to solve the question of the presence of "territoriality" in our concept of hybridity; a presence that we do not deny but are able to de-territorialize by substituting it for a transient conception of hybridity that is situated in a dialectical process of both being and becoming.

The post-colonial literature grounds the notion of hybridity on a dominant/dominated dichotomy that we accept as a fundamental dimension of hybridity but which we also claim is insufficient to grapple with the manifold possibilities emerging from our dialectical interpretation of post-Western hybridity. While some of these usages of hybridity suggest fluidity, ambivalence, and amalgamation of post-colonial identities (i.e., Bhabha 1984; Gilroy 1993), underneath all these perspectives are discussions of hybridity in relation to the intersections and violent encounters between "modes of being, thinking, knowing and living" (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 81) triggered by European colonial/imperial expansion. In the sense given by Homi Bhabha, post-colonial hybridity relates to the psychic process of navigating this interstitial and ambivalent position of a subject which is in relation to the Western other "almost the same, but not quite" (1984, 126). Under the hierarchical structure of colonialism/imperialism, hybridity is close to mimicry, in the sense that mimicry implies the acknowledgment by the subaltern other of a superior culture, which one desires to absorb through imitation, such as in Fanon's metaphor of the "white mask" (1967). W.E.B. Du Bois' theory of "double consciousness" (1994) also refers to the ambivalence and conflictual in-betweenness of the colonial encounter. However, if in the cases of Fanon and Du Bois the wearing of a "white mask" and "double consciousness" are the result of black subjects' sense of inferiority and misplacement, for Bhabha, on the other hand, it signifies a condition of productive resistance against colonial regimes of oppression.

In the discussion of ourselves, we reflect on these conceptual articulations of post-colonial hybridity; yet we realize that they reflect some aspects but not all aspects of how post-Western hybrid subjects are created. Our choice for "post-Western" more aptly captures the varied outcomes of hybridization, which is inclusive of, but also goes beyond the dynamics generated by processes of Western colonization. It allows for a more comprehensive description of forms of transient subjectivity, emerging from the amalgamation of transnational/global and national/local symbolic structures of signification. This interpretation of post-Western contrasts with decolonial and pluriversal perspectives, which emphasize the distinctiveness and autonomy of non-Western cosmologies that have the potential to either avoid (e.g., Shilliam 2015) or disrupt (e.g., Shani 2008) Western cultural and epistemological hegemony.

While our dialectical understanding of hybridity does not protect us from (temporary) reification, which gives us our shared meaning (Inayatullah 2016, 538), the vocabulary to communicate in a co-authored paper our shared experiences, it is a protective device against the closure of our humanistic potential, of our abilities to experience being-in-the-world differently. This potential should be clear as we progress toward our autobiographical narratives, which show that our subjectivity production and agency generated two rather different examples of post-Western hybrid subjectivity.

Autoethnography as a Method

We adopt autoethnography as a set of productive methodological strategies to empirically unpack our situated yet relational experiences as hybrid scholars. In our view, the production of textual representation of our autobiographical reflections, and how they have been shaped by (and performed in) distinct institutional contexts, is the most suitable approach to reveal the hybrid subjectivity of IR knowledge producers today. It will allow us to empirically substantiate the claim that GIRP's substantialist ontology is unsuited to what we argue are, in fact, transnational, relational, and ambivalent experiences, shaping hybrid scholars' subjectivities.

As a research method, autoethnography emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in the context of the post-modernist challenge to canonical social scientific epistemologies and their positivist assumptions (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011, 274). Scholars from a wide range of disciplines in the social sciences adopted autoethnographic methods to engage with their own personal subjective experiences, as a way to reveal broader social, cultural, and political phenomena (e.g., Spry 2001; Tillman 2009). In the past three decades, autoethnographical research has gained adherents in the field of IR (e.g., Cohn 1987; Enloe 2001; Ling 2002; Neumann 2007; Dauphinee 2010). Some feminist scholars, but also social constructivist and postcolonial researchers, have incorporated and adapted autoethnographical methods, practices, and modes of reflection from social anthropology to the study of world politics (Vrasti 2008). In particular, scholarly work in IR has employed methods, such as observant participation, to examine everyday practices and processes of social construction centered on themselves as analytical subjects, through adopting methodological strategies imported from social theory and anthropology (i.e., Pouliot 2007).

Inspired by some of these works, such as, for example, Enloe's (2001), our approach combines accounts of everyday experiences, historical/institutional contextualization, and auto-biographical reflection to construct a narrative that integrates and co-relates the micro level of the individual experiences, albeit relational and multi-layered, as intrinsically connected with (and revealing of) larger political processes which, in our account, are constitutive of global relations. Unlike conventional ethnographical research, autoethnography does not necessarily rely on field research, interviews, and observant participation to gather data. In our self-reflective investigation, the *knower* and *known* are one and the same, meaning the object of analysis, the source of information, and the interpreters of empirical data. This approach creates ontological and methodological challenges, largely related to the validity of our empirical claims and modes of investigation. Patrick Jackson argues that research of this nature,

> […] calls for a certain reflexivity of knowledge, by which the tools of knowledge-production are turned back on the situation of the scientist herself or himself; this reflexivity grounds or warrants empirical claims by relating them neither to a mind-independent world nor to a set of cultural values, but to the practices of knowledge-production themselves (2016, 157).

Given its focus on the "self" as a source of empirical evidence, autoethnography has been questioned as a legitimate research method in the social sciences (Duncan 2004, 28). It has been criticized as unsystematic, introspective, self-indulgent, and simplistic (i.e., Holt 2003; Duncan 2004; Anderson 2006). Contrary to these views, we believe in the unique value of using autoethnography for the research proposed in this article. Feminist/queer research methods have persuasively shown how the operation of autoethnographic self-reflexivity, as a tool of empirical analysis, can productively disrupt widely accepted dichotomies such as, for example, male/female, self/other, objectivity/subjectivity, and public/private (i.e., Butler 2007; Adams and Jones 2011). The present article's focus on "(our)selves" has precisely the aim to empirically challenge given Western/non-Western territorialized categorizations in the Global IR literature and the broader IR academy. In this sense, we understand autoethnography as a powerful tool of theorizing that can produce empirically informed theoretical understandings, which question conventional knowledge, going way beyond the descriptive narration of our personal experiences in academia (Ravecca and Dauphinee 2018). In our view, this methodological strategy meets the twofold criteria set out by Morgan Brigg and Roland Bleiker to validate autoethnographic research in IR. First, it provides innovative insight that would not be possible through deploying other empirical approaches. Secondly, it generates knowledge that advances broader and collective epistemic projects (Brigg and Bleiker 2010, 792).

In the next section, we narrate our lived experiences with the aim to illustrate how personal subjectivity is empirically implicated in (and complicated by) the epistemological and socio-political architecture of transnational academia (Ravecca 2016). We ground and theoretically contextualize our experiences according to the principle that identities and subjectivities are hybrid and constituted through dynamic processes of identity self-articulation. Through a process of autoethnographic reflexivity, we theorize how our (fluid) academic identities have been (re)created as we navigate the cultural, institutional, and material orders of distinct and transnational IR academies.

A Tale of Two Hybrid Scholars

In this section, we focus on the lived experience of this article's authors as hybrid scholars. We produce self-reflective autobiographical narratives that are contrasted with wider cultural, political, and social meanings related to "non-Western" knowledge production in IR. We theoretically frame this exercise by taking the ontological position of the "scholarly self" as the product of "forever in flux" social structures (Neumann and Neumann 2015, 799). The methodological focus on the "oneself" of our everyday experience as hybrid academics allows for a more granular exploration of sites of knowledge production (and identity formation), offering original empirical insight into the role of networks of relations in the production of global relations and politics beyond essentialized West/non-West divides (Jackson and Nexon 1999). In what follows, we engage in a reflection on our "institutional situatedness within academia" (Neumann 2010, 1054). In our cases, the site of agency and subjectivity formation as IR scholars is not necessarily defined by region or geography but by what we would describe as de-territorialized communities of knowledge (Brigg and Bleiker 2010).

Marco Vieira's relational self: Misplaced Eurocentrism and decolonial reconstitution

My early "self" is the product of Brazil's social, cultural, and educational structures, which have ambiguously, and at times contradictorily, accommodated hybrid cultural and racial subjects to the aspiration of Western civilizational standards (Vieira 2017). I was born and lived for over 25 years in the "territory" of Brazil, located in the post-colonial region of South/Latin America, and identified as part of

the non-Western global south. At the same time, however, I am White, male, from a Portuguese heritage, and I have been socialized in a Westernized social–cultural environment. I am from a third- and fourth-generation Portuguese immigrant background. My upbringing and education in Rio de Janeiro were anchored in the socio-cultural milieu of Brazilian Euro-descendants, predominantly White and middle class. Only later, when I moved to the United Kingdom, I was exposed to other ways of "being" in the world and interacted with other (post-Western) hybrid peers.

My initial introduction to the discipline of IR was during my undergraduate studies, in the mid-1990s, at a prestigious private university located in one of the most affluent neighborhoods in Rio. The background of both students and staff were, like myself, largely White and middle class, except for a small minority of students from poorer communities who have been awarded studentships. Leeds, Tickner, and Alba-Ulloa note, in this respect, that a narrow section of human experience shapes the IR profession, overwhelmingly White, male, and affluent, "the result is a dominance of research topics and approaches that appeal to and speak to those backgrounds" (2019, 2). This was indeed strongly the case in my own experience. During the early years of my academic training, post-colonial thought was completely absent, despite my location in a post-colonial region. Despite a considerable emphasis on Marxist economic perspectives in international political economy, largely on the key readings of Dependency, Gramscian, and World System theories, the focus was on mainstream IR debates and theories. All those perspectives, including Marxist-inspired, were taught within the central key referential of Western modernity and the implicit teleology of Western developmental models.

The English language was introduced to me very early on as the "universal" idiom language of IR and a marker of intellectual and in-group recognition. During these early years, I gave little consideration to language as implicated in processes of academic socialization into anglophone-dominated modes of knowledge production. Upon reflection, however, my aspiration to achieve fluency in English, as a desirable symbol of the "West" other, exemplifies the element of unstable hybridity and incompleteness discussed earlier in the article. Feelings of self-doubt, akin to an "inferiority complex," have accompanied my professional trajectory in academia. In my experience, they relate to psychological anxieties given my socialization and self-perception as always lagging behind, hence my continuous attempts to excel and achieve recognition among peers according to Western standards of academic excellence. Notwithstanding my many accomplishments, this has been a perennial dimension of my self-understanding as a hybrid scholar.

Upon my transition to England from Brazil, to undertake my PhD degree, my IR training had been fundamentally Western-centric and students were imbued with an ethos of pursuing excellence by assimilating and reproducing Western frameworks. My exposure to post-colonial scholarship, leading to questioning my early Western-centric education in IR, happened during and after my PhD research in London. The annual conferences of the ISA, held in alternate locations in the United States and Canada, where I had the opportunity not only to present my own work but also engage with post-colonial/decolonial and critical scholars, were also influential in my scholarly and personal development. In these settings, conversations were largely centered around exploring new avenues to move away from Western-centrism in IR, which was a topic that strongly resonated with me. However, during these discussions, I often found myself grappling with a sense of personal misplacement due to the tension of my own hybrid subjectivity, as someone who is the ambivalent and unfinished product of both Western and non-Western identity markers. This feeling of misplacement drove me to question, in my scholarly work, the possibility of an authentic decolonial or non-Western subject. The element of epistemic and ontological separation between colonial and decolonial ways to cultivate knowledge seemed to me incongruent with the actual experiences of those, like myself, growing up in the former colonized spaces of Latin America.

The opportunities offered for critical reflexivity in the territorial spaces of the Global North, such as, for example, during ISA meetings, albeit full of emancipatory potential, were also representative of solidified power disparities that allowed someone like me to fully participate, while others were silenced and excluded. I often felt complicit and unsettled by what I perceived as my own hypocrisy in condemning what I perceived as ongoing colonial practices, all the while benefiting from my privileged position in Western academia. In many ways, my constitution as a hybrid scholar is permeated by this tension of desiring Western validation and privilege, while simultaneously repudiating the suppressions, erasures, and other historical violences associated with them. The desire for Western recognition, and the material and reputational privileges deriving from it, has often been manifested through a sense of paralyzing contradiction. I simultaneously strive to achieve and wrestle against the institutionalized pressure to conform to career goals, such as standardized and institutionally prescribed metrics of scholarly excellence, that are not really my own. On one hand, I resist allowing these metrics to define me, yet on the other hand, I seek the recognition and the awards that can only be attained by conforming to them.

In my experience, the almost automatic identification of territory with academic expertise was a recurrent form of "geographical othering" in British Higher Education. Students often approach me with requests to supervise their final-year dissertation projects on topics related to either Brazil or Latin America, assuming that my place of birth makes me an expert on the myriad subjects they are interested in. However, though my work has an empirical focus on Brazil, I have never taught, nor do I have any formal training or expertise in Latin American studies. The situation is not much different when it comes to some of my faculty colleagues, who often assume that I am capable to provide expert comments on a wide range of topics related to my country of origin, or wider region, simply because of my background. I am frequently directed PhD proposals that have little to do with my area of expertise, with the only clear connection being geographical.

These examples highlight the difficult process of navigating my complicated subjectivity as a hybrid scholar while encountering attempts to restrict me within predefined spatial boundaries. While it can be frustrating to comply with institutional requirements that label me as "the scholar from Brazil," I found some relief in the freedom to design an introductory IR course for first-year undergraduate students that reflects my more nuanced, hybrid, and relational self-understanding. In this course, instead of silencing the canon, the process of introducing other ways to think and do IR has been done "in relation" to and "in conversation with" mainstream canonical texts. My approach to teaching, based on my own intellectual development and self-understanding as an IR scholar, does not see decolonial science as necessarily another science (Shilliam 2015, 185) but, instead, as the capacity of critically confronting and continually rearticulating post-Western forms of knowledge beyond established and neatly separated binaries.

My experiences demonstrate the conflicting adjustments I make in response to my feelings of lack and the desire to be recognized beyond territorial affiliations to Brazil and/or Latin America. I often find myself grappling with the ambivalence between my sense of self and the expectations placed upon me. Despite my efforts to reconcile these conflicting demands, the pervasive feeling of lack remains. It has been over the years a challenging process, but also a redeeming one, as I've learned to better understand and appreciate the unique combination of influences that shape my sense of self. Despite the pressures to conform, and perhaps because of them, I've intensified my commitment to reflect upon and translate the complex interplay of diverse experiences, which are constitutive of my post-Western hybrid subjectivity, into meaningful engagement with teaching and critique of IR.

My case ultimately reveals a hybrid subject coping with ambivalence, change, and reinvention. In the socio-cultural context of Brazil's territoriality (in place of

territory), my early intellectual socialization led to aspirations to replicate Western standards and dominant IR epistemologies. This element of hybridization through mimicry has been particularly powerful in relation to the almost existential requirement for a non-native speaker to command both the English language and the Western canonical texts and theories, seen as markers of in-group recognition and, for me, an early, even if elusive, source of ontological security. At this stage of my self-construction, the imposition of binary structures of Western superiority and non-Western inferiority have strongly resonated with my personal experience and self-understanding as an aspiring IR scholar. This has resulted in lingering doubts about the value of my professional accomplishments that continue to affect me even to this day. However, my early ambivalent hybrid constitution in Brazil has undergone a gradual transformation following a movement of physical relocation from Brazil to the United Kingdom, and through regular appearances at international conferences in Western locations. The interaction with colleagues in those settings opened up my mind to new and exciting opportunities to challenge my own idealized conception of the West and the Western-centrism of the IR discipline. However, it also prompted me to reflect upon my dialectic position of privileged and unprivileged within the structure of Western-centered academia.

As a result of this dialectical process of self-discovery, I often find myself renegotiating the liminal space of subjectivity construction where I am simultaneously coming to terms with and feeling frustrated by my post-Western hybrid self. The crucial revelation, however, is that my experience fundamentally contradicts the idea that "non-Westerness" is necessarily tied to a specific geographical region, or any other form of stable reification, an assumption that is often reflected in everyday attitudes, including those in the institutional environment where I currently find myself in the United Kingdom.

For me, the engagement with the notion of hybridity in this article has been a powerful vehicle for self-reflexion on what I now understand were painfully felt processes of "othering" and "naming" according to an externally assigned territorial affiliation to Brazil and/or Latin America. However, it is now clear to me that processes of othering, geographical or otherwise, and opportunities for resisting them, while implicated in power dynamics inherent to dominant Western frameworks, were not necessarily confined to North/South territorial demarcations. As a hybrid scholar, I have come to realize that my experience of deconstructing and rehybridizing in the West has enabled me to become a critical observer of Western modernity, in a way that it did not happen in the post-colonial territorial space of Brazil. However, I have also encountered in the geographical West, as well as in the non-West, the disciplining power and epistemic violence of Western modes of knowledge production and the unsettling demands to conform with them. In essence, my hybrid self operates within the tension produced by the transnational forces of Western epistemological supremacism, while it complicates conventional Western/non-Western territorial binaries.

Haro Karkour's relational self: Teaching IR from a place of exile

My hybrid subjectivity is shaped by my state of exile. An exile defined by the social milieu in which I grew up, as an Armenian in Egypt. In a famous essay, Edward Said summarized the exile of the Armenians as follows,

> a … frequently displaced people who lived in large numbers throughout the Eastern Mediterranean - Anatolia especially - but who, after genocidal attacks on them by the Turks, flooded nearby Beirut, Aleppo, Jerusalem and Cairo with their numbers, only to be dislocated again during the revolutionary upheavals of the post-World War II period (Said 2000, 161).

I am thus the product of exile; a state of dispersion and permanent dislocation which inevitably created a sense that I was simultaneously an insider and outsider to

every culture. Armenian but not from Armenia; Egyptian but not from Egypt; and British but not from Britain. The comfort of a settled identity was repudiated by my presence in a world that was constantly lacking complete identification. This state of exile, which defines Armenian identity generally and shapes my hybrid subjectivity particularly, means that I find myself constantly entangled in, and evaluated against the benchmarks of, a more dominant culture.

I say "a" dominant culture because the evaluation benchmarks in the social milieu where I grew up were never dominated by *the* dominant culture. I learned from a young age the incompleteness of each culture that claimed, and failed to realize, epistemological dominance. I spoke French at school, Arabic among friends, and Armenian among family and friends. Not only the language I spoke changed in each social milieu, but also the entanglement of each language into the other transformed all languages into a hybrid form, recognizable as "almost the same, but not quite" to native speakers. As such, there were no binaries in the world I witnessed growing up—Armenian-ness never existed separately from French-ness or Egyptian-ness. Rather, together, all three cultures, or what has become of them, provided a sense of ontological security that lacked the sense of coherence one culture on its own would provide. My ontological security was thus premised on the relationality and entanglement of several cultures, identities, and languages, becoming one layer more complex with my move to the United Kingdom, learning English and becoming a British citizen 12 years later.

In the United Kingdom, I had no sense of double consciousness; for the complexity of my background meant that I was accustomed to ambiguity, contingency, and entanglement. I saw the claim of superiority as a key tenet of all cultures, repudiated by a reality of entanglements. Notions of "Western superiority" were episodes in history to be compared with the golden age of Islam and the great Pharaohs. As such, I saw my British-ness as another layer to several layers already in place, with no attempt to strive toward it to the extent to abolish the other layers and no expectation to be anything more than the same but not quite. I was none of the cultures I grew up with in a complete sense, and yet I was all of them. Similarly, my British selfhood is incomplete, and yet I am British. My hybrid subjectivity is grounded in a relational sense of self that stands in the midst of multiple entangled cultures and identities. These entanglements at once provide the depoliticized ground as well as the political possibilities for further entanglements and the quest for (in)complete self. There is a contradiction in my being, a sense of existential anxiety. My exile, a product of genocide, is my liberating force from political closure. However, it is also a source of alienation, perpetual loss, and insecurity. I find myself both in a privileged and an unprivileged position—I am in the liminal space, beyond the domineering discursive power of seemingly disentangled cultures, but unable to benefit from the certainty that a recognizable national identity provides.

As a hybrid subject, I am the product of tension, of ambiguity, and of exile; and it is this that I seek to cultivate in teaching and reading IR texts. I was trained in IR initially in Egypt, where I was introduced to post-colonial thinking, particularly the works of Fanon and Said. To me, Fanon and Said were hybrid subjects. Their experiences and outlooks on the world rejected national boundaries to knowledge and/or culture. Neither, in my view, produced "non-Western" knowledge. "Who in India or Algeria today," Said wrote in *Culture and Imperialism*, "can confidently separate out the British or French component of the past from the present actualities, and who, in Britain or France, can draw a clear circle around British London or French Paris that would exclude the impact of India and Algeria upon those two imperial cities" (Said 1993, 16). The same can be said of Cairo, the city where I grew up, and of the Department where I currently work. Hybrid scholars people the hallway where my office is located, with colleagues trained in Germany, Canada, Italy, Lebanon, and Egypt.

When I arrived in the United Kingdom to continue my studies, I was introduced to mainstream texts that were either taught partially in Egypt, such as Hans J. Morgenthau's "six principles of political realism" in *Politics Among Nations* or not taught at all, such as E.H. Carr's *Twenty Years' Crisis.* The common critique of these texts by post-colonial scholars in the West, I came to learn in the United Kingdom, was their "Eurocentrism" (Hobson 2012; Henderson 2013). What struck me personally, however, was that Morgenthau and Carr, like Fanon and Said, were scholars in exile with hybrid subjectivities. My hybrid subjectivity, as a scholar who is also in exile, that is, as a scholar neither inside nor outside, but always back and forth, gave me a different view on their texts. I saw the mutual entanglement between their arguments and their (seemingly) opponents' arguments, just as, since a young age, I learned about the mutual entanglement of seemingly opposing identities and cultures. In my view, IR theories are entangled, if not by common problems, then by the critiques they offer to each other: Theories do not emerge endogenously but rather in relation to each other. Old and new theories meet contrapuntally rather than emerge separately. In my own teaching, this meant that the IR "canons" ought not to be taught simply from a textbook that divides the discipline into separate theoretical positions. Rather, theories ought to be read and taught alongside seemingly disparate theoretical perspectives. An example of such reading of Morgenthau's classical realism is found in Harmut Behr and Felix Roesch's introduction to the *Concept of the Political.* Such reading of Morgenthau shows, for instance, that his realism shared with post-structuralists "the same *problématiques* of modern politics . . . elaborating congruent analyses and agendas, even if these differ in detail and theoretico-political conclusion" (Behr and Roesch 2012, 24; emphasis in original). Scholars conducted similar studies, showing overlaps between classical realism and critical, post-structural and constructivist approaches (Barkin 2003; Cozette 2008; Behr and Williams 2017; Karkour 2021). In my own work, I read E.H. Carr's work alongside his post-colonial contemporaries—Du Bois, Fanon, and Césaire (Karkour 2022; Karkour 2023). This reading revealed important overlaps between Carr's realism on one hand, and Du Bois, Fanon, and Césaire on the other.

To read and teach IR theories contrapuntally reveals overlaps between the old and the new; for instance, a relationship between the post-colonial ideology critique of imperialism and Carr's realist critique of liberal idealism, both dealing with the problem of hegemony, from places of exile. "Exiles," Said wrote in the same essay previously cited, had

> cross-cultural and transnational visions, suffered the same frustrations and miseries, and performed the same elucidating and critical tasks—brilliantly affirmed, for instance, in E. H. Carr's classic study of the nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals clustered around Herzen, The Romantic Exiles (Said 2000, 161).

The perspective that Carr gained from the Russian exiles did not only lead him to militate against the liberal establishment of his time, but also ultimately led Carr himself into exile (Haslam 2000). Carr destabilised structure, questioned British identity, and brought ambiguity and anxiety to the heart of the establishment.

The "establishment" today is the sociological structure of IR as a discipline (Kristensen 2018), protected by "oral tradition" (Heath and Behr 2009), and reproduced through readily available textbooks. In teaching IR theory, my feeling of contradiction looms: At once I come from a place of exile, of liberation from epistemological authority, but also dependent on power structures to claim authority myself. I am liberated from structures that neatly divide the discipline into "camps," but also dependent on making allowance for *some* structures to avoid paralysis. In my experience, the price tag for challenging this structure in teaching, particularly an introductory IR module, is Carr's exile. When I began teaching IR theory, slightly over a decade ago, I offered the students precisely this structure. I was rewarded with a "Superstar Award," nominated by the students to "celebrate excellence" in

teaching. However, I never felt comfortable: teaching IR as neatly divided "isms" contradicted my hybrid subjectivity. Later I began to question my method: I suggested the possibility of a contrapuntal reading of texts in the classroom and opened the floor for discussion. Theories suddenly became overlapping, entangled, hybridized. For this, I paid a price: "lack of structure" became a recurrent theme in student evaluation. Meant as criticism, I deem it as, at least a partial, success. Structure implies hierarchy. Hybridity, being a transient structure, leaves room for democracy—the rotation of power. A device for unsettling, it opens room for conversation. Power sharing is tiresome when the audience is accustomed to authority. By offering a stable structure, authority stabilizes identity. Demagoguery and teaching share this feature: both interact with identity. To destabilize structure is uncomfortable precisely because it destabilizxes identity. This explains the reaction of a student, eager for others to choose a third-year module I recently designed with the title "Alternative Narratives of IR." "Change it," they said, "so it would not imply we would unlearn the narratives we were already taught." And I remain full of doubt: after all, I challenge power structures from within power structures. I feel privileged for being allowed to teach predominantly White students about entanglements, thereby giving resistance to nationalistic narratives a chance. However, I remain out of place, anxious, perpetually reminded of my exile with the question "where are you from?." I am bound by student evaluations and metrics.

To those who recognize it, the tension I speak of is unresolvable (e.g., see Inayatullah 2022; Shepherd 2023). It puts me as a lecturer in an ambivalent position: I find myself against the full weight of IR's sociological structure, like an Egyptologist excavating for the treasures of hybridity in the lost city of canonical figures. If reification is an inevitability, then the key is to embrace, rather than annul, this tension: My ambivalent position—between the sociological structure of IR and the potentialities of hybridity—is not to conclude in new theoretical reification. It is precisely this tension that I take as my challenge, embrace the uncertainty it causes to my students and vulnerability to my position as a lecturer who is not ready to capitalize on theoretical reification but let the discussion float on a thin balanced sheet. The spirit of entanglements cannot die in the classroom. My role as a teacher is to strike this balance, keep the dialectical process open, humanize theory, and bring it down from the heavens to the classroom. There are risks involved. Not receiving that Award; losing in popularity what I gain in advancing learning. I accept the challenge.

Conclusion: Toward a Post-Western IR

In this article, we argued that to move the GIRP debate forward we need to reconceptualize subjectivity away from territorialized understandings of how knowledge is produced in the discipline of IR. We proposed a framework grounded on an interpretation of hybrid subjectivity to get to grips with the de-territorialized, transnational, and multidimensional identity markers of hybrid scholars from the so-called Global South as representative of post-Western (rather than non-Western or post-colonial) forms of subjectivity. We have articulated a common definition of hybrid subjectivity, based on insights from Lacan's theory of the subject and post-colonial psychology, to theoretically ascertain how subjects operate and seek existential stability within and across multiple social and symbolic settings. By drawing on autoethnographic methods, we have empirically focused on our own experiences as hybrid scholars, a dialectical process of unlearning and re-learning, under the weight of institutional pressures and false territorial assumptions.

In challenging territorial assumptions in the GIRP, this article's conceptualization of hybrid subjectivity helps reframe the debate on the diversification of IR (for recent takes on the debate, see Andrews 2022; Carrozza and Benabdallah 2022). On one hand, the "Western" side of the story in this debate encapsulates a hybridized

post-Western agency, internal hierarchies, and modes of resistance that cannot be conclusively reified without turning the "West" into a perennial stranger. None exemplifies this more clearly than Robbie Shilliam's latest book, *Decolonizing Politics*, where he describes, accurately in our view, Aristotle as "uncanny"—both familiar, "progenitor of a European science of politics" (2022, 2), and unfamiliar "*not* a European" but a "permanent alien"; an "immigrant" (2022, 2, 5; emphasis in original). However, *why* has Aristotle suddenly become a stranger? Our article offers an answer: Aristotle was neither Western nor non-Western but rather a hybrid subject.

On the other hand, the "non-Western" side of the story *also* encapsulates manifold manifestations of hybridized post-Western agency. Sayyid Qutb was not only an anti-imperialist Muslim scholar, but also an intellectual who traveled to the United States to study its educational system. In his "dispute with modernity," Qutb explored Pharaonism and Arabism alongside Islamism (Toth 2013, 31–2). Taha Husain, Qutb's contemporary, rejected the framing of Egypt's identity as "non-Western" altogether, citing ties to Europe that dated back to ancient Greece. Post-Western hybridity is thus a learning process, not a destination, and far from uniform in its relationality to so-called "Western" modernity. Closer to our case studies, the pursuit of "unique viewpoints and autonomous contributions of [non-Western] perspectives" (Andrews 2022, 442), cannot eliminate the possibility that these perspectives are present "here" and undergoing a dialectical journey under the institutional weight of "Western" academia.

This post-Western reframing of the debate on IR's diversification is crucial for two reasons. First, it problematizes the ontological separatedness of "worlds" (Blaney and Tickner 2017, 303), as the picture we receive with post-Western hybridity is that of worlds not only entailing one another but also manifold in their entanglements and in constant flux as part of a dialectical process. Put differently, hybridity problematizes the binary between "multiple worlds" and "singular reality." Thus to avoid essentializing the "non-West," it is not sufficient to call for theory to travel to "intellectual terrains outside of the ideal West" (Shilliam 2010, 24), but rather to also acknowledge that so-called "non-Western" agency may itself, as our experiences demonstrate, be present in "Western" terrain. In a discipline mired by "fragmentation" (Dunne et al 2013), it is through this unending process of two, rather than one, way exchange, that we find pathways for dialogue unhindered by paradigmatic assumptions, textbook definitions, and the artificiality of theoretical constructs. Second, our re-conceptualization of post-Western subjectivity opens novel pathways to diversify IR beyond rigid boundaries of "self" and "other" imposed by Western/non-Western territorial assumptions, toward a picture of a global canvass where self/other form hybridized entities in an incomplete dialectical journey.

As part of this journey are of course the gendered dynamics involved in hybridity. Our travels and institutional challenges would have generated further insights, had we analyzed our experiences through gender lenses (e.g., see Mackay 2021). Our omission of gender echoes Said's in his reflection on exile. We find L.H.M. Ling's (2007, 145) response to Said fitting in this context: the omission, Ling argued, does not mean irrelevance, but "compel[s] us to search further, probe deeper, inquire more comprehensively." Transient in its reification, manifold in its manifestations and dialectical at its core, hybridity serves IR scholars just well in this inquiry. In particular, hybridity offers an alternative discourse of global entanglements to the hegemonic discourse that neatly divides the discipline on the macro level. In doing so, it functions as our emancipatory tool, the voice of the many IR scholars who identify with it (albeit in various relations of privilege to the disciplinary power of the North–South divide), against the oppression of national ghettoing and Western/non-Western distinctions that territorial thinking produces.

Acknowledgments

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