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# Entangled with the past in Norwegian academia

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores entanglements of matter, space, and temporalities in shaping academic subjectivities in Norwegian higher education. Drawing on conversations with foreign women working at a major university, I explore the forces (re)producing what matters in academia, creating assumptions of who can be a *real academic*. Leaning on Karen Barad's (2010, 2017a, 2019) hauntology and Walter Mignolo's (2011) queering of temporality, this study elucidates how foreign women academics are entangled with the past through gendered and racialised hauntings and more-than-human discursive materialities, such as linear temporality and ideals of progress. Illustrating ways in which Othering are still enacted in the world of academia, I argue the necessity of rethinking institutions of higher education as spaces where westernised and patriarchal geopolitics of knowledge are reproduced. This study carries out a decolonial delinking of linear temporality towards the recognition of pluriversal experiences of now-time, expanding geopolitics of knowledge in Norwegian academia.

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## 1. Introduction

Norway is one of the most developed democracies in the world, characterised by a high degree of egalitarianism and gender equality. The Nordic welfare model ensures social democratic policies such as human rights, social benefits, and free access to higher education. In this study I explore how Othering (Lugones 2010; Mignolo 2009) is reproduced in academia. I consider the gaps between what White Papers (Ministry of Education and Research 2017) stresses as the importance of internationalisation of higher education, intercultural communication, global mindset, and solidarity as vital generic twenty-first-century skills and foreign academic women situated knowledge. Situated and embodied knowledge problematise the Cartesian dualism of object and subject, the notion that we stand outside and observe the world. Situated knowledge refers to how we cannot be conceptually removed from an embodied context or from a situated point of view (Barad 2007). Departing from the intertwined position of being both gendered and

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racialised, I explore intersections of inequalities in academia, unveiling the silence and invisibility of Othering processes in higher education (HE) institutions (Wekker 2016).

Norwegian academia is highly influenced by meritocracy and gender equality. Political rights to equal opportunities serve as key premises for preventing social and economic inequality in entering and completing HE (Askvik and Drange 2019). In this socio-cultural context, there is a general tendency to believe that the gender battle has been won and that meritocracy ensures rewards according to individual performance or talent (Van den Brink and Benschop 2012). However, this study delves into academic bodies that do not conform to or fit with meritocratic academic norms that inhabit Nordic institutions of higher education, showing tenuous and contradictory entanglements<sup>1</sup> of disembodiment and invisibility.

Research on foreign women academics is remarkably scarce in Norway, and studies of gender and racialisation<sup>1</sup> are largely fragmented and dissociated. Existing studies either explore the challenges of being a woman in academia (Hovdhaugen, Kyvik, and Olsen 2004), the challenges of combining an academic career and family/childcare (Seierstad and Healy 2012), or the different outcomes between men and women in terms of academic ideals of excellence (Brandser and Sümer 2017; Egeland and Bergene 2012). As Wekker (2016) argues, ethnicity/race is not an analytical category in these studies, as gender studies are largely conducted by White women in European countries. Regarding axes of ethnicity/race, existing studies emphasise the difficulties that ethnic minorities face entering Norwegian HE (Arntzen and Eriksen 2019) or research institutions and illustrate the disadvantages that immigrants experience in academia (Maximova-Mentzoni et al. 2016). Gender is not an analytical dimension in studies of race/ethnicity in HE in Norway. As we see, research on intersections of ethnicity and gender in Norwegian HE is extremely limited, except for Ramirez (2021) highlighting epistemic disobedience and grief embedded in Norwegian academia, showing the existence of ongoing gendered and racialisation processes. This present study makes an important contribution to the field of intersectional, decolonial, and new material analysis in the context of growing ethnic and gender diversity in Norwegian and Nordic academia.

Inspired by the material turn, participants were given an opportunity to articulate affects, bodily sensations, atmospheres, materiality, and words (Barad 2007), capturing what Taylor (2013) describes as discursive material forces producing what and who matters in educational contexts. Departing from the premise that materiality is both an active and constitutive agent in processes of (re)producing gendered and racialised inequalities in educational phenomena<sup>3</sup> (Barad 2007), I follow the line of new material feminists such as Lenz Taguchi and Palmer (2013), Taylor (2013), and Juelskjaer (2013) theorisations on how material forces shape human subjectivities. Material feminism draws attention to how discursive materiality carry out performative work as agential in the world. This requires us to recognise the power of non-human and more-than-human materiality, losing the hubris we possess in considering forces, capacities, and energies possessed by matter (Taylor and Ivinson 2013). This is a radical move that decentres the human and emphasises the power of non-human and more-than-human materiality. The present study illustrates how materiality possesses the force and ability to (re)produce gender and ethnic inequalities in Norwegian HE by emphasising the situatedness of bodies, temporalities, and spaces as ongoing reconfigurations of entangled materiality (Barad 2007). From this intertwined gendered and racialised position, I illustrate

how bodies of foreign women are already entangled with more-than-human material discursivity of Western linear temporalities, progress, and development, preventing them from being perceived as *real academics*.

In this study I shed light on the ways in which Norwegian academia remains bound to linear, Western, and paternalist ideals of meritocracy and progress, thereby reproducing human hierarchies in higher education. Leaning on Barad's hauntology and Mignolo's queering of Western linear temporality, I display how ideals of progress, evolution and development prevent foreign women academics from being perceived as *real academics* through hauntologies to the past. I further develop this argumentation throughout the article. First, I review theoretical perspectives informing the empirical analysis. After a methodological presentation, the article turns to an elaboration of five agential cuts illustrating entanglements of objects-bodies-temporalities-space in academic phenomena. I conclude with the necessity to consider temporality and space as important dimensions in the ongoing hierarchisation of foreign women academics to *old times* in Norwegian higher education.

## 2. Hauntology and queering western, linear temporality

For Barad (2007), materiality is not a separate or static entity but is dynamically produced in practice: *not a thing, but a doing* (151). Discursive material practices are inseparable agents in the production of subjectivities, constituted by both meanings and materiality *as relations rather than things* (Barad 2003, 814). Barad (2003) argues:

The relationship between the material and the discursive is one of mutual entailment. Neither is articulated/articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated. Neither can be explained in terms of the other. Neither has privileged status in determining the other (822).

In this inseparability, the agency of discursive materiality enacts both entanglements and differences at the same time *as open-ended practices* (Barad 2003, 816). This study foregrounds the situatedness and relatedness of embodied subjectivities, giving attention to the material, non-human, and more-than-human forces involved in entanglements of power and intersectional differences. I emphasise the processual situatedness of becoming (Tiainen et al. 2020), turning my attention to articulations of participants' embodied knowledge through Barad's (2010) perspectives of hauntology. According to Barad (2017a) hauntings are more than just subjective human experiences, where a recollection of the past makes itself present in a subjective way. Hauntings are lively indeterminacies, constitutive of matter itself, showing the dynamism of ontological of time-being (223). Hauntology is the discursive materiality of embodied knowledge involving re-memberings, re-turnings, and the indeterminacy of temporality as lighting flashes (Barad 2017b), where time-now are images flashing up of what has been together with the thick-now of the present (34). Barad (2019) argues how the past haunts us in the present through moods, emotions, memories, and sensations not controlled by reason. Zembylas, Bozalek, and Motala (2021) argue that hauntings are embodied and work as affective and embodied operations. Feelings, emotions, affects, and sensations are hauntological matter of something happening in phenomena, arguing for the importance of rethinking the linearity of time as *the continuous unfolding of the past into the future* (Barad 2007, 22). In exploring subjective processual becoming in relation to intersectional differences (Geerts and Van der Tuin 2013), I am likewise inspired by Barad's (2017a)

queering of Western linear temporality as the ultimate metaphor for Western civilisation and modernity – an ideological abstraction, portraying modern subjects as fixed, motionless entities conforming to ideals of objective knowledge, rationality, and linear progress and essentialised to static views of national and gendered belongings.

Supporting the idea of hauntology, I echo decolonial thinker Mignolo (2009) arguing that Western geopolitical epistemology of time and space as static and linear, creates specific conditions for shaping human subjectivities. Mignolo (2011) states:

Time entered the picture to place societies in an imaginary chronological line going from nature to culture, from barbarism to civilisation, following a progressive destination toward some point of arrival in future, as progress (151).

Mignolo (2011) illustrates how Western temporality, viewed as sequences of moments in a linear form from past to present to future, stems from Enlightenment, when linearity of time was connected to assumptions of progress through developments linked to the future. This experience of time describes humans through linear terms, influenced by a static past that formed us and limited us to the possibilities of an unknown future. As Barad (2007) states, notions of the linearity of time fail to acknowledge vital characteristics of becoming and change, the nature of variability, dynamism, open-endedness, and multiplicity. Barad (2019) states: *Each moment is an infinite multiplicity, and now is a rich condensed node of on-going changing entanglements across time and space* (525). Following Barad and Mignolo, this study blurs notions of linear temporality, proposing a vision of time as open-ended and scattered in multiple directions, where the past is in the present-future, and the present is in the past as thick now-present (Barad 2017b). In unmasking limitations of Western temporality and delinking the hegemonic linearity of time from embodied knowledge, this study shows the living presence of gendered and racialised ghosts in academia (Zembylas 2018).

### 3. Ghosts from the past and agential cuts

I immersed in phenomenon of foreign academic women being a foreign academic woman myself. I conducted eight interviews with eight participants, and the conversations took place with *normal* (western and linear) conceptualisations of time. Issues of temporality were not considered at all in the first place. As I began the analysis, I had a tough time admitting how articulations of time (re)produce Othering in academia, struggling with how we contribute to these processes ourselves through our own immersion in the status quo of Western, linear temporality. Sensations of mutuality and resemblance aroused in conversations with women, leading to an embodied engagement with the data. Barad states (2007), *practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We know because we are of the world* (185). In conversations, participants constantly returned to moments of becoming defined and fixed through material symbols attached to their bodies and/or national, race/ethnic, or religious belongings. The performativity of matter through involvement of *things* was conspicuous, and the recurrence of becoming Othered by *ghosts* of the past through matter was an important common feature in conversations with foreign women.

As a foreign academic woman myself, I was affectively moved by stories of becoming othered in academia as I encountered my own ghosts of the past. In this process, I grappled with ghosts of invisibility and disembodiment as hauntings (Barad 2017b),

unveiling static definitions of temporality which were intrinsically tied to normal assumptions of Western linearity of time. I began to recognise the way my home country is present in my everyday life in Norway. Through questions and comments from others, I am always attached to my country and rarely acknowledged as a ‘Norwegian’ because of the discursive materiality of my body. Although I am aware of the good intentions behind these questions, it is at the same time a constant reminder of my belonging *outside* and not *here*, even though I have been upraised here, living in Norway for nearly 40 years. In this process, enactments of temporality as more-than-human discursive materiality emerged as an important feature in the reproduction of Othering in academia. Even though I feel equally connected to both places, my home country and Norway, I sometimes feel chained to fixations to a colonial and patriarchal past through entanglements of gendered and racialised ghosts. While there are many advantages in residing in this borderland between cultures (Anzaldúa 2016), that is the subject of another study.

I am inspired by Barad’s (2007) *agential cut*, an analytical practice where the researcher separates out something – an object, practice, or body – from the ongoing flow of entangled phenomena. I decided to separate four cuts illustrating how *things* attached to bodies enacts to (re)produce and (re)inforce Othering in academia. These material cuts are entangled in Western, linear time, as embodied materiality often associated with *old times*. In the following analyses, I delve into how skin colour, a foreign accent, choices of clothing and hairstyle, and the scarf enact Othering in academic phenomena. These agential cuts make evident that knowing does not come from standing at a distance representing the world but rather from a direct material and affective engagement with phenomena. As we separate a cut, we infuse ourselves within the entanglements produced by the cut we make as an *external within*. Externality within refers to how we as researchers are part of phenomena, as we choose cuts. Barad (2003) highlights the ethical responsibility of choosing agential cuts. These cuts produce the world as we see it, bestowing upon us the responsibility to intervene in the genesis of phenomena, analyzing cuts we choose from within, as an external within. In this process, I feel ethical responsibility in choosing material cuts of a body of colour, a foreign accent, traditional clothing/hairstyle, and the scarf. These cuts are illuminated by enactments of discursive material agency as hauntological ghosts from a colonial and patriarchal past, reproducing Othering through entanglements of matter, embodied knowledge, and linear temporality.

As mentioned earlier, I find it arduous to separate the intersected significance of gender and ethnicity in analysis of subject becoming. Being myself in that intersection, I can only express the world through my own entangled and intertwined subject position (Lugones 2010). This study explores holistic and subjective experiences of foreign women academics, from which intersectional differences emerge, re-emerge, and transform (Tiainen et al. 2020). However, I realise that Norwegian, Sami and other woman living in Norway also must cope with patriarchal, meritocratic, and neoliberal gazes in academia (Seierstad and Healy 2012).

#### 4. Methodology

Conversations with participants were conducted in two different periods: Spring 2020 and Winter 2021. I spent long-time finding participants because of the ongoing Covid-19

pandemic. In the first period, I had four physical conversations with four foreign academic women at one Norwegian university. These women were originally from Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe. In the second period, I had four physical conversations with other four women from Africa, Western Europe, Asia, and Latin America. All participants were cisgender and from the same university. The same questions and procedures were implemented in both periods. Conversations were held in the meeting rooms of the participants' respective departments or in their offices and lasted between one and two-and-a-half hours. Conversations were recorded on tape and transcribed. The aim of the interviews was to uncover trajectories and stories related to participants' academic careers and everyday lives in academia. The participants initially came to Norway to study or because they married a Norwegian man. No participants were immigrants or descendants of immigrants. All came from middle- or upper-class backgrounds in their original countries and represented a variety of scientific fields, including architecture and design, medicine, social anthropology, education, neuroscience, engineering, and social work. Their positions vary from PhD candidates, post-doctoral students, assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors. I decided to include PhD students in the term academic because in Norway they get salary from the University and are considered as employees in the institution. I selected participants after asking colleagues whether they knew any foreign academic women I could talk to or searching for participants through the University's website. This process took a long time due to the limited number of female academics with ethnic minority backgrounds in Norwegian academia and because of the pandemic. For this article, I decided to elaborate on agential cuts from five of the eight participants. This decision is based on the article's permitted length and the fact that participants described complex life stories that resembled each other's. For reasons of anonymity, participants are not connected to a specific national belonging or scientific field, nor is their age mentioned. They have been given fictive names and are connected to their scientific field in the broadest sense (e.g. science, humanities, or social science). This study has been reported to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), fulfilling ethical and privacy requirements.

## 5. Material entanglements with 'old times'

All participants expressed disembodiment in one way or other. Disembodiment refers to acts of being marked through fixed and static gendered, racialised/ethnic, and religious categorisations without recognition of the processual, situated and embodied becoming of the subject (Lugones 2010; Tiainen et al. 2020). Disembodiment is a mechanism that makes subjects invisible, even when they are hyper-visible in White contexts (Essed and Carberry 2020). According to Barad (2007), this fixity serves to avoid complexity and recognition of multiplicity and unpredictable transformation. Stability, in terms of fixed correspondence from self-definition to a sense of national belonging ('I am from'), and linear temporalities defining a belonging to assumptions of *a home country*, sustain additional disembodiment. Fixity promotes and reproduces neutral, causal, and objective dimensions of Western temporality and geopolitical knowledge production (Mignolo 2009). As I will illustrate, the past is always present through hauntological gendered and racialised discursive materiality. The vision of time as linear – as sequences of moments of past-present-future linked to progress, development, and evolution – aided

colonialists in *the helping process* of civilising primitives/inferiors of the past (Mignolo 2009). We see how this is manifested with an agential cut of Sara's story.

### **Body of colour**

*Once, a colleague asked me when other colleagues and I were having lunch at the cafeteria: 'when are you going to go back?' 'Go back where?' I answered. 'To your home country?' 'Why?' I replied, 'Because ... are you going to stay here?' the colleague replied. I was quite provoked by this incident. This was a Norwegian male colleague, and the thing he asks me in front of everyone else was when I was going to return to my home country. It was horrible.*

As an academic of colour in a predominately White university, Sara's body is a space of transit, an open-ended body tied to fixed categorisations of being both a woman and a foreigner. The image of a woman of colour corresponds to someone who cannot be read as neutral, detached from her gender and ethnic belonging in contexts of higher education. Sara is always attached to assumptions of who she is based on categorisations of her body, gender, and national belonging (Wekker 2022). Following Grosz's (1998) theorisation on the singularity of geographies and cultural belongings to the times of those places, assumptions of bodies of colour have important implications for how we create ideas of the Other. The materiality of Sara's body sustains essentialist views of a static subjective assurance that all members of a social group will remain stable and fixed, immobile, attached to their nation, as if they were still living there – prisoners of their colonial past (Mignolo 2011).

Following Lugones' (2010) decolonial feminism, the idea of the stranger as someone fixed is a way to portray the foreign and coloured body as a ghost – someone who is psychically close while remaining culturally and ethnically remote. Sara's body haunts her, representing a primitive past attached to her body in the thick present-now (Barad 2017b). The imagination of Sara's body approaching *our territory*, statically belonging to a specific territory and culture *out there*, makes her a target of damaging definitions and labels, commonly expressed in terms of deficit, and lack (Mignolo 2009). The comment '*Are you going to stay here?*' is based on a linear and causal notion of temporality that categorises Sara's body according to normative essentialisations of gender, sexuality, age, and skin colour – expecting her to tell specific stories of the world based on a national belonging to the past. The assumption that time is sequential and linear is the product of a Western, unidirectional lens. Linearity and the causality of temporality are integral ideas of the Enlightenment that are linked to ideologies of progress and modernity. According to this ideology, evolution occurs as the unidirectional progress of time from past to future (Barad 2019). Sara's body haunts her into essentialism, making her a representative of her cultural heritage and national belonging to the past as a ghost. Even though Sara is proud of her origin, the discursive materiality of her body in the form of gender and skin colour essentialise her origin and gender as intrinsically constitutive of herself. Her anger and despair following her colleague's questioning were bodily reactions to embodied hauntologies constituting deficiency in academia, justifying the marginalisation and discrimination of those who are imagined as the Other. Western linear time and ideals of progress are entanglements producing a dominant notion of *a real academic*.

Sara's body and gender haunt her, enacting Othering through entanglements of linear Western time in White universities, where ideals of progress, development, and modernity do not encompass her femininity and national belonging (Lugones 2010). The embodied



hauntology makes Sara conscious of how privileges, or lack of privileges, work in the world of higher education. The linearity of time operates as an unseen material force acting behind our backs, defining and articulating others as fixed, without recognition of Sara's own voice or embodied knowledge. This fixity applies to bodies out of place, as *space invaders* in academia, unveiling spaces that are not empty or neutral, but marked with masculinity and whiteness (Puwar 2004). The past, represented by hauntologies of gender and skin colour, invade Sara's present as ghosts – as corporeal manifestations of patriarchal and racialised oppressive systems of power in spaces of higher education (Tiainen et al. 2020).

### **Foreign accent**

*You are always branded as less smart if you do not speak accent-free. At least, that is my impression, and you are always a little biased. I am the same, and the language quality says nothing about the content of what I say; that is an unfounded idea. You must always argue extra well, and it is a disadvantage to be both a woman and a foreigner; it is double bad luck. I often think that it depends on what kind of background you have. If I had been from an English-speaking country, that is an advantage. Still, I cannot say why, but I think one is seen as less qualified.*

Olga is a white academic woman with Western European background, making her indistinguishable from other Norwegians in terms of skin colour and Europeaness. In our conversation, indeed, she expresses being perceived as inferior due to her foreign accent. In Norwegian academia, language proficiency and fluency are tools to articulate ideas and thoughts, allowing expressions of intellect, points of view, and arguments. Language and speech produced by our available words are vital tools in all academic work. Olga highlights how her accent affects her negatively, enacting Othering at her department. Both her accent and gender enact and reinforces feelings of lack of competence, assertiveness, and confidence. This leads to Olga's incapability to fully express ideas and professional arguments in a fluid and intellectual way as *a real academic*. Being essentialised by reinforcements of her foreign accent and gender, Olga experiences inferiority and biased disadvantage. Through discursive material entanglements of foreignness and gender, she is trapped into being both an outsider and a woman – *double bad luck*, as she mentions. Olga's past haunts her present, enacting a constant (re)membering of her gender and a (re)turning to her national belonging. Her accent marks her as an outsider – a *space invader* – an unpredictable and disconcerting subject that cannot be fully defined and understood as an insider (Puwar 2004). Olga is entangled by her national belonging through the material agency of her foreign accent, unveiling lack of Norwegianess. She is inextricably tied to a national belonging that is not here but is still very present and visible through her undefinable way of speaking, materialised by her accent. Her lack of language fluency reinforces fixity and impedes Olga from being recognised as an academic subject. As Grosz (1998) states: *if the past continues to be a ghost that defines our present, we cannot consider the present to be fully present* (40). The materiality of Olga's accent will continue to mark her as a foreigner and keep her attached to the past of her national belonging, according to Mignolo (2011), as a false universalism assuming homogeneity of times and spaces. Olga does not have the opportunity to fully define herself *as a academic* until we welcome, as Barad (2017a) states, the openness, uncertainty, and undefinability

of the future. When future is entangled with ideals of progress and development, Olga's gender and foreign accent entrap her in the past.

### ***Traditional clothing and hairstyle***

*It is how people perceive me, strangely enough, not always as a professional, but more often as the wife of a Norwegian man. I am often not perceived as an individual myself, as an academic, even though my colleagues know that I am employed in this department and that I am an academic. I feel I get often put in the category of 'wife', 'a foreign wife', married to a Norwegian man.*

Irina is a White academic woman in the faculty of technology who is originally from Eastern Europe. She speaks with accent and wears *old-fashioned* clothing, jewellery, and hairstyle. She is different in her speech and behaviour compared to the imagined *normality* of Norwegian faculty staff. It is difficult to figure out this agential cut without a situated description of Irina's bodily performance through clothing and adornments. This cut counts as what Lenz Taguchi and Palmer (2013) call a meaning-making practice, where entanglements of body adornments do agentic work in constituting relational materiality, reproducing Irina's *gendered foreignness*, which is visible and fixed. Although Irina is White, she is undefinable and difficult to categorise or interpret due to the uncommonness signs of her bodily performativity. She represents unpredictability, as the constitution of her clothing, adornments and hairstyle do not conform to the expectations of *a real academic*. Irina's clothing, hair, and adornments as old-fashioned positions her in the past – as *old*, out of date, and thus, inferior. Through Irina's clothing, hairstyle, and bodily adornments, she is gendered and often associated as the wife of a Norwegian man rather than as a faculty member. Grosz (1998) argues how *notions of newness, creativity, and innovation are all concepts with positive connotations, whereas unpredictability, chaos, indeterminate, or disordered change seem to disconcert scientific and philosophical ideals of stability and control* (38). Irina's embodied appearance haunts her, both as a woman and a foreigner. Irina's clothing and hairstyle are ghosts enacting visions of antiquity, fixing her within the past, entangled with gendered notions of *a traditional wife*.

Essed and Carberry (2020) argue that competitiveness, progress, and effectivity are desired attributes in the world of academia. These ideals are embodied through proper bodily performativity, framed in White, middle-class, heteronormative, modern, and masculine enactments of desired academic characteristics. In the phenomena of Irina's bodily adornment, we discern the often-invisible process of Othering enacted by ideals of modern fashion and academic effectiveness and competitiveness intertwined with linear temporality. In academic phenomena, competitiveness is understood as a straight line that moves between two points with purposeful direction and causality. Direction and causality are only possible if we know what is coming next and act in accordance with a goal that results in specific future outcomes. Effectiveness and competitiveness often tend to be associated with masculine rationality and modernity, visualised on bodies as modern Western fashion. In the case of Irina, the constitution of her bodily performativity is a direct correspondence to notions of *a traditional foreign wife* – not a faculty member. Irina cannot escape the ghosts symbolised by her choice of clothes and adornments, enacting Othering in academia. In other words, she is defined as a stranger and not *a real academic* through hauntings of traditional gender and ethnic performativity in higher educational contexts (Zembylas 2018).

### **The scarf**

*Well, I have a different physical appearance, you see. I wear hijab. No one else in the department wears one, so I am completely different here. I am the only Muslim woman with hijab here. Many of my colleagues respect that I look different and have a different background, but there are some who are not comfortable with it. I feel it. They do not say anything, but they express it in different ways that I notice. Nonetheless, I say to myself, 'it's not my fault, it's yours'. I try to avoid such people, but it is not always easy. I get a little reserved and cannot be myself, right? When these people are nearby, I think, 'now I should be careful because this is not my place, you know?'. Fortunately, there are not many of them here.*

In this agential cut, we capture the force of Amira's scarf, haunting her into essentialised national and religious belongings. Asking the question 'What does a scarf do?' leads to a reconceptualisation of how things are active and productive in processes of Othering in academia. Amira's scarf is not only a piece of clothing. As Taylor (2013) argues, it is an object of *thing-power*, taking place as a discursive material agent in academia, filled with gendered, religious, and ethnic performativities. The hijab's fixity to a religious and ethnic past enacts hauntings as a regression that opposes modern progress of higher educational institutions. Amira describes disembodiment through the material agency of her scarf, trapping her into patriarchal and racialised hauntologies and disabling her from becoming a self-defining and embodied academic subject. According to Butler (2004), the body has its invariable public dimension that is constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere. Amira's body is and is not her own, as it is always enacting normative assumptions of an ethnic and religious belonging to the past rather than to the present or future. This rests on the idea that there is a correspondence between place and subjectivity (e.g. people from a particular country act in a certain way because of where they are from). Performing time as a succession from a static past, a given present, and an unpredictable future requires imagining and confining the self as a predetermined subject without the possibility of defining oneself freely. Amira's hijab sustains fixity and disembodiment, impeding her recognition as an academic. She is always the target of preconceived hauntological ghosts describing who she is. The scarf acts as a ghost, fixing Amira to the past, as inferior, and primitive, haunted by a colonial and patriarchal past.

Barad (2017a) illustrates the way time and humans are universalised through Western linear temporality: *Within notions of a universal clock, it is inevitable to put people as on time, ahead of time or running late, as wheels moving down a single road called progress* (60). Amira's scarf forms a human-nonhuman phenomenon materialising Amira's lack of *progress*. Through the linearity of temporality, Amira is defined through ethnic and religious dimensions *like it was in the past, in old times*, creating disordered and unpredictable subjectivities (Grosz 2010). The notion of linear temporality has had an enormous influence in creating the idea of the Other by reproducing essentialisations of traditional gender and ethnic performativity entangled to fixed definitions of geographies and cultures *as uncivilised and primitive*, haunted by a fixed belonging to times and spaces *of the past*. Hauntology is enacted when notions of past and present collide, producing disturbing and struggling subjectivities as if they were static. Amira's scarf enacts discursive material entanglements of difference compared to *normal* academics. The scarf symbolises religious and ethnic belonging to places linked to the past – a ghost from the past still present in the present (Barad 2017b). The situatedness of time refers to

sociohistorical, geographical, and cultural entanglements within which subjectivities are negotiated and contested (Mignolo 2009), reproducing Othering in institutions of HE. I wonder: is it possible to think of the past in another way? Can we be delighted with unpredictable and singular academics without fixing them to hauntological belongings to old times?

## 6. Beyond linear temporality

Displacing humans as principal grounds of knowledge, as Barad (2007) states, gives space to disclose the agency of non-human and more-than-human matter. This study illustrates forces of linear temporality operating through objects, spaces, and bodies in academic phenomena, reproducing disembodiment and fixity through hauntological ghosts from the past. Through the discursive materiality of a body of colour, foreign accent, old-fashioned bodily adornments, and a scarf through one another, analysis foregrounds how matter comes to matter in educational settings (Taylor 2013), bringing to light entanglements of racialisation, patriarchy, and ideals of progress. Following the line of new material feminism and decolonial theory, I show how people with positions in HE institutions shape and position human subjectivities through unconscious normative assumptions of who can be *a real academic*.

It is argued that neoliberal values of competition, comparison, and quantifiable outcomes have turned many universities around the world into businesses characterised by profit, individualism, and the pursuit of effectiveness and innovation (Zembylas 2018). These prototypical neoliberal characteristics are entangled with idealisations of the future as progress, where the creation of new knowledge, concepts, and theories are the main pursuits for academics – as entrepreneurship and creativity are important characteristics of *real academics*. In this context, an important dimension of futurity is entangled with discourses of development and evolution. The dichotomy of future-as-progress and past-as-regression implies perceiving the past as old and left behind. The future, then, is viewed as the evolution of past and present, achieving progress, development, and evolution. Accomplishments of future-as-progress encompass then-previous experiences as past, left behind, old, and thus, not important for the future. In this understanding of linear temporality, visions of the future are linked to discursive material performativities of linear successions from a given past, a static present, and a future seen as progress. The faith in progress as creating a better future is then strongly influenced by discourses of evolution and development in linear temporality, constructing a vision of *a real academic* rooted in discourses of progress as efficient and innovative.

In this context, I propose what Mignolo (2009) suggests as *a delinking* of linear temporality from ideals of progress – an alternative way to experience time outside of the unilateral emphasis of futurity entangled with discourses of progress, evolution, and development. As Barad (2019) already pointed out, time can also be experienced as open and scattered in multiple directions. Exploring time in a different way allows non-linear and non-binary temporalities to enjoy the same legitimacy as Western linear temporality. This encourages us, as Taylor (2013) argues, to view education in terms of openness, flows, and multiplicities, thus expanding our understanding of humanity in educational phenomena.

Phenomena of foreign women academics are complex, multifaceted, and open-ended. Participants articulate their simultaneous immersion in temporal spaces of both here and there, illustrating an ability to see the world from different angles and parallel worldviews. Isabel, a non-Western academic, states:

*The advantage of having several cultures is that you have different views of things. We know, for example, that things can work in other ways, that challenges can be solved with other approaches and still be good and right. I feel lucky because I can see the world from different perspectives and think up new and creative solutions to challenges. I like being incorporated into several cultural realities, having the capacity to think new, different, and 'out of the box'.*

In the last sentence of this cut, Isabel describes her immersion in both the past and present simultaneously, experiencing time *as broken apart, scattered in multiple temporal directions, where each moment is an infinite multiplicity where other moments and past moments are here-now* (Barad 2019, 525). Experiencing the thick-now of the present (Barad 2017b) as moving in time and flowing back and forth illustrates that futurity is not attached to present or past as linear sequences. In this cut, I glimpse hope in the complexity that emerges when futurity is considered through dimensions of openness without attachments to preconceived ideals of progress, linear evolution, and development. Isabel expresses a temporal subjectivity as open-ended, an open rhizome, resonating with concepts of uncertain newness and becoming – not as phases of development or evolution from lowest to highest in linear sequences. Isabel illustrates an awareness of temporality where the new and old coexist – a scattered and open-ended sense of temporality that, according to Barad (2017a), opens possibilities for understanding how past and present are inseparable from one another, illustrating the inseparability of discursive materiality. Performing time according to the unpredictability of the future implies what Isabel expresses as openness to becoming something else – something that we do not know, *to think new, different, and 'out of the box'* – offering multiple understandings of future as unpredictable, not as progress. Barad (2019) states that we can be both in the past and the present at the same time. As Barad (2017b, 25) states: *The time of now is not an infinitely thin slice of time called the present moment, but rather a thick-now that is a crystallization of the past diffracted through the present.* Isabel articulates satisfaction from immersion into both her past and present, not just emphasising future as progress but recognising how the past influences her present and future in positive ways – good and positive hauntings that bridge subjects entangled to the past, present, and an unpredictable future. Barad's (2017a) assertion that *hauntings are embodied practices of re-membering, and re-membering is a bodily activity of re-turning*, describes the situatedness of time and the dispersion of self where space, time, and bodies coexist in past-present-future, thereby deconstructing time as a linear succession of moments (84).

As Mignolo (2011) proposes, delinking hegemonic assumptions consists of disrupting colonial definitions of humanity, arguing for pluriversalism instead of universalism of temporality as linear. Mignolo (2018) presents a vision of what he calls *epistemic reconstitution, which requires two steps: recognising and recovering non-Western ways of living and knowing, and actively delinking from Western and modern/colonial epistemologies* (191). He stresses the existence of people around the world who have access to different ways of knowing and living – as non-Western and non-colonial knowledges *re-surg-ing*

and *re-emerging*. As this study shows, foreign women academics live in the hauntological betweenness of temporalities, illustrating advantages and disadvantages of their intertwined gendered and racialised positions in academia.

## 7. Hauntings of gender and racialisation in Norwegian academia

I have only been able to make a few agential cuts of complex entangled discursive material realities. Agential cuts visualise how faculty members routinely and robotically rely on unconscious belief systems as they indoctrinate one another into normative academic performativity. Foreign women academics are unable to become *real academics* due to hauntings of colonial and gendered discursive materiality engendered in patriarchal and national belongings out there, not belonging here (Mignolo 2009). The homogeneity and universalism of time as linear undermines questions of who is responsible for promoting diversity in academia, focusing on issues of development and progress, distracting attention from the existence of Othering in HE. Hauntology addresses the ghosts of racism (Zembylas, Bozalek, and Motala 2021), and patriarchal power brought forth by the presence of foreign women in spaces of academia.

As this study illustrates, when time and space are imagined as fixed, sequential, and linear, foreign academic women are perceived as fixed, without movement. Movement and flow are removed from them, becoming ghosts of static categories, lacking the possibility to define themselves as creative, multifaceted, and moving subjects. As Zembylas, Bozalek, and Motala (2021) state, unveiling the ghosts of the past is a form of taking responsibility for the living presence of racialised and patriarchal entanglements in contexts of higher education.

This study attempts to illustrate the situated phenomena of foreign women academics from within, immersed in academia as the bastion of knowledge. As analysis illustrates, colonial and patriarchal entanglements are not restricted to women of colour in academia but to the extent that women are seen as *foreigners*, outsiders, and space invaders (Puwar 2004), regardless of their skin colour. Gender and foreignness reinforce each other as hauntological ghosts – as cultural archives from the past (Wekker 2016), allowing continuous processes of splitting and differentiation (Geerts and Van der Tuin 2013) due to naturalised divisions between matter and discourse.

This study deconstructs dominant linear temporality by foregrounding the situatedness and relatedness of embodied subjectivities, giving attention to material, non-human, and more-than-human forces involved in entanglements of power and intersectional differences made invisible by modernity and coloniality (Lugones 2010; Zembylas 2018). According to Benjamin (in Barad 2017b), crucial to the pursuit of justice is the disruption of the temporality of progress – the continuous flow of time that leaves the past behind while moving toward the future. Barad (2017a) argues that there is no single road per se to human improvement. There are many paths, each situated in the actual places where subjectivity unfolds (60). To genuinely include diversity in the world of academia, we need to acknowledge matter as a doer and disrupt the very notion of time as progression (Barad 2017b). Transcending dichotomies and binaries of linearity of time and recognising the thick now-present as unpredictable, agentic, and situated, opens a space for what Lenz Taguchi and Palmer (2013) call a more *livable academia*.

## Notes

1. To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate identities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence (Barad 2007 p. ix, preface).
2. Gendered and racialisation processes refers to ongoing discursive material (re)productions of categorization and marginalization based on racial subjectivities as ongoing, fluid processes (Lugones 2010).
3. Phenomena is a Baradian concept comprising the inseparability of matter and discursive agencies as complex entangled web (Barad 2007, 388).

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