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INTERGENERATIONAL GEOGRAPHIES OF RACE AND GENDER: TRACING
THE CONFLUENCE OF AFRO-CARIBBEAN AND FEMINIST THOUGHT

BEYOND THE WORD OF MAN

by

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A dissertation submitted to the

Graduate School-New Brunswick

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Women's and Gender Studies

Written under the direction of

Jasbir K. Puar

And approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

October 2015

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Intergenerational Geographies of Race and Gender: Tracing the Confluence of Afro-Caribbean and Feminist Thought Beyond the Word of Man

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“Intergenerational Geographies of Race and Gender: Tracing the Confluence of Afro-Caribbean and Feminist Thought Beyond the Word of Man,” proposes a theory of humanism that grapples with contemporary patriarchy, racism, and colonialism. First, following the work of Sylvia Wynter and Frantz Fanon, it develops methodological tools for mapping experiments in collective life currently unintelligible to conventional understandings of the human. Second, it argues that Caribbean philosophy answers Wynter’s challenge to think the human in its multiplicity, as an expression of our shared and interdependent lives still singular and differential. This stems from the Caribbean’s history as a site of both violence and creolization, often mobilized around the distinction between different kinds of humanity and between humans and nonhumans. Finally, the dissertation brings this conceptual apparatus to bear on a site of analysis where the question of who counts symbolically is a matter of life and death and the environment impinges on the supposed sovereignty of the human: New Orleans before and after Hurricane Katrina.

This interdisciplinary work reconceives the relationship between feminist theory and Afro-Caribbean philosophy—often seen as antagonistic based on the question of whether a race or gender analysis should be “primary”—by juxtaposing those fields with

various strains of new materialism and affect theory particularly inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Before an “ontological turn,” Caribbean and feminist thought articulated political-ecological readings of how bodies, landscapes and violence interpenetrate to produce hierarchies of the human. Thus, this dissertation represents not only a diagnostic tool for understanding how power is organized at a global level but also a repository of alternative political imaginaries where local practices index an outside to the current hegemony of a narrow Eurocentric, White Man.

The result is a dynamic spatio-temporal model of race, gender, and economics Wynter calls “genre studies,” the study of human kinds, that is multi-scalar and pluri-conceptual, up to the task of mapping how neoliberal capitalism globally spaces partial incorporation and fungibilization. Genre studies both examines how specific descriptive statements of Man regenerate and how we struggle intergenerationally for a world otherwise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a dissertation dedicated to feminism as an intergenerational ethics, or a set of obligations stretching back to the ancestors and forward to worlds unknown, makes an acknowledgements section both necessary and impossible. I owe this work and this life to so many and hope to do justice to their generosity and struggle.

The sustaining friendship of Stephen Seely and Carolina Alonso Bejarano made graduate school possible and even wonderful. Your brilliance marks this work in countless ways. More importantly, I met you in 2010 as a child and you both, with endless patience and incredible spirit, taught me what it could mean to teach and to talk and to commit. It is the life we have shared and will continue to share that makes these little moments of marking time so important.

I am grateful to my committee members for their generosity and encouragement. Thanks to Jasbir Puar for bringing me to Rutgers, for her mentorship, and for her example doing daring work not beholden to disciplinary regeneration. Drucilla Cornell showed me the spirit of intergenerational feminism and the force of ethical commitment; I am forever honored we are family. This dissertation is unimaginable without Yolanda Martinez-San Miguel who taught me that New Orleans is part of the Caribbean and archipelagically remapped so many ideas. Thanks to Nelson Maldonado-Torres for a combative methodology and a profound model for shifting the geography of reason. My outside reader, Patricia T. Clough, exemplifies how attention to method and form can open a closed system to a world otherwise. Any merit in the following flows from those teachers.

Many other teachers contributed greatly as well, willing to engage in constant debate and discussion under the name of friendship: Yarimar Bonilla, Ed Cohen, Nadine Ehlers, Marisa Fuentes, Mary Gossy, Shiloh Krupar, and Dana Luciano. I will miss commutes and rooftops with Kyla Schuller where so many inklings became arguments. Thanks to Yana van der Meulen Rodgers and Abena Busia for support and leadership.

My endless gratitude to the community of friends and interlocutors at Rutgers who have shared their work and thoughts with me over the last few years. From Women's and Gender Studies, I am daily thankful for Nafisa Tanjeem, Rosemary Ndubizu, Sara Perryman, Snezana Otasevic, Abraham Weil, Anel Mendez Velasquez, Jenna Brager, Lindsey Whitmore, Stina Soderling and Louise Tam. Special thanks to Miriam Tola for her patience and humor during many shared car rides. I learned more about political theory and ecology waiting in traffic than I had in a decade of classes. Jasmin Young showed me the way to finishing my dissertation and doing serious scholarly work meant to change the world. I hope to emulate her ability to balance such dedication with a joyful life surrounded by friends and family.

The staff of the Women's and Gender Studies Department is the condition of possibility for all of this work and joy. Joanne Givand's (almost) endless patience with me during a year as graduate assistant and Monique Gregory's constant problem solving taught me irreplaceable lessons about institution building and the need to fight for feminism within the university. I cannot even begin to thank Suzy Kiefer enough. Suzy, you are a dear friend and an incisive therapist. I feel assured about the future of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers and the welfare of its students as long as you are there.

My debate family guided me to a future for ideas with agonism and conviviality: Eric Emerson, Claire McKinney, Nick Miller, Daniel Sharp, Michael Antonucci, Jishnu Muha-Gujamdar, Jonathan Gingerich, Ben Crossan, J.V. Reed, Nick Fiori, Teddy Albinia, Cameron O'Bannon and countless others. Sincere appreciation to Paul Milani for always reminding me that teaching is my path. Deep thanks to Keith Hoffman for always reminding me that teaching is a beautiful vocation. And to Tedd and Adam, my friends who showed me it could all be done with a good sense of humor.

I have always found it odd in acknowledgements that people foreground academic life and institutional obligations before mentioning the inextricably intertwined spirits that make not just writing but all of life possible. Now, faced with actually writing these, it feels it's the only way, to slowly unburden the countless debts accrued on the way to finally saying: all of *this* is theirs. Hence, some institutional thanks first: my deep gratitude to the Center for Cultural Analysis at Rutgers, especially Curtis Dunn and the 2013-2014 seminar leaders Jorge Marcone and Colin Jager, for a transformative year. Research funding from the Institut Français d'Amérique at the University of North Carolina enabled a semester of research in Paris. The Graduate School-New Brunswick also provided generous travel and research grants, opportunities I hope extend to the next generation of Rutgers students. Thanks as well to Alexandria Bachmann at the Graduate School for fixing everything always. Finally, parts of Chapter 3 and 4 were previously published in *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge* in 2012 (24), *Small Axe* in 2013 (42.3) and *The Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* in 2014 (22.1).

For once, I will keep this part brief as I have already made it a life's work to thank the following people (and their advice rather often is to get on with it already). Pep,

nothing in my world is possible without you. I learned that a truly ethical generosity is just on the horizon. I learned just from watching you and from seeing so many reiterate just how much you care. Elani, whether you meant to or not, you raised a Texas feminist (I'm pretty sure you meant to). I am forever grateful you shared your life and family with us. Abby and Harry: we always have and always will have each other. I'm in awe of your spirit and cannot wait to all live on the same block. Emily, where did you come from? Your love animates every thought here that another world is possible. And to Carol, who somehow always has the strength to show us that world of unconditional love.

Finally, this work is dedicated to Lynn Hantel. Thank you for never leaving my side all these years, for finding ways to space yourself out in the earth and express your love through a multiplicity of faces. It is for her, my mother.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract
ii-iii

Acknowledgements
iv-vii

Introduction: Against Autopsies: On Symbolic Codes of Life and Death
1-39

Chapter 1: Sociogenesis of Liminal Subjects: The Body, Affect, and Truth Beyond
40-107

Chapter 2: From Liminality to Demonic Ground: Wynter, Foucault, and The History of
Sexuality Along the Color Line
108-162

Chapter 3: Genre Studies Between Regeneration and Intergeneration: On Creolization,
Sexual Difference, and The Pieza Framework
163-226

Chapter 4: Glissant's Haunted Materialism: The Political Ecology of Genre Studies and
the Political Economy of Scholarly Influence
227-287

Epilogue: Second-Lining the Anthropocene
288-296

Bibliography
297-311

LIST OF INTERLUDES

George Bush doesn't care/about Black people
77-86

American Dream (Team)
105-107

New Orleans Third Ward World
144-152

8/31 After 9/11
153-162

Ol' Man River's Rhizomes
257-260

Swampton
282-287

Jump
293-296

Introduction

Against Autopsies: On Symbolic Codes of Life and Death

I. Two Eulogies for New Orleans: On Reimagining Human Life

On September 15, 2005, George W. Bush read a eulogy for a certain decayed and decrepit body-city that had finally flatlined thanks to a “cruel and wasteful storm.”¹ New Orleans had tragically passed due to natural causes it seemed, compounded by its own bad habits. Evoking his version of a local tradition, however, Bush promised the coming of new life, a healthy body-city in that very same space:

In this place, there is a custom for the funerals of jazz musicians. The funeral procession parades slowly through the streets, followed by a band playing a mournful dirge as it moves to the cemetery. Once the casket has been laid in place, the band breaks into joyful ‘second line’—symbolizing the triumph of the spirit over death. Tonight the Gulf Coast is still coming through the dirge—yet we will live to see the second line. Thank you and God Bless America.²

From the local tragedy to the national spirit, what symbolic and material terms of life and death do Bush and his administration imagine for New Orleans? The linear and monumental narrative of life overcoming death, it became clear, would work like a classic American bootstraps tale: an economic tale, that is to say, of a revitalized New Orleans free from the visible scars of poverty, a body-city cleaned up of malignancies and made safe for the ultimate giver of life in the American context. Not the ethereal spirit but the quantifiable balance of (private) development.

On the other hand, for local publisher and organizer Abram Himmelstein, the relationship of life and death in New Orleans entails more brevity and complexity. “New

¹ George W. Bush, Remarks on Katrina as prepared for delivery, available at <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2005/09/15/1870/katrina-speech-text/>

² George W. Bush, Remarks on Katrina as prepared for delivery, available at <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2005/09/15/1870/katrina-speech-text/>

Orleans is dead! Long live New Orleans!”³ Far from the narrative of simple overcoming, Himelstein embeds death in life, the resources for a shared future found in present hauntings taken up and embodied by experimental collectives in the here and now. He plays, moreover, on the fantastical sovereignty of the king’s body, bringing into sharp relief the tragicomedy of Bush’s speech from Jackson Square where the “decider” decried a weather event and materialist history all at once. Himelstein located New Orleans in the temporal register of survival and the spatial register of liminality, neither dead nor alive according to the straightforward code of what counts as the *good life* in the contemporary United States of America.

So is New Orleans dead? Which New Orleans and which death? Far from self-evident, the disjuncture between these two eulogies speaks to what philosopher Sylvia Wynter calls the “governing codes of symbolic life/death” under the Western order of Man.⁴ Himelstein and Bush articulate their imaginings of New Orleans’ past and future through distinct political grammars of what counts as human, in the full sense of a human *being* carrying ethical weight. For Wynter, this question of the human expressed through the specificity of post-Katrina New Orleans extends to the entire political economy of racial-sexual violence under contemporary colonial capitalism. Thus, how and what we struggle for in New Orleans tells us something about the future of *humans* globally as they live in and through specific landscapes. On the one hand is Bush’s language of what Wynter calls Man, a specific modality of hegemonically bourgeois-white-male life

³ Himelstein, quoted in Joel Dinerstein, “Second Lining Post-Katrina: Learning Community from the Prince of Wales Social Aid and Pleasure Club,” *American Quarterly* 61.3 (September 2009): 626.

⁴ Sylvia Wynter, “Unparalleled Catastrophe for our Species?: Or to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations.” Interview with Katherine McKittrick. In *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*. Ed. Katherine McKittrick. (Durham, Duke UP: 2015), 37.

“overrepresented” as the generic referent for all humanity; on the other, the possibility of an insurrection at the level of the human itself, claiming a new humanism that does not recapitulate a symbolic life narrowly confined to material accumulation, environmental degradation, and the denial of *humans*’ affirmative multiplicity.

Thus, the following dissertation is, in the first instance, a response to Hurricane Katrina and the theoretical and political challenges posed by its effects on the urban geography of New Orleans and its residents. Particularly at issue are the qualitative spatio-temporal models in use to map how “liminal subjects” survive in landscapes marked by the force of sovereign violence and the unequal distribution of ecological destruction that simultaneously reveals the limits of sovereign control, a quandary that has recently culminated in the discursive formation of the “anthropocene” and the attendant fear of apocalyptic climate change.⁵ A deep engagement with the work of Sylvia Wynter provides the most compelling initial answer to the questions posed by so-called “natural disaster” zones where who counts symbolically is a matter of life and death and the environment impinges on the demarcations of human sovereignty. Within her work, Wynter utilizes a profound set of methodological tools at the threshold of “material-semiotic”⁶ systems to effectively describe how gender, race and class become inextricably intertwined in and through multi-scalar geographies. She threads, in other words, recent trends in the fields of feminist theory loosely labeled “new materialism” or

⁵ The cultural politics of the “anthropocene,” referring to humanity as no longer merely a biological agent but a geological agent affecting earth at a systems level, is taken up in the epilogue. The term as deployed here refers to the general usage, initially coined by Crutzen and Stoermer. Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, “The Anthropocene,” *IGBP [International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme] Newsletter* 41 (2000): 17. See also Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Winter 2009): 197-222.

⁶ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and The Privilege of Partial Perspective,” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 183-200.

“the ontological turn” to the revolutionary humanism of Afro-Caribbean thought. In so doing, Wynter makes the ethico-political stakes of descriptive projects clear: she not only does justice to both the materiality of suffering like that experienced in New Orleans and the materiality of the non-human world, but actually renders the account of either one inextricable from the other.

Beginning with Wynter, moreover, provides a useful point of departure for considering feminist theory and Afro-Caribbean thought more broadly, both as they intersect and diverge on questions of embodiment, futurity, and political transformation. As the preceding makes clear, feminist new materialism has much to learn from Afro-Caribbean interventions, particularly as it begins to take on the political-ecological challenge of planetary destruction. Thinkers from the Global South have continually developed survival tactics in the face of dangerous interpenetrations of colonial power, economic exploitation, and environmental degradation, conditions faced by much of the world since at least the fifteenth-century, and generated new ways of making livable worlds. Situating these questions in Afro-Caribbean thought, then, enriches feminist theory through not only ecological readings of how bodies, landscapes, and violence become co-constituted, but also a repository of alternative political imaginaries where local practices index an outside to the current hegemony of a narrow, Eurocentric, White Man.

Contemporary feminist theory, in turn, has much to offer an analysis of Sylvia Wynter’s work, yet feminist debates over nature and culture, intersectionality, and sexual difference are curiously elided in the enthusiastic uptake of her concepts. A key issue in understanding the event of Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans concerns generationality,

both in terms of how landscapes become infused with historical memory and how our ethical concerns stretch back and forth (especially as we work within the temporal scales of the planet's biosphere). I propose a constellation of contemporary feminist thought that has gone the farthest in mapping landscapes of memories, the constitution of bodies as the point at which a scarred present might become otherwise, and advancing a notion of intergenerational ethics. Thus, as this dissertation turns to the specificity of both formal and informal memorial practices around New Orleans and the political life of precarity, Wynter's humanism is routed through feminist analyses of sentiment and generational embodiment. This intervention is not intended as a corrective, however. The immanent force of feminist ethics persists, sometimes unarticulated, through Wynter's work where something attuned to (but not quite the same as) sexual difference animates her theoretical moves. This force remains ignored by many of her interlocutors who paint an oppositional relationship in a manner that limits not only a historical account of her intellectual trajectory and its deep ties to feminist concerns but also the power of her intervention which requires, I argue, a broadened concept of gender.

Taken together then, to reimagine life from the landscape of post-Katrina New Orleans means fundamentally rethinking the human, how that category is symbolically and materially enacted through and against particular bodies and what struggling for a new humanism means for engaging a haunted earth that precedes and exceeds us. "New Orleans is dead! Long live New Orleans!"

II. Social Construction versus New Materialism at the Intersection of Race and Gender

The preceding sketch of Wynter's argument places her uneasily in three different overlapping fields of critique and inquiry: (1) the dissolution of the human in new materialism, particularly the brands inspired by Deleuze and Guattari on the one hand and so-called "object oriented ontology" on the other; (2) critical race theory and postcolonial debates over embodiment and representation; (3) feminist approaches to sexual difference along with other demarcations of difference. Rather than provide a blueprint of those three fields, this section introduces the three problems posed by Wynter's account of the overrepresentation of Man, articulating each problem through the conceptual resources provided by the three fields with a special focus on their methodological and empirical impasses and suggestions for how Wynter might resolve it.

First, how does "genre" organize race, class, and gender? Does it go beyond a depth-model of race as foundation or an ordering principle of race? What other descriptions of "intersection" or "assemblage" does Wynter propose? Second, upon accounting for the simultaneously sexed, raced, and classed body, how is that (human) body both creator of such representational systems and created by such representational systems? Given Wynter's insistence on the empirical power of symbols, or the interfacing of rhetorical and biological forces, what is the relationship between representation and materiality? Third, if the human for Wynter is simultaneously biological and meta-biological then, how are humans ecologically embedded in specific landscapes? Does she provide a non-anthropocentric account of the relationship between humans and its non-human others or separate them entirely? This dissertation attempts to answer these three questions separately and ultimately together, arguing that answers point to a world beyond Man.

a. Intersectionality

In “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” Audre Lorde insisted on the need for feminist inquiry that could both diagnose the facile oppositions framing human difference and glean the affirmation of difference as a way of life. Lorde, a powerful voice amongst a host of other theorists addressing this struggle, argued that:

...we have all been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think is subordinate. But we have no patterns for relating across our human differences as equals. As a result, those differences have been misnamed and misused in the service of separation and confusion.⁷

The contemporary field of women’s studies, and feminist theory especially, has developed extensively, and even primarily, in response to this call from Lorde. How does power organize the multiplicity of human differences and how might rethinking or rearticulating those arrangements suggest emancipatory possibilities? Angela Davis, for instance, interrogates the racializing effects of a narrow understanding of feminism through the life of bourgeois white women, encapsulated by the “first” and “second” wave periodization trope that so often defines the field of Women’s Studies. In an brilliant historicization of the “birth” of feminism in the post-abolitionist suffrage movement, she argues the narrow focus on women’s liberation (or in Wynter’s terms, a struggle *within* the episteme of Man) relied upon and reified racial violence. Davis looks at the compromises made by famous Suffragists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who came to see the fight for enfranchisement as a zero-sum game with the movement for black rights. Having to appeal to middle and upper class Southern

⁷ Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984), 115.

women, they narrowly tailored their positions to extending white privilege. As Davis compellingly shows, many suffragists tapped into racialized discourses of the day, particularly the burgeoning eugenics movement, to not only gain powerful allies but also to add urgency to their calls (giving white women the vote became an antidote to black political power). Working class women also found themselves excluded from this coalition based on political equality, first because their concerns about economic equality were not legible and secondly because modes of proving one's civic rationality embraced by mainstream suffragists (namely literacy tests) tended to disqualify them. And so, Davis concludes, "Not an ounce of sisterly solidarity could be detected here, and there was not a word about the defeat of male supremacy...It was not women's rights or women's political equality but, rather, the reigning racial superiority of white people which had to be preserved at all cost."⁸

This mode of inquiry exemplified by Lorde and Davis became famously systematized in the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, who proposed "intersectionality" as a model of multiple differences in two groundbreaking articles.⁹ Crenshaw's methodological and empirical approach is now widely cited as the standard bearer for not only the field of Women's and Gender Studies and feminist theory more broadly, but for any field engaged in the theorization of social difference.¹⁰ In brief, the goal in each essay is to articulate a theory of difference based on her pre-theoretical resource, black

⁸ Angela Davis, "Woman Suffrage at the Turn of the Century: The Rising Influence of Racism," *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 126.

⁹ Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"; "That other one"

¹⁰ In a review of the field, Leslie McCall argues, "[F]eminists are perhaps alone in the academy to the extent which they have embraced intersectionality—the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations—as itself a central category of analysis. One could even say that intersectionality is the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far." McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," *Signs* 30.3 (2005): 1771.

women's lived experience of both racism and sexism, which is up to the task of forging an identity politics. Notably, Crenshaw writes in the context of legal redress and so the concept of identity politics is relevant, in part, for how it resists the assimilationist universalism of liberal tolerance by insisting on irreducible particularity. That insistence can only be politically effective, she contends, if it is sensitive to the heterogeneous multiplicity of group identification.

In an especially elegant analysis, Crenshaw considers the obscenity trial of the rap group 2LiveCrew who used sexually explicit and often violent lyrics. Both critics and defenders of the group were united by their exclusion of black women. The critics generally focused on the lyrical vitriol directed against women and the glorification of sexual violence. Crenshaw brings into relief how this concern for women really meant a concern for white women in the face of sexualized black males. The fact that the lyrics were particularly violent towards black women did not register as locating a specific intersection of racism and sexism. Defenders pointed to the continuities of the music with other parodic and hyperbolic music forms in black culture or emphasized how social resistance plays out in hip-hop. Again, a masculinist anti-racist politics prevails in which internal iterations of patriarchy are secondary concerns. A social analysis focused on attacking hierarchy *within* one axis of difference reified oppression along another axis of difference; in each case, black women as fully constituted subjects are excluded from legal redress and political identification.¹¹

As the preceding example suggests, much intersectional analysis—relying on two constituted axes meeting at the point of a particular legal or political claim—works by

¹¹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1993): 1283-1295

freezing particular aspects of identity to attend to the temporary volatility of the other axis in that moment. The identity of “black woman” at the intersection becomes “black” *and* “woman,” the “and” introducing a simultaneous conjunction and disjunction in the socio-political cleaving of multiplicity. As Drucilla Cornell argues about the result of the multiple axis diagram, “The danger of intersectionality is that despite its intent, it still reinscribes the notion that there is a gender that can be separated from how one is racialized, and how one in turn identifies with racialized difference.”¹² The conventional axes of race, class, and gender simply exist as stable and static structures of identification. To continue the spatial metaphor, they may briefly intersect but each street in the grid continues its pre-planned path and remains fundamentally unchanged on its way to the next intersection. Any single axis in this model, while problematic as a unit of analysis from the perspective of legal redress and political organizing, is epistemologically and representationally sufficient.

Along with the limit of spatial metaphor, Jasbir Puar adds that this gridding introduces a temporal fix through its reification of the synchronic. “[I]ntersectionality and its underpinnings—an unrelenting epistemological will to truth—presupposes identity and thus disavows *futurity*, or, perhaps more accurately, prematurely anticipates and thus fixes a permanence to forever.”¹³ It circumscribes identity, in other words, through a series of pre-given and recognizable categories that are not only dehistoricized from their uneven co-constitution but closed off in turn from the possibility of a radical shift. Taken together, Puar and Cornell see a post-hoc unification in intersectional analysis where the (ongoing) multiplicity of bodies, movements, and forces caught together temporarily in

¹² Drucilla Cornell, “Revisiting Beyond Accommodation after Twenty Years,” *feminists@law* 1.1 (2011): <http://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/feministsatlaw/article/view/13/56>

¹³ Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages* (Durham: Duke UP, 2007), 216. Emphasis added.

an event of difference are tidied up by enunciation in the future perfect: “race” and “gender” always will have been. The subsequent danger is that feminist theorizing becomes nothing more than the task of locating subjects on a map. Neither Puar nor Cornell advocates simply leaving intersectionality in the conceptual dustbin in favor of a shiny new methodological toy. Indeed, the point is the opposite in some ways as resisting this reduction of intersectionality to “x marks the spot” entails tracing the palimpsests, frayed edges, and uneven production of cartographies of difference and following the partial and unpredictable trajectories of various bodies along their seams and fissures. The very promise of political redress that undergirds much of intersectional thought must be considered a crucial factor in the retroactive projection of the knowable subject of racial and sexual difference.

In the wake of the profound work of intersectional feminism, the challenge then is two-fold: at the descriptive register, how to map the dynamic co-constitution of socio-political categories like “race” or “gender” over time and their emergence and solidification at specific historical moments; at the ethical register, how does the preceding description point to a constitutive outside to the contemporary conditions circumscribing the life and meaning of “race” and “gender”? In other words, what is beyond the colonial, racialized, sexualized maps that are bequeathed to us and that claim to exhaust the knowable world even as the experiences and existences of alternative imaginaries trace something other? In a historical context, Anne McClintock argues, “[T]he map is also a technology of possession... Yet the edges and blank spaces of colonial maps are typically marked with vivid reminders of the failure of knowledge and hence the tenuousness of possession... The map is a liminal thing, associated with

threshold and marginal zones, burdened with dangerous powers.”¹⁴ It is here that the work of Sylvia Wynter becomes profoundly useful to reinvigorate the heavily institutionalized discourse of intersectionality that helpfully narrates particular events of difference even as it sometimes defers or forecloses the ethical question of imagining the world-otherwise.

Wynter, following the work of Asmarom Legesse, argues that a transformative philosophy of difference must begin from the embodied perspective of “liminal subjects,” those that trace the outside of a particular descriptive statement of the human by their very existence and paradoxical survival under conditions of systemic negation or assimilation.¹⁵ The category of the liminal subject as the simultaneous truth and negation of contemporary conditions of symbolic life meets the two challenges detailed above, I argue in the next chapter, by renaming the socio-political processes of racialization and gender identification as dynamic flows within the confluence of the overrepresentation of Man, powerful enough to disrupt the unstable auto-poiesis of Man2.

b. The Ontological Status of Race

As chapter one argues, Wynter bases her diagnosis for the overrepresentation of Man on a specific reading of Frantz Fanon’s work in *Black Skin, White Masks*, particularly the famous train car scene in which Fanon finds himself confronted by a Parisian child exclaiming, “Look! A nigger!”¹⁶ She turns to Fanon specifically to move

¹⁴ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 28.

¹⁵ See chapter 1 for a discussion of the liminal; see also Sylvia Wynter, “On Disenchanting Discourse: ‘Minority’ Literary Criticism and Beyond,” *Cultural Critique*, 7 (Fall 1987): 237-238.

¹⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 109. Cited as *BSWM* from here. Note that future quotations of *Black Skin, White Masks* refer to the Markmann translation rather than the newer edition by Philcox. While I have

diagonally out of a polarized debate on the question of the ontological status of race and an attendant binarization of the terms of “nature” and “culture” in sociopolitical theorizing. Wynter helpfully shifts the terms of the debate from an abstract notion of ‘ontology’ to ‘ontologism,’ a specific capacity of human bodies that goes beyond mere physicalism.¹⁷ Along with describing a representative work from each pole—the school of ‘deontologizing’ race versus ‘reontologizing’ race—and Wynter’s move, the following also suggests that feminist theory makes a distinct contribution to this discussion because of its foundational attention to the stakes of “nature” and “culture” debates and its usefulness for excavating the gender politics subtending racial polarization.

In the introduction to *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures, and the Allure of Race*, Paul Gilroy confidently declares, “The modern times that W.E.B. Du Bois once identified as the century of the color line have now passed.”¹⁸ Gilroy cautions that racial hierarchy remains a political challenge, but that escaping the capture of racism requires rejecting the dated “raciologies” bequeathed to us by Du Bois and others in the theorization of the Color Line. The game has changed, in other words, and theorists and oppressed groups articulating political demands according to the old rules of racial difference are not only failing in their anti-racist mission but risk undermining the (admittedly utopian) potential of democratic cosmopolitanism.

occasionally corrected infelicities in the Markmann translation, overall I agree with those critics who find the earlier translation, even in its less cleaned up state, more evocative of the force of Fanon’s work. On this discussion, see Singh 2010 and Gibson 2003 (227, n10).

¹⁷ ‘Genital Mutilation’ or ‘Symbolic Birth’: Female Circumcision, Lost Origins and the Aiculturalism of Feminist / Western Thought.” *Case Western Reserve Law Review* 47.2 (1997): 501-552. Online.

¹⁸ Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Race, Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (London: Penguin, 2000): 1.

The need to “de-ontologize race,” as he puts it, comes from the transformation of the visual-epidermal regime of racialization to a medicalized bio-technological regime of corporeality. “The old, modern representational economies that reproduced 'race' subdermally and epidermally are today being transformed on one side by the scientific and technological changes that have followed the revolution in molecular biology, and on the other by a similarly profound transformation in the ways that bodies are imaged.”¹⁹ Indeed, in an age of omnipresent technological mediation, the visual regime of racial signs on which Du Bois and his twentieth-century interlocutors based their politics turns out to be a *trompe l’oeil*: “Screens rather than lenses now mediate the pursuit of bodily truths. This is a potent sign that 'race' should be approached as an afterimage—a lingering effect of looking too casually into the damaging glare emanating from colonial conflicts at home and abroad.”²⁰ Having detected the illusion, Gilroy finally sees one of his primary political challenges as convincing the rapt crowd of racial believers that their senses deceive them and that “there is something worthwhile to be gained from the deliberate renunciation of race.”²¹ He is explicitly vanguardist in this moment, hoping a concerted theoretical effort might lead people away from the bright seductions of racial thinking toward the democratic, humanist cosmopolitanism waiting around the corner. Race presents an epistemological problem (a mistake), in other words, that can and must be conceptually deconstructed as not only a structure of domination but also a structure of identification. We must *think*, as Gilroy titles his follow-up work, against race.²²

¹⁹ Gilroy, *Between Camps*, 43.

²⁰ Ibid, 37.

²¹ Ibid, 12.

²² Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2002).

At the other pole, Arun Saldanha proposes “re-ontologizing” race, affirming racialized bodies (which is to say, all bodies) as sites of creative liberation. Based on a highly original reading of the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Saldanha rejects Gilroy’s epistemological view of racialization. Instead, race is a “real process” comprising arrangements of “bodies and physical events”; as a result, “though contingent, race cannot be transcended, only understood and rearranged.”²³ The political upshot of this approach is two-fold. First, it means the way out of racial domination is an immanent line of flight within Gilroy’s feared raciologies: proliferate race, play with race as a material event rather than trying to “abolish or deny race” as the social constructionists do.²⁴ “Race need not be about order and oppression, it can be wild, far-from-equilibrium, liberatory.”²⁵ And second, for Saldanha, it means we have circumscribed the terms of racial discourse too narrowly vis-à-vis a preconceived notion of the human: ““Humanism and cosmopolitanism are severely limited if the struggle against racism is defined only in human terms. So race should not be abandoned or abolished but proliferated.”²⁶ And so, in his ethnography of the Goa trance scene and its raves, Saldanha maps the *emergence* of race as a kind of material “viscosity,” where certain bodies form dense and sticky connections through all sorts of human and non-human connections to music, environments, drugs, technologies of mobility (like motorcycles) and visibility (like fashion), animals, locations and geographic imaginaries, and so forth. As this non-exhaustive list suggests, race emerges and re-emerges

²³ Saldanha, ““Reontologising race: the machinic geography of phenotype” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24.1 (2006): 9.

²⁴ Saldanha, *Psychedelic White: Goa Trance and the Viscosity of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007): 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 199.

constantly with no beginning or end in the unpredictable and dynamic connections within and between multiple bodies and their socio-environmental surroundings. *Pace* Gilroy, then, Saldanha insists, “It is the *plasticity*, the creative potential of race, that is important, not its rigidity.”²⁷ Thus, the epistemological view of race as socially constructed and, hopefully, socially deconstructed inadequately attends to the materiality of race. Re-ontologising race brings into sharp relief, moreover, the limits of the human subject as the only, or even primary, agent of global politics.

Despite their diametrically opposed positions on the ontological status of race, both Gilroy and Saldanha articulate their intervention through and against the work of Fanon. They find the great Martinican thinker detained by his particular historical moment and, poignantly, captured by the blackness he so ably described. Their parallel critiques of Fanon are striking in their shared premises. Three issues stand out: his outdated conception of the body and its consciousness; his stubborn dualism; his dead-end humanism.

First, they both agree that ongoing technological shifts in our relationship to different bodies, and especially the multi-scalar nature of such interventions, renders much of Fanon’s narrow focus on visuality as the mode of encounter nearly irrelevant. Gilroy, for instance, argues that “nano-politics” brought on by medical imaging, biotechnology and genomics, and the ubiquitous mediation of self and others through the black mirrors of modern telecommunication has succeeded “dermo-politics.”²⁸ Saldanha

²⁷ *Ibid*, 192.

²⁸ “Epidermalization...refers to a historically specific system for making bodies meaningful by endowing them with qualities of ‘color.’ It suggests a perceptual regime in which the radicalized body is bounded and protected by its enclosing skin....This is not the scale of comparative anatomy that arose in moving from natural history to the science of biology. The skin has no

too looks to the “molecularisation” of race, its emergence from the virtual capacities of a body out of dense entanglements not predictable in advance.²⁹ He similarly concludes through the insights of the non-linear causality of complexity theory that Fanon’s “self-other” structure of conceiving embodiment, “a system of exclusion and recognition,” fails to “appreciate the entangled and effervescent nature of both race and racism.”³⁰

Second, they argue the specifically “black-white” nature of Fanon’s argument limits its usefulness and reveals Fanon’s historically bound anti-colonial myopia. Routing our critical approaches to race through Fanon, in other words, leaves us grasping at the fleeting after-image of a colonial and decolonial Manichaeism that no longer exists, if it ever did. Saldanha criticizes the central dyad of Fanon’s thought as almost a reification of white and black as “naturally opposed entities,” agreeing with Gilroy’s dim view of Fanon’s “stark dualistic diagnosis.”³¹ While they each see the breakdown of dualism in the opposite terms of the end of oppressive racial thinking or the proliferation of liberatory racial practices, respectively, Gilroy and Saldanha strike almost the same chord here when they argue that Fanon’s reductionism no longer maps onto the many complex encounters, intermixings, and hybridizations of post-colonial globalization.³²

independent life. It is not a piece or component of the body but its fateful wrapping. Dermo-politics succeeded biopolitics. Both preceded nano-politics.” Gilroy, *Between Camps*, 46.

²⁹ “Similarly, the molecularisation of race would consist in its breaking up into a thousand tiny races. It is from here that cosmopolitanism should start: the pleasure, curiosity, and concern in encountering a multiplicity of corporeal fragments outside of common-sense taxonomies.” Saldanha, “Re-Ontologising Race,” 21

³⁰ Saldanha, *Psychedelic White*, 10.

³¹ Ibid, 194; Gilroy, *Between Camps*, 249.

³² “The virtual structures behind racial formations don’t look like formal logic (a/not-a); they continually differentiate as actual bodies interact and aggregate.” Saldanha, *Psychedelic White*, 196. “the expressive cultures that have grown up in these polyglot urban spaces--transnational and translational vernacular cultures--supply and celebrate a variety of interconnection that not only acknowledges interdependency but, at its insubordinate and carnivalesque best, has been known to project an immediacy, a rebel solidarity, and a fragile, universal humanity powerful enough to make race and ethnicity suddenly meaningless.” Gilroy, *Between Camps*, 249.

Third, the point of differentiation between Saldanha and Gilroy in the preceding example is the question of “universalism” and the human. Gilroy concludes his ode to post-colonial expressive cultures with an invocation of a “fragile, universal humanity” whereas Saldanha concludes by rejecting “a Hegelian sublation into the universal” and Fanon’s faith in escaping blackness through “a color-blind universalism” or “a radical recognition of common species being.”³³ Fanon’s brand of universalism is at issue in both cases, found wanting due to its narrow parochialism for Gilroy or its vacuous largesse for Saldanha. And so, despite their polarized self-positioning, Gilroy and Saldanha end up at the exact same place in relation to Fanon and his decolonial politics with Saldanha advocating an anti-racism that “doesn’t take sides in racial politics at all...but asks what needs to happen for there to be sides at all,” and Gilroy asking anti-racism to move beyond “the Third World initiating a new...humanism” and toward “building upon the narratives and poetics of cultural intermixture already alive inside Europe’s postcolonial popular cultures in order to see how these polar positions have already been rendered redundant.”³⁴

This sketch of two prominent approaches to race, social construction versus ontological materialism, points to a series of impasses, particularly in current understandings of Fanon, that my reinterpretation of Wynter’s work attempts to resolve. She makes Fanon’s notion of “sociogenesis,” a concept I take up in chapter one, central to his description of both racism as structure and racialization as embodied process. Sociogenesis locates the nature-culture interface in which human consciousness comes into being. Human collectivities *become* through symbolic codes of life and death, in

³³ Gilroy, *Between Camps*, 249; Saldanha, *Psychedlic White*, 196, 194.

³⁴ Saldanha, *Psychedlic White*, 200; Gilroy, *Between Camps*, 253.

other words, a process dramatized by Fanon's simultaneous recognition and alienation when confronted by the white child's cry. As a theory of the complex feedback loops between biological systems and symbolic systems, Wynter's extension of sociogenesis dissolves the three preceding challenges to Fanon's thought and points to a diagonal way out of the construction-realism impasse in race theory. The following chapters evidence this move in three ways. First, sociogenesis provides an account of the material embodiment of race that incorporates historical shifts in technology, the compression and elongation of time-space today, and the multi-scalar interventions into life by capital and security apparatuses. Second, a sociogenetic analysis insists on the centrality of blackness in the overrepresentation of Man. Wynter refuses to dissolve the molar categories of racialization through a premature celebration of cultural hybridity, intermixing, or virtual capacities—a key theoretical decision in the midst of the specifically anti-black racism that marks the moment of this writing—at the same time she insists on blackness as a site of liminal possibility that escapes the ascription of “social death” not least of all through transversal and transcultural connections to the multiple modes of embodiment negated by the overrepresentation of Man.³⁵ And finally, her rendering of Fanon promises a new humanism built from the materials of Afro-Caribbean thought. She insists on the ethical weight of a distinctly human body that no longer comes to consciousness of its own life through the negation of others, whether human or non-human. It promises the possibility of locating experiments in collective life in the form of quotidian survival tactics that

³⁵ Chapter 2 on Wynter, Foucault, and the concept of genre studies does suggest, however, that an overly sedimented frame of “anti-blackness” inevitably fails to describe the specific materializations of overrepresentation. I push Wynter's analysis by placing Katrina in the context of post-9/11 security dynamics to trace the way race does not operate *as such* but through a specific field of actualization. Thus, anti-blackness in the context of post-Katrina New Orleans is animated by the War on Terror such that blackness cannot be understood except vis-à-vis the biopolitics of securitization.

point to a constitutive outside to the overrepresentation of Man and the racialized, patriarchal political economy the latter sustains: for once, a true humanism.

It is finally to the question of the political-ecological landscapes in and through which humans become, that I turn in the next section. Briefly, however, it is necessary to insist on the importance of two strands of feminist theory addressing race as a structure of identification and a structure of domination that support the diagonal movement described above. First, feminist theory under the broad label *affect theory* has contributed greatly to understanding how we come to emotionally invest in understandings of the self and social structures, even when those understandings diverge or contribute to conditions of precarity. Hence, when Gilroy says groups who have come to forge their own identity through racial politics must be disabused of such an identification through elite revelations of that category's artifice, he inadequately attends to the political technologies of feeling and sentiment through which collectivities find unexpected and sometimes contradictory meaning. Following Michel Foucault's work in *The History of Sexuality*, contemporary feminist theory provides an essential aspect of Wynter's "genre study" through its view on the constitution of the self by a process of forging affective and emotional attachments as modes of interiority retroactively posited as subjectivity. As a corollary to this argument, the affective analysis of Katrina as an event of race that actualizes in the wake of the discursive formation of the War on Terror and September 11 necessarily refigures Wynter's description of blackness as the zero-point of Man by bringing into relief the way "race as a codeword for genre" congeals through multiple political technologies, rather than race simply being the master-code which determines in

advance the diagram of those technologies.³⁶ Beyond that specific complication, moreover, I argue that Wynter's expanded sense of gender has received inadequate theoretical attention as a cross-genre and so archetypal or foundational aspect of human ontologism. And second, I propose a notion of generational movement in feminist theory that helps push us past the impasse of social construction versus realism by placing the body back in time, making the question of doing justice to the ancestors and justice to the generations-to-come a central aspect of political theorizing. Specifically, taking Luce Irigaray's profound but despatialized concept of "sexual difference" as a point of departure, chapters 3 and 4 look to the power of intergenerational ethics in feminist thought to translate the bio-cultural interface of sociogenesis into a set of political commitments.

c. New Materialism and Post-Humanism

Sylvia Wynter's defense of humanism, precisely through the language of complexity, cybernetics, and neuro-biology, situates her as both central and fringe to the now well-established field of feminist new materialism that emerged in the last two decades. She shares a conceptual vocabulary with many of that movement's leading theorists, while coming to two profoundly distinct conclusions: first, that the human cannot be reduced to a biocentric entity in continuity with organic life and attempts at such a reduction feed (unwittingly or otherwise) a global politics of racialized economic sorting; second, that approaching the human beyond the word of Man translates into the an ethical-political commitment that does justice to the ecological insights of a rigorous materialism. This final review section will broadly outline the field of new materialism,

³⁶ Wynter, ProudFlesh Interview, 5.

with particular focus on its feminist iterations, and suggest the limitations of its flattened conception of the human. Especially at issue are more recent turns in materialist thought toward figures of the “post-human” or the “object.” I then turn to the surprising lack of commentary on Wynter’s explicit and oft-repeated call for an ecological politics of the non-human alongside a renewed humanism. And so, the insights of new materialism, despite their limitations, prove vital to Wynter’s ultimate commitment to a humanism capable of living in this world beyond “ecosystemic catastrophe.”³⁷

Feminist theory has long turned on the question of the relationship between “nature” and “culture,” both through the specific moves of the ever ongoing play of sex and gender (often shorthand as the question of essentialism) and more generally through the central focus on embodiment and representation.³⁸ The loosely grouped “feminist new materialism” tries to open these discussions up to the vitality, diversity, and contingency of the material world and rethink classic tenets of agency and politics through engagements with physics and the natural sciences. Myra Hird articulates this shift as an “openness and play within the living and non-living world, contesting paradigms which posited a changeable culture against a static nature.”³⁹ Hird’s emphasis on a deep sense of “engagement” manifests in feminist new materialist work as a description of the co-constitution of the human and its non-human others, challenging not only classic categories of Enlightenment humanism like autonomy and sovereign mastery, but the very project of humanism itself. Donna Haraway writes, for instance, “I love the fact that human genomes can be found in only about 10 percent of all the cells

³⁷ Wynter, “Unparalleled Catastrophe for our Species?” 20.

³⁸ See *The Essential Difference*, eds. Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); *Human, All Too Human*, ed. Diana Fuss (London: Routledge, 1996).

³⁹ Myra Hird, *Sex, Gender, and Science* (London: Palgrave, 2004): 145.

that occupy the mundane space I call my body; the other 90 percent of the cells are filled with genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such, some of which play in a symphony necessary to my being alive at all.”⁴⁰ To this biological symphony, many thinkers add a technological section as the meaning of “self” shifts in relation to mediatization and embedding in digital networks.⁴¹ In explicit contradistinction to the “cultural turn” of the 1970’s and 1980’s, new materialism asks: “In light of this massive materiality, how could we be anything other than materialist? How could we ignore the power of matter and the ways it materializes in our ordinary experiences or fail to acknowledge the primacy of matter in our theories?”⁴²

Thus, the descriptive project of materialism begs an ethico-political question.⁴³ What might a materialist politics that begins from a renunciation of anthropocentrism look like; or, put differently, what political questions and ethical obligations come to the fore when no longer circumscribed by a human agent concerned with human outcomes? Once we have a more rigorous sense of what a human is and is not, the many connections and assemblages, fragments and quasi-objects, bits and pieces of matter and energy that form this temporary entity, how does the ethical weight of the body change and its political obligations and horizons? As Graham Harman puts it, “not all politics is

⁴⁰ Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 3-4. To be clear, I consider Donna Haraway’s work an ally of Sylvia Wynter’s humanism. Haraway is taken up in chapter 4 to bring into relief how human autopoiesis is always already multi-species, helpfully pushing Wynter’s argument into the realm of political ecology. I pick this particular quotation here less to criticize Haraway than to call into question the many deployments of Haraway as part of the post-human turn. The wide and decontextualized citing of this particular Haraway quotation, for instance, evidences an exuberant post-humanism detached from her political concerns.

⁴¹ Nigel Thrift, *Non Representational Theory:: Space, Politics, Affect* (London: Routledge, 2007); Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009)..

⁴² Coole and Frost, “Introducing the New Materialisms,” in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* eds. Coole and Frost (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010): 1.

⁴³ On a specific version of this question, see Hantel, “Posthumanism, Landscapes of Memory, and the Materiality of AIDS in South Africa,” *WSQ* 40.1/2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 251-256.

human.”⁴⁴ The slippages and fuzzy borders of the “human” along with its imbrication with non-human worlds make this point abundantly clear, but I argue much of feminist new materialism still lacks a compelling follow-up answer to that recognition speaking to ongoing, multi-scalar struggles for survival. This concern is a subset of what Nelson Maldonado-Torres calls the de-colonial reduction, which “makes explicit the challenges posed by the colonial condition to theories that assume a unified world where humans live and co-exist.”⁴⁵ The materialist dissolution of the human must first posit a flattened and necessarily dehistoricized human, erasing the scars of colonialism and slavery in the process.

A prominent example comes from the work of Karen Barad. Trained as a theoretical physicist, Barad rethinks feminist philosophy in line with theories of quantum entanglement and debates over the particle-wave duality. In short, she argues that the insights of contemporary physics reveals the always-already entangled nature of matter across scales such that the ontological distinction of self and other or nature and culture does not actually align with the vibrancy of a fluctuating material world. Feminism has approached subject and object as a question of “interaction,” for instance, or the meeting of pre-formed entities in a field of power rather than as Barad’s preferred term of “intra-action”: relationalities that give and demand response from an already entangled mutual co-constitution. As Barad argues, “reality is not composed of things-in-themselves or things behind phenomena, but ‘things-in-phenomena.’”⁴⁶ Based on this insight, Barad

⁴⁴ Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (Melbourne: Re.Press, 2009), 89.

⁴⁵ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008): 101.

⁴⁶ Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter" *Signs* 28.3 (2003): 817.

collapses traditional categories of philosophical inquiry, asserting that contemporary physics bequeaths us an “ethico-onto-epistemological” materialism. New materialism’s relational dissolution of discrete entities becomes a self-evidently ethical move for Barad in the sense that it makes the structure of encounter inherent to processual mattering. She writes, “The attending ethico-onto-epistemological questions have to do with responsibility and accountability for the entanglements ‘we’ help enact and what kinds of commitments ‘we’ are willing to take on (including commitments to ‘ourselves’ and who ‘we’ may become).”⁴⁷ My taking up of Wynter in the context of new materialism concerns the political labor performed by the scare quotes around Barad’s ‘we,’ the provisionally enacted and self-deconstructed humans who enact and take on material commitments. What of the differential capacities to create entanglements and the unequal resources to take on commitments, especially when those unequal distributions of agency and intra-action constitute the definition of the human taken for granted by Barad’s thought. This limitation becomes apparent when Barad describes her intervention as a specifically “posthumanist” questioning of the divide between human and nonhuman.⁴⁸

As the preceding discussion of Wynter in section II makes clear, any declaration of “post-humanism” is premature in that we have never known a true humanism, just a humanism that conflated Man2 for the generic referent of humanity. Hence, the upsurge of post-humanist thought at this moment as an advertised antidote to the ongoing human destruction of the planet proves not only poignant, but perniciously misguided. Thinkers like Rosi Braidotti, Claire Colebrook, Eileen Crist, and Timothy Morton all identify our current moment of the “anthropocene”—the idea that humanity is no longer just a

⁴⁷ Karen Barad, “Queer Causation and the Ethics of Mattering,” in *Queering the Non/Human* eds. Myra Hird and Noreen Giffney (London: Ashgate, 2008), 333.

⁴⁸ Barad, “Posthuman Performativity,” 808.

biological agent but a geological agent affecting the earth at a systems level—as evidence for the need to go beyond outmoded commitments to the human or humanism.⁴⁹

Following Wynter, my discussions of Hurricane Katrina and the anthropocene suggest two dangers of a post-humanist thought that inadequately articulates the task of translation between ontological redescription and ethico-political commitments. First, confronted by the unequally distributed materiality of suffering and death, a ‘flat’ approach can only reify status quo geographies of vulnerability because it annihilates difference when blindly attacking hierarchy. Second, beyond just a conceptual lacuna, this impasse turns into a dangerous feedback loop through the implicit privileging of Western ontologism. Lodged in the very term “anthropocene” is a sleight of hand hiding the infrastructure of global climate change and attendant environmental destruction: it is not “human” produced in a generic sense, but precisely a result of the political-economic arrangements of colonial-capitalism that express the overrepresentation of man. Looking for solutions from within the same ideological coordinates that cordon off whole sections of the globe and whole populations as outside the human inevitably reproduces the same material conditions. Thus, I situate my argument in relation to Afro-Caribbean contributions to ontological questions around humans and non-human others, an emerging field of Caribbean materialisms that, as the epilogue suggests, has addressed the deep relationship between ecology and exploitation long before any recent “turns.” This field rejects the seductions and ruses of a more capacious version of Enlightenment liberal humanism while promising the possibility of imagining the world-otherwise through, finally, a true humanism that upholds the insights of much new materialist

⁴⁹ Braidotti, Colebrook, Crist, Morton.

thought without codifying the unequal racial and gendered logics of how matter materializes.⁵⁰

Strangely, this commitment to the ecological in Wynter's work remains elusive to her many interlocutors despite her clear insistence from early on that the fate of humanity beyond the overrepresentation of Man must be understood in relationship to planetary destruction and environmental degradation. Indeed, the fundamental role of anti-black violence and neoliberal accumulation in Wynter's schema is structurally intertwined with the becoming-disposable of the earth. Take, for instance, her open letter to colleagues in 1994 after the brutal beating of Rodney King, the acquittal of the police officers involved, and the so-called Los Angeles Riots that followed. King, she wrote, fell under a commonly used category within the Los Angeles Police Department's administrative machine: N.H.I. or "No Human Involved." Most commonly applied to unemployed black males from the inner city, the N.H.I. label served a taxonomic function far beyond just an exceptional episode of individual racism or bad taste; to Wynter, the logic of N.H.I. conveys the deep and fundamental truth about the political economy of racialization, both in the United States of America and globally. Strikingly for Wynter, the logic of N.H.I. and the blindspot it produced extends beyond just intra-human hierarchy: "[T]he category...embodies a plight, *which like that of the ongoing degradation of the planetary environment*, is not even posable, not to say resolvable, within the conceptual framework of our present order of knowledge." She continues,

I come now to the final point of my letter to you. Jesse Jackson made the point that the uprising of South Central L.A. 'was a spontaneous combustion - this time

⁵⁰ While only addressed laterally in this dissertation, there is exciting new scholarship amongst Caribbean theorists that falls into this field of inquiry and to which I hope to make an important contribution through the insistence on Wynter's humanism as an ecological and affective project. See Zakiyyah Jackson; Monique Allaewaert; Vanessa Agard-Jones.

not of discarded material but of discarded people.' As is the case with the also hitherto discardable environment, its ongoing pollution, and ozone layer depletion, the reality of the throwaway lives, both at the global socio-human level, of the vast majority of peoples who inhabit the "favela/shanty town" of the globe and their jobless archipelagoes, as well, at the national level, of Baldwin's "captive population" in the urban inner cities, (and on the Indian Reservations of the United States), have not been hitherto easily perceivable within the classificatory logic of our "inner eyes." In other words, the two phenomena, that of the physical and that of the global socio-human environments, have been hidden costs which necessarily remained invisible to the "inner eyes" of the mode of subjective understanding," generated from our present disciplines of the Social Sciences and Humanities.⁵¹

The parallel she draws here is not just metaphorical, between people treated like trash and a trashed environment, but instead operates at the somatic level of embodying symbolic codes of the human expressed through a geographical landscape that precedes and exceeds us. So how to expose those hidden costs and draw a contour line between ecological destruction and the constitutive negation of non-white bodies? Wynter's answer: "a humanism made to the measure of the world."⁵² As a study of Hurricane Katrina, the urban geography of New Orleans, and the planetary fall-out of the overrepresentation of Man, then, the following chapters will propose spatio-temporal and cartographic tools to help "measure" the world in its multiplicity, as an articulation of our undeniably shared and interdependent lives yet singular and differential.

To meet this challenge laid out by Wynter, however, it is necessary to confront some of the tension in her thought around the questions of the non-human and to take seriously feminist new materialism's description of the body as a vital, agential force not reducible to cultural inscription. On the first point, Wynter's critique of Western cosmogony sometimes fails to escape the anthropocentrism that undergirds the intimate

⁵¹ Wynter "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues," *Forum NHI* 1.1 (1994): 10.

⁵² Césaire, quoted as the epigraph in, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," interviewed by David Scott, *Small Axe* 8 (2000): 119-207.

connection between unsustainable environmental destruction and human flourishing. She argues that animals, for instance, remain “genetically preprescribed” in their roles and thus external to questions of sociogenesis.⁵³ This holdover of a *privileged* human consciousness, I argue, undermines her larger ecological concerns even as it is unnecessary to the overall premise about a renewed humanism. Thus, one challenge of this dissertation is articulating Wynter’s ethics in a manner that does justice to the “abyssal” differences between humans and non-human others.⁵⁴ Rather than an inducement to hierarchy, in other words, the enigmatic distinction that cleaves us from animals (and, as Derrida reminds us, animals from animals, as the monolithic “animal” is hardly coherent) is the starting point for an ecological ethics. And second, this task means further emphasizing the body’s multiplicity and irreducible force in the concept of sociogenesis. The uptake of Wynter’s work has tended to privilege the representational questions it evokes and so positioned the body as a site of passive inscription; along these lines, Wynter herself occasionally slips into a reduction of sociogenesis to narrative processes alone. Instead, turning to corporeal feminism, particularly the work of Elizabeth Grosz, along with a materialist reading of Afro-Caribbean thought suggests the creative power of the body as the very ground of dynamism and unpredictability. Refocusing on this reading of the body, and matter more generally, as generating new relations and affects proves crucial to exactly the kinds of liminal chaos Wynter describes as the basis for revolutionary humanism.

III. The Argument to Come

⁵³ Wynter, “Unparalleled Catastrophe,” 34-35.

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, translated by Marie-Louise Mallet (Fordham: Fordham University Press, 2008): 31.

The first goal of the following chapters is to provide a deeply historicized and holistic yet granular reading of Wynter's oeuvre. I do so with the sense that her decades long relationship to both non-institutionalized and institutionalized feminism has fallen out in the recent explosion of secondary literature on her. Each chapter makes the case why a specific conceptual formation from contemporary feminist thought, read back into Wynter's critique of the overrepresentation of Man, is necessary to the reinvigorated humanism for which she struggles and which I ultimately defend as a crucial bulwark against the generalization of ecological disaster and the ascription of living death to large swaths of the globe.

Chapter 1, ("Sociogenesis of Liminal Subjects: The Body, Affect, and Truth Beyond") along with an exegesis of Wynter's argumentative schema, develops the concept of the liminal subject in Wynter by revisiting her primary source material, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, through the lens of feminist approaches to affect and embodiment. This move clarifies the political stakes of the body as the site of virtual openness and the index to an outside beyond the reigning ontologism of Man. Chapter 2 ("From Liminality to Demonic Ground: Wynter, Foucault, and *The History of Sexuality* Along the Color Line") considers the philosophical relationship between Foucault and Wynter, particularly on the question of biopolitics and sexuality, to move from the liminal subject to the collective scale of genre, or human kinds. Reorienting the traditionally oppositional readings of Foucault and Wynter toward a complementary view of the deployment of sexuality as a technology of the color line clarifies how the body of the liminal subject becomes the "demonic ground" of collective struggle. Thus, genre

studies makes possible an insurrection at the level of the human through a radical re-reading of what Foucault calls “bodies and pleasures.”

Chapter 3 (“Genre Studies Between Regeneration and Intergeneration: On Creolization, Sexual Difference, and The Pieza Framework”) forms the core of this project. Here, I make the comprehensive case for Wynter as an important feminist thinker who considers “gender,” rendered here much differently than its common usage, as a cross-genre condition of human existence. Locating her humanism within a distinctly feminist genealogy of thought is ultimately “generative,” I argue, both necessary to understanding how specific descriptive statements of Man *regenerate* and how we struggle *intergenerationally*. An original pairing of the work of Luce Irigaray and Edouard Glissant furthers this case through a latticework of two seemingly irreconcilable philosophical commitments—creolization and sexual difference, respectively—that when reworked at the scale of ontologism make possible a creolized theory of sexual difference and a sexual difference theory of creolization. Genre studies emerges at the confluence of these two streams. The result is a dynamic spatio-temporal model of race, gender, and economics that is multi-scalar and “pluri-conceptual,” up to the profound task of mapping how neoliberal capitalism globally spaces partial incorporation and fungibilization.

Finally, chapter 4 (“Glissant’s Haunted Materialism: The Political Ecology of Genre Studies and the Political Economy of Scholarly Influence”) considers the disjuncture between the stated need for a renewed political ecology in Wynter’s work and the ultimate limits around humanism she constructs that tend to reduce autopoiesis to the exclusive terrain of human narrativization, freed from environmental constraints and ontological openness. I make this case in conversation with the work of Donna Haraway

and other approaches in critical animal studies that insist not simply on flattening the relationship between human and non-human others, but accounting for the “multi-species” process of autopoiesis. Thus, this chapter ultimately concludes beyond the work of Wynter with the philosophical relationship between Glissant and Deleuze and Guattari, specifically their shared language of the rhizome, to examine how the overrepresentation of Man occurs at and simultaneously constructs the nature-culture interface in particular terms. Tracing the uneven movements of rhizomatic thought and horizontal growth of rhizomes along and against the seams of colonial cartography brings into relief a political ecology of political economy necessary to challenge the overrepresentation of Man.

Various interludes appear throughout the text, planned and unplanned trips in and out of New Orleans before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina. This dissertation is not primarily an “area studies” project or an analysis of a specific site. As chapter 4 on the scalar meanings of “Caribbean” theory suggest, the spatial circumscription of thought is a powerful geographic tool of coloniality. Instead, the various boundary projects I investigates are mobile and shifting political technologies—the color line, the nature/culture divide, the citizen, race, gender and so forth—that take on different valences at different moments. In each instance, I consider the symbolic codes of life and death at play, both processes of overrepresentation and lines of flight to an outside. These sites are provisional and fleeting, less diagrams for a specific political outcome than a palimpsestic tracing of the spatio-temporal disjuncture of liminality: alternative political imaginaries beyond the word of Man are here, are now.

IV. Notes on Method

The joys and difficulties of writing in an interdisciplinary department are compounded by focusing on a great decolonial philosopher like Wynter who challenges us to think beyond disciplinary and geographic apartheid, as Chela Sandoval puts it, and collectively contribute to a “new science of the Word” that “would be able to deal, for the first time, with the hitherto unsolved phenomenon of human consciousness.”⁵⁵ Above all else, Wynter reminds her readers, “The buck stops with us.” This final introductory section outlines some of the methodological implications of Wynter’s point and their lessons on humility the following chapters try to learn well. Perhaps above all, the key starting point is not to take method too seriously in imagining new concepts and worlds. I follow Fanon’s sage self-declaration of dereliction, “I leave methods to the botanists and the mathematicians. There is a point at which methods devour themselves.”⁵⁶ For Wynter, then, to extend the Afro-Caribbean philosophical mission of a revolutionary humanism means a method that is always already in the process of going beyond itself.⁵⁷

First, the relationship between theory and its sites of analysis must be understood beyond active-passive binaries of targeting or application. The concept of liminal subjects argues against the idea that thought in the temporal register of survival somehow lacks

⁵⁵ Wynter, “Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species,” 64; I further engage Sandoval’s argument from *Methodology of the Oppressed* in the epilogue.

⁵⁶ Fanon, *BSWM*, 12.

⁵⁷ The need for methodological flexibility is a direct response to the powerful pliability of overrepresentation as a structure of power. The discussion of the rearticulation of racialization in the next chapter, for instance, briefly sketches how the color line operates through biological race, color blind multiculturalism, and genetic sequencing, both chronologically and simultaneously. Locking ourselves into the micro-management of a specific method ensures “mistaking the map for the territory,” in Wynter’s formulation. Wynter, “On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Reimprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Desêtre: Black Studies Toward the Human Project,” in *A Companion to African-American Studies*, eds. Jane Gordon and Lewis Gordon (London: Blackwell, 2005): 107-118.

the rarefied air of “theorizing,” caught as it is in the muck of lived landscapes and colliding bodies. So even as the following will get theoretical in a colloquial sense, it only emerges through its grounding in a specific geographical time. The great Clyde Woods once asked, “Have we become academic coroners? Have the tools of theory, method, instruction, and social responsibility become so rusted that they can only be used for autopsies?”⁵⁸ Writing in the context of social scientific studies of race and ethnicity, Woods lamented the social death frame that characterizes so much work on marginalized populations in US America. Even well-intentioned scholars articulate their target populations as always-already given over to death, accidental bodies and future cadavers who, if not already dead, merely negotiate their ongoing slow death in various forms some might romantically call resistance.

The work of Wynter is a profound rejection of the coroner’s role, as she gives us the conceptual resources to not only find signs of life in a place like New Orleans and partake in it but follow the trails and hints they leave that lead to an outside where life and death mean something altogether different. This commitment goes beyond the classic concern of critical theorists with a “pre-theoretical” resource, or the idea that “a theory of society could engage in critique only insofar as it was able to rediscover an element of its own critical viewpoint within social reality.”⁵⁹ The temporal disjuncture introduced by the “pre,” gives us the common recursive model of the theorist making sense of—better yet, translating—the experiences of a marginalized population they have targeted as somehow revealing. Following the work of feminist thinkers like Lorde and Sandoval, I try to collapse the privileged distinction between theory and survival by taking seriously

⁵⁸ Clyde Woods, “Life After Death,” *The Professional Geographer* 54.1 (2000): 63.

⁵⁹ Axel Honneth, “The Social Dynamics of Disrespect: On the Location of Critical Theory Today,” *Constellations* 1: 255-269.

alternative temporalities of thought and following Wynter's insistence on the liminal subject as not just an epistemological corrective. "The starving fellah, (or the jobless inner city N.H.I., the global New Poor or *les damnés*), Fanon pointed out, does not have to inquire into the truth. He is, they are, the Truth."⁶⁰ Inevitably, the political technology of (academic) writing and the form of the dissertation or the manuscript makes demands that render Wynter's exhortation an *ideal* for our pedagogy and scholarship. Still, it is an ideal worth repeating and measuring our work against. To reinstitute the distinction between the pre and the properly theoretical risks not just becoming an academic coroner, but an academic cannibal feeding off the reproduction of scenes of violence and inventories of horror every few years without asking what could exist outside this process.

Second, the bulk of the following work represents close readings of Wynter along with some of her interlocutors like Glissant, Fanon, Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari. The exegetical approach to her work in the context of Afro-Caribbean philosophy hopefully does not come off as proprietary, claiming the one and only Wynter like Nietzsche's priest claiming a passage in the bible. Fully inhabiting the landscape of her thought, however, serves two functions at this moment of a notable uptick in work on not just Wynter but Afro-Caribbean philosophy more generally. For one, it is meant to avoid the very real problem the measurement of non-white and non-male philosophers exclusively by the metrics of established, racialized philosophical traditions rather than taken on their own terms at the juncture of theory and survival described above. The proliferation of studies of Wynter's thought in the last few years is to be welcome, in other words, but also provokes a certain caution as the nature of academic trends do not

⁶⁰ Wynter, "No Humans Involved," 15.

always align well with someone who thinks at the scale and duration Wynter does. Walter Mignolo's warnings about when the drive to originality becomes a good in itself regardless of the pedagogical and political outcomes rings loudly at this moment when an industry grows up around a specific thinker.⁶¹ Perhaps more glaring, then, is the risk of an increasingly unmoored view of Afro-Caribbean philosophy. The following work does not look to Wynter's early writings on C.L.R. James, for instance, simply to insist on "discovering" new terrain, but instead to follow Glissant's maxim, "The intellectual journey is destined to have a geographical itinerary."⁶² Afro-Caribbean philosophy is not *reducible* to the physical geography of the Greater Caribbean but is still expressed through a specific landscape. The final chapter addresses the case of Glissant and the dangers of an uprooted Caribbean theory exported for general use. Hence, tarrying with the ins-and-outs of Wynter's thought, mapping the movements across different pieces and mediums, and insisting on a certain fidelity that does justice to her four-decades of work is a way of undermining the illusion of discovery, global translatability and pure transparency. Indeed, epistemic convergence as described by Curry is part and parcel of the overrepresentation of Man; the outside to that system, moreover, is not just a metaphor but inevitably a place.

Finally, there exists a clear tension between the preceding critique of comparativism and the bibliographic line-up of the following that puts Wynter in conversation with Irigaray and Foucault, Glissant in conversation with Deleuze and Guattari. These readings of the inextricably intertwined trajectories of such thinkers

⁶¹ Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke UP), 122; The vagaries of the "Deleuze" industry are particularly instructive here, as taken up in chapter 4 by way of the relationship between Deleuze and Glissant.

⁶² Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, translated by Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press), 4.

engage certain tactics to avoid the import/export model of North-South philosophical engagement or unidirectional derivation. Wynter's use of a transcultural frame, explored more fully in the first chapter, stems from re-culturalizing the Western order of things as opposed to always taking it as the a-cultural norm against which non-Western (and non-White) intellectual work develops. She need not avoid the long shadow of Foucault as long as she begins from an articulation of Foucault's thought as part of the "indigenous hermeneutic" of a certain imagining of the West. In that sense, Foucault's theories (as Foucault himself would acknowledge) are profoundly useful both in what they say and can not say, his blind spots as instructive for a socio-diagnosis as his lucid insights.⁶³

Similarly, Glissant shifts the tenor of critical engagement from opposition to "apposition," "literally places where one thinking of the world encounters another thinking of the world."⁶⁴ Writing from the borders of the human, ambivalent citizenship and sovereignty, and a paradoxical place in the rarefied air of French theory, Glissant apposes ideas to insist on their Relation and irreducibility, their co-constitution and abyssal difference. For Glissant, it is the space between seemingly fixed and constituted entities where we find their entanglement with each other and the world: the place from which ethics starts.⁶⁵ In that sense, the readings that follow are generally affirmative. Despite the introduction as a mode of situating the work to come, in some ways a concession to academic mores, I tend not to critically return to the fields described or to animate the argument exclusively through opposition to established positions. The goal

⁶³ The discussion of disciplinary power, indigeneity, and slavery in chapter 2 exemplifies this approach.

⁶⁴ Glissant, quoted by Oakley, "Commonplaces: Rhetorical Figures of Difference in Heidegger and Glissant," *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 41.1 (2008): 2.

⁶⁵ The discussion of how the "rhizome" as concept and metaphor travels between the work of Glissant and Deleuze and Guattari in chapter 4 exemplifies this approach.

instead is to fully inhabit the modes of thought and landscapes invoked and find the immanent forces at play there, fully drawing out their implications for Afro-Caribbean and feminist philosophy.⁶⁶ Glissant resists the imaginary exteriority of critical opposition, preferring a mode of critique closer to the kinds of “decolonial love” practiced by Chela Sandoval and Nelson Maldonado-Torres that engage the Other and the unknown beyond “discovery and newness.”⁶⁷ Critique and polemic still occur, but rendered as an agonism akin to creolization, rather than purely the labor of the negative.

Finally, an engagement with Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault runs as a thread throughout the dissertation. Their combined work represents the most useful of Western continental philosophy for the haunted ecologies and landscapes of memory considered here. Reading them productively in Wynter’s terms as an indigenous hermeneutic of the West eventually brings us to the limits of their thought and its stumbling and silence around certain questions of geography and race. As an extension of the preceding affirmative approach, I find these moments useful precisely in terms of how they reveal the power of racialization in their thought. In that sense, the tradition of “minor” literature they describe (and which Wynter complicates) can be productively turned on to Deleuze and Guattari themselves as it has been turned to questions of colonial thought. As Yolanda Martinez-San Miguel writes in the context of imperial and colonial discursive matrices, “Deleuze and Guattari classify as ‘intensives or tensors...any linguistic tool that

⁶⁶ The reading of Irigaray and Glissant in chapter 3 exemplifies the approach of affirmative reading.

⁶⁷ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Transmodernity*, 1; compare, for example, to Timothy Morton, one of the leaders of the “object oriented ontology” movement described earlier who writes, “Things are given for orangutans and droplets of mercury as much as they are for humans. This approach calls itself object-oriented ontology, and it was discovered by Graham Harman.” Morton, “Poisoned Ground,” *Symploke* 21.1/2 (2013): 38. A cadre of white male philosophers discovering the material universe and the relationships between orangutans and humans should give us a very, very long pause.

allows a move toward the limit of a notion or a surpassing of it.” Hence, I argue that blackness as understood by Wynter appears and reappears as a “tensor” in Deleuze and Guattari’s thought, “in which these texts become minor vis-à-vis the imperial literature to which they also belong.”⁶⁸ While they are incorrectly claimed as the foundation for a deracinated new materialism or an anti-humanist ontological turn, in other words, the limits of Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptual edifice reveals the constitutive force of the overrepresentation of Man and, thus, the need for a reinvigorated humanism.

⁶⁸ Yolanda Martinez-San Miguel, *From Lack to Excess: Minor Readings of Latin American Colonial Discourse*, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press) 38.

Chapter 1

Sociogenesis of Liminal Subjects: The Body, Affect, and Truth Beyond

In 1952 Frantz Fanon declared “Beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny,” and indelibly changed the human sciences.⁶⁹ Yet we are still catching up to Fanon’s injunction. He wrote in response to Freudian theory, and psychoanalysis more generally, which had itself reacted to the phylogenetic theories of human differentiation (or species level, naturalistic view of human development) with an ontogenetic theory of individual development. These two poles linger in the field of feminism and critical race theory as described in the introduction, where the story of human differentiation is told either at the scale of the natural, physical biocentric species or the psychoanalytically inflected micro-scale of discursive inscription. Thus, Fanon’s call for a sociogenetic analysis, up to the task of not only describing embodied consciousness in the world but also changing it, remains urgent. The point of departure for Sylvia Wynter’s conceptual corpus is fleshing out the concept of sociogenesis and bringing it to bear on the contemporary conditions of colonial-capitalism, casting in relief the sites where the possibility of a world-otherwise comes briefly into view through the praxis of liminal subjects.

This chapter further elucidates the theory of sociogenesis, particularly around the famous train scene in Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* and considers it in relation to one of Wynter’s less theorized interventions into feminist debates over so-called “female genital mutilation.” I pick up here where section II of the introduction left off, with the emergence of the episteme of Man2, or bio-homo-economicus. In this view of the human,

⁶⁹ Fanon, *BSWM*, 11.

where the black and the colonized can only serve as degrees of differentiation from fully developed (in the economic, physical and intellectual sense of the word) man, ontogenesis serves as the key model for understanding difference.⁷⁰ If ontogenesis, in the modern sense of the biological development of an organism within the limited telos of its genetic code, ensconced in the practice of economics, defines the horizon of human potential, then there is no struggle to be had. It is in this context that Wynter points to Fanon's crucial insistence on "grasping his narcissism with both hands."⁷¹ The human is distinct, in other words, because it is an *ontologizing* being expressed through a body but never reducible to corporeal physicalism.⁷²

This chapter traces the process of ontologizing across multiple registers of difference, beginning with the Fanon's famous train car scene as a moment of racialization and then turning to feminist debates over so-called "female genital mutilation." In moving between and across these sites as differential moments in the production of the human, I propose an embodied reading of Wynter's concept of the liminal subject, both as the index of a system of domination and the index of the possibility of that very system's demise. The liminal subject, in other words, is narratively condemned through processes of autopoiesis that work to close down the

⁷⁰ Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience, and What It Is Like to Be "Black," in *National Identities and Sociopolitical Changes in Latin America*, eds. Mercedes F. Duran Cogan and Antonio Gomez Moriana (New York: Routledge, 2001): 35.

⁷¹ Fanon, *BSWM*, 23.

⁷² I use the word 'distinct' here purposefully, as a way of differentiating without valuating. That is to say, it is important to articulate the difference between human and non-human forms of life even as one dislodges any unitary or monolithic sense of humanness and, with it, a hierarchical attachment to humanity's superiority as such. See the previous discussion of "abyssal difference" in Derrida. See the discussion on page [x] about the specific use of auto-poiesis here, and where Wynter situates herself in this discussion.

affective openness of the body that might open a path to challenging the overrepresentation of Man.

I. The Overrepresentation of Man as Historical-Geographical Process

This exegetical section briefly introduces the main premise of Wynter's argument, its historical basis, and its political implications for the mission of Afro-Caribbean and feminist thought. While the following chapters will flesh out this skeleton, the opposition between Man and human (embodied in the concepts Man1 and Man2) remains the core of any engagement with Wynter. In short, she maps the spatialization of particular "descriptive statements" of the human since the 15th century, by which certain "genres" or kinds of humans derived from the Western order of things come to stand in for the human as such.

In formal terms, Wynter describes how an auto-instituted system reproduces itself at the expense of a series of liminal subjects until the latter's destabilizing influence causes a phase-change into a new system which, as it undergoes the same formal process of auto-institution, tends to restart the cycle. More simply put, she locates a given epoch's central descriptive statement and then tries to excavate how a new descriptive statement becomes hegemonic. She focuses on three descriptive statements that have ruled the Western imagination, what she calls the Christian, Man1 and Man2. Each figure includes the following aspects: a specific axis of sameness and difference determining ontological privilege, the space of otherness sustaining this distinction, and an epistemological-political correlate stemming from ontological description.

The Christian as the overrepresented descriptive statement of humanity (in other words a particularity enforced and maintained as a universal) reigned throughout the Middle Ages until approximately the late 15th century. For Wynter, a dominant statement is accompanied by a master code that articulates foundational dichotomies of human meaning making, namely life/death and order/chaos, in a manner that adaptively reinforces the status quo system. In the theocentric model, then, this adaptive distinction was between Spirit and Flesh, marking the worldly bearers of original sin as a fallen other to the clergy who had access to divine eternal truth. This sin/redemption distinction was geographically mapped onto the earth/cosmos dyad such that “God was the supernatural ‘space of otherness’ of the Christian.”⁷³ The epistemological-political implications were as follows: “[T]hese theologically absolute paradigms that, by circularly verifying the ‘sinful by nature’ cognitive incapacity of fallen mankind, served at the same time to validate both the hegemony of the Church...over the lay world including the state, as well as...over any [lay] knowledge...”⁷⁴ So in this theocentric, physico-ontological system, a true Christian represented the Spirit mapped onto a cosmos, inaccessible to those worldly beings afflicted by original sin (including the dark descendants of Ham), where true knowledge of the conditions of being resided—knowledge that seemed to confirm its own conditions endlessly.

Chaos intruded on this order, however, through the many manifestations of the *Studia Humanitatis*. The lay humanists of the renaissance, beginning in the late 15th century, worked to transform the Christian subject redeemed in spirit into the “Rational

⁷³ Sylvia Wynter, “Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of The Antilles.” *World Literature Today* 63.4 (1989): 642.

⁷⁴ Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3.3 (2003): 276.

Self of Man as political subject of the state.”⁷⁵ The treatise of Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) proved particularly formative, according to Wynter, in creating Man1 as a hybridly religious and secular subject (still divinely created but put on earth to “make of himself what he willed to be”) who now sought redemption in reason. Wynter argues this intellectual development fundamentally altered what was seeable and sayable such that, without Mirandola and the other lay humanists, the Copernican revolution, the voyage of Columbus, and Newton’s physics all remained unthinkable in a very literal way. Ptolemy, for instance, relied on similar raw data to Copernicus but could only work in a geocentric model because of the power of the physico-ontological axis of difference. He insisted on “saving the phenomenon” when confronted with such data rather than following it to its earth-displacing conclusions. With Man1, the idea of a non-homogenous universe (both in the divine sense of the earth/cosmos but also the geographical sense of the inhabitable/uninhabitable earth) breaks down: Newton realized everything is expressed through the same force and matter and Columbus and the Portuguese saw a shared world primed for exploration. These rational intellectuals also provided legitimation for the centralization of the state as the primary organ of collective belonging, because it was the means by which man expressed the collective will imbued in him by God.

Of course, with this new geography at work on earth, the space of otherness came down from the heavens and mapped itself onto the newly “discovered” populations of natives and Africans who embodied irrationality: “All other modes of being human would have to be seen not as the alternative modes of being human that they are ‘out

⁷⁵ Ibid, 277.

there,’ but adaptively, as the lack of the West’s ontologically absolute self-description.”⁷⁶

Along with the new physical sciences, this intellectual development yields the conditions for colonialism based on a hierarchy of human groups measured by natural reason such that the inferior groups are labeled “natural slaves.”⁷⁷ So to briefly summarize the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, or the reign of Man1, we have a ratiocentric world of homo politicus divided by a homo-ontological principle in which otherness is mapped externally onto geographical regions outside of Europe and internally onto the “mad.”

The institutionalization of ratiocentric hierarchy in the form of colonialism and the asylum also made possible the rise of biological sciences, as the divinely created order of being was increasingly contextualized as a scientifically objectifiable natural order. Through the very active period of life sciences in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including the work of Carl Linnaeus, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, and most importantly Charles Darwin, “a mutation would occur to a new bio-ontological form...the lack-state of the fullness of being was now to be that of the Lack of a mode of human being, the Indo-European, now made isomorphic with Being human itself.”⁷⁸ Darwin’s ecological view of natural selection combined perniciously with Thomas Malthus’s theory of resource scarcity and population density to install a simultaneously eugenicist and economic view of the human, Man2. Man2 is a thoroughly natural organism whose redemption comes in the form of accumulated capital and naturally selected genetic traits. Biocentric homo economicus, embodied in the bourgeois western white male, became the overrepresented mask of all humanity through the violent

⁷⁶ Ibid, 282.

⁷⁷ Sylvia Wynter, “The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism,” *boundary 2* 12.3/13.1 (1984): 34.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 36.

demarcations of colonial difference: “The social behaviors that were to verify this topos of iconicity which yoked the Indo-European mode of being to human being in general... would be carried out by the complementary non-discursive practices of a new wave of great interments of native labors in new plantation orders and by the massacres of the colonial era... different forms of segregating the Ultimate Chaos that was the Black.”⁷⁹ The overrepresentation of Man2 is where we stand today, a biocentric order hinging on the “Color Line” to quarantine the space of otherness in the “underdeveloped” third and fourth world, positing a natural causality for neoliberal economics in which the subject becomes the subject-entrepreneur investing in not only market forces but also their own genetic stock.

To reiterate, with the simultaneous rise of the life sciences in the nineteenth century and Malthusian theories of demographics and resource scarcity, the ratiocentric order transforms according to the discourse of man’s continuity with other organic life forms. Human difference was again remapped by a new axis of difference based on the conflation of natural selection and social inequality. The space of otherness filled by the Native/Negro is now articulated as a question of biological science where they represent the evolutionary link between white, European bourgeois male and bestiality.⁸⁰ This shift to the overrepresentation of Man2, biocentric homo economicus, brings us to our contemporary condition.

II. Sociogenesis in the Train Car

⁷⁹ Ibid, 37.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 36-37.

Fanon proposes sociogeny as the method for diagnosing, then, how particular ontological statements become the single standard for human consciousness. Borrowing from Thomas Nagel, Wynter argues that consciousness only exists in an organism if “there is something that it is like to be that organism... We may call that the subjective character of experience.”⁸¹ In other words, to posit human consciousness is to posit as well some notion of qualia, or subjective experience, that indexes what it feels like to be a human. On Wynter’s ingenious rereading, she shows how Fanon introduces the question of race into this model and, in so doing, solves the problem of the division between objective states of mind (i.e. brain-states of which consciousness would be epiphenomenal) and subjective consciousness (i.e. qualia as an inexplicable and transhistorical essence of what it means to be human, like the bat in Nagel’s famous title).

Fanon explores this connection through a description of his own self-consciousness as it registers in both the first and third person. Wynter’s section titles in her essay on the sociogenic principle plot how this progression takes place. First, she addresses Fanon’s description of subject formation for the French Caribbean black before he visits France in the section titled “Stop acting like a Nigger!” The title comes from Fanon’s explanation of how symbolic codes imposed on the French Caribbean through colonialism manifested in a common admonishment for youth failing to act appropriately.⁸² The idea that one should (and could) stop acting like the Negro—in the sense of the figural zero-degree of legitimate humanity—established a distance between a black person in the Antilles and the organizing force of the color line in the overrepresentation of Man2. Wynter traces Fanon’s profound point that the development

⁸¹ Nagel quoted in Wynter, “Toward the Sociogenic Principle,” 30.

⁸² Wynter, “Toward the Sociogenic Principle,” 33.

of normal human consciousness is in fact the development of a white-male-bourgeois-colonial consciousness. Within her understanding of the sociogenic principle, the color line is continually strengthened in the minds of these Antillean children through a feedback loop between neurobiology and racialized culture: “[I]f the mind is what the brain does, what the brain does, is itself culturally determined through mediation of the socialized sense of self, as well as of the ‘social’ situation in which this self is placed.”⁸³ A black person in the Antilles, in other words, prior to their trip to France and insofar as they effectively distance themselves from the figural Negro Other, develops a white sense of self, or an “I” that self-expresses through the *exclusive* claim to being of Man2.

The title of the next section comes from Fanon’s arrival in Paris and the eruption of the third-person in consciousness: “Look, a Negro!” As Fanon is ontologically shackled to his body through epidermalization, he also comes to realize, according to Wynter, that blackness is only the negative dialectical term to whiteness, and nothing more. The Negro as ontological lack is “woven” from anecdotes and pseudoscience; within the coordinates of the color line, it is only from these elements that Fanon might “construct himself...in order to verify the truth of the others’ glances.”⁸⁴ His self-experience, it becomes clear, is no longer what he is but what he *must be* according to the rhetorically mediated neurobiological formations that overrepresent the visual phenomenology of whiteness as the universal experience of the world.

Fanon’s investigation of the autophobic consciousness is made possible by the sociogenic principle: purely cultural explanations mask the embodied force of racialization and so understate how cultural formations congeal into ontological

⁸³ Ibid, 37.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 42.

statements in a transcultural manner while biological models cannot account for the cultural specificity of different systems of metaphysical life/death that activate the neurobiological reward system instituting a subject's sense of self. So at the risk of being reductive, the sociogenic principle takes the "nature-culture" interface itself as its object of study: a transcultural constant (in other words, an aspect of humanity's autopoietic existence) of the specific cultural modalities of the human self correlated with neurological and biochemical states.⁸⁵ What does the sociogenic principle make possible and what methodological and archival processes does it demand?

Following Fanon, Wynter suggests an effective "sociodiagnosis" is a prerequisite to imagining the world otherwise and following this new imaginary to a place beyond the current overrepresentation of Man.⁸⁶ The sociogenic principle, moreover, seems to function as a strategy of reading for Wynter such that she works through an almost overwhelming series of texts to pinpoint both the conflation of the Man and the human and the moments indexing profound instability in our descriptive statement. That is because the entire cognitive architecture of human consciousness is at issue in sociogenetic emergence and, importantly, no longer isolated from social or environmental factors that might make it transparently intelligible like a straightforwardly mechanistic model of input and output. So Fanon's study of a singular black man cannot be reduced to either an individualist phenomenological frame or a purely structural, even species-wide humanism where agency and consciousness prove epiphenomenal. Maldonado-Torres writes, "By studying blacks sociogenically, Fanon has to study whites and blacks, males and females, culture and structure, as well as experience and situation, all of which

⁸⁵ Ibid, 60.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 60-61.

he does in different ways in *Black Skin, White Masks*.”⁸⁷ The mediums and discursive formations, moreover, through which socio-political and environmental categories become symbolized are all at issue for Fanon and Wynter as well. News media, cinema, theater, political rhetoric, popular sports, built space, memorials, the classroom, literature. The list goes on almost endlessly in thinking about the emergence of consciousness at a particular historical moment. While the sociogeneticist can never exhaustively engage such a list, they can ask what symbolic formations take on crucial structuring or directing effects in a certain historical place and, most commonly, what a shock to the system’s equilibrium reveals. Hence the diverse archive that follows in my study of post-Katrina New Orleans and the very logic of focusing on an “event,” even as one questions the rhetorical frame of eventness for eliding the racial and gender logics that make “natural” disasters unnatural and “slow death” invisible. I want to first turn to a case study of a lingering controversy in feminist theory to further bring out the promise of the sociogenetic principle

II. Female Genital Mutilation and the Liminal Subject Between Relativism and Imperialism

“Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women,” Susan Moller Okin eponymously asks in a provocative 1997 essay. This question spawned not only the cover article for the Boston Review, but also a book-length treatment by fifteen other thinkers mulling over Okin’s contention about female members of patriarchal cultures: “Indeed, they might be much better off if the culture into which they were born were either to become extinct...or,

⁸⁷ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “Rousseau and Fanon on Inequality and the Human Sciences,” *CLR James Journal* 15.1 (2009): 113-134.

preferable, to be encouraged to alter itself so as to reinforce the equality of women.”⁸⁸

Okin’s formulation of different cultures and ritual practices as problems for feminism, for instance “female genital mutilation” or “veiling,” suggest both a monolithic understanding of the proper objects of feminist politics and a necessarily antagonistic relationship between feminist goals and struggles for self-determination. To be fair, even though Okin’s rendering of the benefits of cultural extinction is particularly intense, she is hardly alone in framing the current impasse of transnational feminism as an either/or choice between a struggle against patriarchy or an absolute relativism. To continue with the work of Sylvia Wynter, we can now begin to understand the onto-epistemological conditions of possibility for this theoretical impasse and to gesture towards a mode of thought that repositions feminism as a transcultural, decolonial critique.

For Okin and her interlocutors, “female genital mutilation” represents the patriarchal excesses of particular cultures in need of a Western style emancipation for their women. According to Wynter, critics of this position fall into a trap when they simply accuse Western feminists of “cultural imperialism” and assert the right to cultural specificity. First, it undermines the resources for a transcultural critique by positing cultures in relativist and isolated terms. Each culture becomes a black box that circumscribes knowledge with no possibility of escape; qualitative descriptions, moreover, of how and why particular rituals work vis-à-vis general horizons of meaning become impossible. Second, it implicitly places Western feminism outside the realm of culture, such that the mark of particularity is reserved for those idiosyncratic—or more precisely, exotic or primitive—practices understood as indigenous in opposition to a

⁸⁸ Susan Moller Okin, “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?” in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women*, eds. Cohen, Howard, and Nussbaum (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1999), 22-23.

rational, geographically central West. Instead, Wynter argues, “cultural imperialism, should perhaps be looked at as being indistinguishable from Western cultural *ontologism*.”⁸⁹ A shift in emphasis to “ontologism” not only shatters the illusion of a universal category of “woman,” (taken up again in the next chapter) but also opens up the question of the epistemological priority of race in Wynter’s work in the complex mode of *genre* she describes.

To make the first point on the possibility of transcultural critique, Wynter begins with L. Amede Obiora’s proposal for a “middle course” approach to female circumcision. Obiora argues against total prohibition or eradication as proposed by not only Western feminists like Okin, but also by African feminists such as Efua Dorkenoo or African-American feminists such as Alice Walker. Instead, Obiora supports a balance between local context and health hazards, supporting the right of communities to engage in life-affirming symbolic acts that do not endanger the life of the recipient. The problem, according to Wynter, is that the proposed reconciliation is not possible under the current conditions of feminist and legal thought. The supposedly given ground of comparison—the human, and by extension, the woman—is far from a neutral descriptive category. Instead, each argument posits a very different understanding of the human in line with their local cosmology. Wynter writes,

Given the confrontation of two indigenous hermeneutics, two frameworks of rationality, and two modes of reflective thought and motivation...it will be only on the basis of an entirely new conception outside the limits of their respective criteria and conception of what it is to be a ‘good man or woman of their kind,’ outside the terms, therefore, of their cultural ontologies, and their respective indigenous behavioral repertoires and

⁸⁹ Sylvia Wynter, “Genital mutilation’ or ‘symbolic birth?’ Female circumcision, lost origins, and the aculturalism of Feminist/Western Thought,” *Case Western Law Review* 47.2 (1997): Online, emphasis added.

hermeneutics, that Professor Obiora's proposed middle course will be hearable.⁹⁰

The first step in this shift is not a new move (and so I will not go over it in detail here, although it is deserving of serious consideration): describing the variegated indigenous systems of meaning in the communities where female circumcision still serves as a ritual marking types of symbolic birth. Within the cultural relativism versus feminism impasse described earlier, locating the cultural meaning of the practice is the end-point of the argument. It is the subsequent analysis Wynter performs that produces a radical epistemological break. She describes the “indigenous hermeneutic” of Western feminism itself, exposing how descriptive statements about the Human have a historico-geographical basis that reveal the chauvinist particularity of the subject of “human rights.” Second, she draws these two systems parallel by revealing the formal processes at work in the production of the human and its good life across cultures. Sociogenesis allows a move from absolute relativism to an autopoietic description of subjective experience.

Following the anthropological work of Lucien Scubla and Obiora, Wynter argues that female circumcision must be understood in terms of “the Third Event,” the rupture in continuity with biological life that produces the human as a symbolic creature. “[This] form of life crossed a threshold after which it would come to motivate and orient its behaviors through the mediation of the Word.”⁹¹ Biological maternity, in other words,

⁹⁰ Ibid. This argument brings into relief how Wynter profoundly rereads the concept of qualia from Nagel. What it’s like to be human is expressed differently in different parts of the world such that the subjective experience of sociogenetic existence is geographically inflected. Thus, we really do have competing ontologies, or ontologisms more specifically, but not just as abstract philosophies. For Wynter, sociogenesis means subjective states are always spaced in the world in specific ways. It cannot be an irreducible relativism at work then.

⁹¹ Ibid.

becomes the symbolic kinship structure of mothering not determined in advance by genetic code. The Word here refers to the unique capacity for language evolved in humans *qua* humans that allows them (as biological creatures) to create autopoietic feedback loops between their bare life (neurology, physiognomy, reproductive biology) and cultural life.⁹² Seen in this context, female circumcision in different indigenous communities marks the specific movement across, and relationship between, bare life and cultural life; this movement is value-laden, operating according to the coordinates of a specific culture's notion of the good-life that precedes and exceeds the illusion of an autonomous, *sui generis* individual. So female circumcision is a "technology of the body" that physically inscribes a culture's horizons of meaning such that, "Initiates are removed from the common mass of humanity by a rite of separation."⁹³ Through this rite, community members are included in a particular genre of the human in the full sense of the Third Event.

It is only within a completely different conception of the human that this corporeal symbolism becomes intelligible as "torture" or "mutilation" expressing a hatred of women. Wynter pushes Obiora's analysis further, by not taking for granted the premise of Okin's question stated earlier, a premise Obiora implicitly concedes when she addresses "how relevant circumcision protestations contradict feminist principles."⁹⁴ Wynter illustrates that "feminist principles," far from articulating a coherent universal community, also rely on a limited set of cultural meanings about the good life such that there really is no contradiction: put simply, a certain brand of feminism, in line with the

⁹² Wynter, "Toward the Sociogenetic Principle," 60; Wynter, "The Ceremony Must be Found," 24. The next section explains with more precision Wynter's deployment of autopoiesis.

⁹³ Obiora quoted in Wynter, "Genital Mutilation?"

⁹⁴ Obiora quoted in Wynter, "Genital Mutilation?"

broader machinations of colonial neoliberal capitalism, has turned white, bourgeois females into the generic woman. In describing this “theoretical cannibalization” of female circumcision by Western feminists, Wynter articulates her broader thesis about the overrepresentation of man in terms of Western conceptions of gender.

As she makes clear in her indigenous analysis of female circumcision, every human collectivity demarcates their symbolic and physical borders according to shared values about the good life, constituting a specific “descriptive statement”⁹⁵ about the human. The problem today, under contemporary conditions of global capitalism, is the substitution of just one such descriptive statement for the generic and transhistorical referent of the Human. According to Wynter, Western ontologism maintains global hegemony over other genres of the human in its understanding “that the human is a purely biological being that exists in a relation of continuity with organic life.”⁹⁶ This category is the “biocentric” conception of man, originating in the work of Darwin and Malthus, described earlier. The simultaneous uptake of their work on evolutionary biology and the economics of resource scarcity and demography, respectively, installed a eugenicist and economic view of the human (Man2). Man2 is a thoroughly natural organism that measures the good life in terms of accumulated capital and naturally selected genetic traits, with each metric serving as proof of the other. Social inequality indexed by the discourse of “developed” and “undeveloped” peoples is naturalized along a bioevolutionary continuum on which white, bourgeois males represent the highest natural achievement of the human in opposition to the zero-point of Blackness where

⁹⁵ Descriptive statement is a term of art that Wynter takes from the cybernetics theorist Gregory Bateson, meaning an organizing principle that defines the persistence over time of a living system (see Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality,” and Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*); again, her argument is situated in contemporary debates over auto-poiesis in the next section.

⁹⁶ Wynter, “Genital Mutilation?”

humanity recedes into the bestiary. Wynter rearticulates W.E.B. Dubois's idea of the "color line" here, illustrating how racial difference is the organizing trope of our present moment, marking the difference between "symbolic life" and "symbolic death."

"It is only within the biologized terms of this culture," Wynter writes, "...that the practice of 'female circumcision' is see-able either as 'genital mutilation,' 'torture,' or, in ...'radical feminist' terms, as an institution put in place because of male 'hatred of the clitoris'." ⁹⁷ The indigenous hermeneutic of communities practicing female circumcision does not register as properly "human" on the bioevolutionary scale of Man2, in other words, because their relationship to the discourse of development places them on the dark side of the color line. ⁹⁸ Hence, any relationship between female circumcision and the symbolic kinship structures of *heterogeneous* human communities is unintelligible to Western feminists who seek explanations for bodily marking within their own origins stories: non-western women are rendered non-human, or unevolved, in relation to their primitive culture at the same time their Western sisters offer them redemption in the form of a "modern," Western-style emancipation from Patriarchy through equality feminism.

Within the article on "female genital mutilation," Wynter articulates sociogeny as analogous with "subjectivity," "symbolic birth," and "the institution of the human community." ⁹⁹ All human collectivities, in other words, socialize their members through a set of governing codes that must be understood through sociodiagnostics, or the

⁹⁷ Wynter, "Genital Mutilation?"

⁹⁸ See Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), chapter 1 "Time and the Emerging Other," particularly the section "From History to Evolution: The Naturalization of Time."; Wynter's formulation goes beyond just the denial of "co-evalness," as Maldonado-Torres points out, since the denial of co-humanness represents a more fundamental mode of differentiation. Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008): xii.

⁹⁹ Wynter, "Genital Mutilation?"

locating of the nature-culture interface in which human consciousness comes into being. Thus, the sociogenic principle reinstates the possibility of a transcultural critique that can articulate the effects of intersecting indigenous hermeneutics, not just intersecting identities. As I further argue below, this principle becomes particularly important to recognizing that women could have a complex, subjective experience of genital cutting that would see this as a form of symbolic birth, feel ambivalence toward it, or any number of reactions beyond facile false consciousness.

Now, with this conceptual scaffolding in place, it should be clear why Wynter refers to patriarchy as a “theoretical fiction” created by Western feminists in a particular historical moment. It follows logically from her historico-ontological argument concerning Man2: patriarchy, understood broadly as male/masculine dominance within a binary sex/gender system following A/A logic, only makes sense within the much more encompassing terrain of who does and does not count as human. As Maria Lugones puts it, “The reason to historicize gender formation is that without this history, we keep on centering our analysis on the patriarchy... Liberatory possibilities that emphasize the light side of the colonial/modern gender system affirm rather than reject an oppressive organization of life.”¹⁰⁰ Patriarchy, in other words, presupposes the register of the human such that a feminism defined in response to it is limited to intra-human insurrections, not an upending of the human-Man2 conflation. Hence, for Wynter, the “oppressive organization of life” mentioned by Lugones is the color line as a rhetorical and material axis demarcating the human. Understanding the color line as our political infrastructure, and by extension ‘patriarchy’ as epiphenomenal of the overrepresentation of man,

¹⁰⁰ Maria Lugones, “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System,” *Hypatia* 22.1 (2007): 187.

changes how one must approach the question of female circumcision.¹⁰¹

First, sociogenic analysis of female circumcision is transcultural but not ahistorical: in other words, it provides a specific contextualization of the historico-ontological field upon which the indigenous hermeneutics of Western feminists and various African communities meet. *Man2* stems initially from an imaginative exercise—the intellectual developments pioneered by Darwin, Spencer and Malthus—but includes in its descriptive statement a *global* ordering principle that sediments through spectacular and mundane violence. The structural conditions of colonial difference and slavery, in other words, are made possible by the theory of biological race (measured primarily by economic rationality) at the same time the former naturalizes and mystifies the latter.

Wynter explains,

The social behaviors that were to verify this topos of iconicity which yoked the Indo-European mode of being to human being in general... would be carried out by the complementary non-discursive practices of a new wave of great interments of native labors in new plantation orders and by the massacres of the colonial era... different forms of segregating the Ultimate Chaos that was the Black.¹⁰²

Today, the rhetorical position of Africa as underdeveloped (and so, less evolved) produced by the overrepresentation of man is inextricably intertwined with its ongoing expropriation and immiseration through structural adjustment, international “aid” and development, and enforced globalization and corporatization.

Second, Wynter suggests a sociogenic explanation for the limited horizon of Western feminism embodied by Okin’s question: “Is multiculturalism bad for women?”

Wynter argues, “So it is only within the terms of our contemporary culture that the

¹⁰¹ Chapter 3 on Irigaray, Glissant, and Wynter, further explains this connection between racialization and patriarchy beyond recourse to depth models.

¹⁰² Wynter, “Ceremony Must be Found,” 37.

eradication of these specific cultural practices, rather than, for example, the eradication of hunger, can be seen as the indispensable condition of being human, of being, for feminist thinkers and writers, an autonomous and fully realized woman.”¹⁰³ Enconced within the legitimate category of the human, even if they are discriminated against within that group, Western feminists can point to fundamentally sentimental gestures like ending female circumcision as finally achieving equality. The obsession with “unveiling” Muslim women, for example, has become the sentimental feminist politics par excellence, where a local cultural practice with a complex history becomes the flattened sign of monolithic Muslim patriarchy.¹⁰⁴ A focus on cultural practices leaves unnoticed the material conditions that attend the demarcation of the color line, such as Wynter’s example of chronic hunger and the global political economy of food.

Indeed, from the vantage point of Man2, agency within the temporal register of survival is not really relevant at all. While there are clearly certain cases in which white-European, bourgeois women experience bodily harm and the possibility of death—situations that I in no way want to minimize—such instances arise within the temporal register of the event, shocking aberrations produced by specific pathological individuals or patriarchal settings.¹⁰⁵ So when a woman’s life is at stake as the *normative* condition of her daily existence (what Lauren Berlant calls the temporality of “crisis

¹⁰³ Wynter, “Genital Mutilation?”

¹⁰⁴ Ayotte and Husain, “Securing Afghan Women: Neocolonialism, Epistemic Violence, and the Rhetoric of the Veil,” *NWSA Journal* 17.3 (2005): 112-133.

¹⁰⁵ It is worth insisting on the ongoing importance of feminism in a global context around the issue of abortion, which remains as urgent and pressing as ever. The introductory discussion of sexual violence and intersectionality evidences, as well, how status of “event” and the implication of shock and aberration in the context of sexual coercion and rape remains a privilege of the light side of the color line

ordinariness”¹⁰⁶) because of combined forces of neo-colonial militarism and neo-liberal capitalism, Western feminists try to reconceptualize daily survival in terms of exceptional events that arise from patriarchy.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the agency of these women caught within the temporal register of survival is unintelligible and they are forced to fit a binary frame: either they are passive victims of patriarchy, mutilated or duped into complicity, or they are active resisters, heroic sisters taking up the feminist fight against their own men.

With these two points, finally, Wynter can rethink female circumcision without having to decide between absolute relativism or imperialist paternalism. That is, without romanticizing it, Wynter combines the many layers of her argument to explain how the risks and promises of female circumcision fit along the global color line. Taking Obiora’s medical middle road proposal—to embrace symbolic prickings but reject dangerous health practices—a step further, Wynter tries to understand the historico-ontological conditions that make female circumcision particularly dangerous to women’s bodies today. She acknowledges the danger, “As has been documented, the continuing practice of female circumcision in the new social environment (of an Africa in the throes of a shanty-town mass urbanization, or of fully industrialized European states) has led to serious complications, grave risks of infection, and severe sexual malfunction.”¹⁰⁸

Without the long and arduous sociogenic analysis she did to contextualize these complications, a journey few Western feminists undertake, the solution would indeed seem to be simply outlawing the risky procedure. Given Wynter’s convincing description of the production of Man2, it becomes clear instead that the problem is how a

¹⁰⁶ Lauren Berlant, “Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)” *Critical Inquiry* 33 (2007): 779.

¹⁰⁷ For more on anti-rape feminism in the US and Europe as an example. See Angela Davis, “Rape, Racism and the Capitalist Setting,” *The Black Scholar* 12.6 (1981): 39-45.

¹⁰⁸ Wynter, ‘Genital Mutilation?’

cultural practice with a particular meaning becomes problematic when a separate indigenous hermeneutic becomes materially determinate. Put simply, practitioners of female circumcision live on the wrong side of the color line such that malnutrition, infectious disease and environmental destruction are the conditions under which bodily inscription must occur. For indigenous hermeneutics other than biologized Western Man2, the material world into which they are thrown has become massively distanced from their conceptions of the good life. In a fashion that must be quoted at length, Wynter concludes her sociogenic analysis of female circumcision:

[T]he cornucopia of resources that are being extracted, mined and harvested ... (and which call for, inter alia, the large scale polluting of the environment) are so poorly distributed that 20 percent of the earth's people are chronically hungry or starving, while the rest of the population, largely in the North, control and consume 80 percent of the world's wealth. [E]xtreme poverty to which the distribution system leads (poverty that, inter alia, blocks the urgently needed growth of a "scientific temper," as well as of the stabilized job and income security needed to make both birth control and the clinicalization and thereby ending of the practice of female circumcision a rational choice), lead to a situation in which... a climatic bust of consumption by a single species is overwhelming the skies, earth, waters, and fauna.”

...[Female Circumcision] can be identified as the direct effect of a still profoundly culturally embedded conception of being inherited from the cultural sphere of a once autocentric Agrarian Africa but now not necessarily providential to its practitioners. Thus, this cause-effect relation is that the negative social and environmental effects, as documented by Hawken, are also the effects of a culturally embedded conception of being (that of the human as a purely biologised being whose optimal criterion of being is that of homo oeconomicus), and whose "significant ill" of Natural Scarcity and "cure" of unending economic growth or plan of material salvation leads to our present.¹⁰⁹

Beginning with the production of Man2 and the violent demarcation of the color line leads to a non-reductive understanding of female circumcision that takes into account its symbolic meanings without erasing or minimizing its physical risks; most importantly, it

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

exposes how the assumed “acultural” status of Western feminism and their organizing trope of patriarchy contributes to the system of global destruction that not only makes female circumcision particularly dangerous in the first place (through centuries of draining the strength from non-white bodies) but also enables an ongoing genocide, whether by war or environmental destruction, against those on the dark side of the color line.

III. The Liminal Subject and Chaos in the System: From Autopoiesis to The Virtual

The exegesis of Wynter’s analysis of “FGM” raises two questions about her conceptual edifice. First, if indigenous hermeneutics are described auto-poietically in terms of rhetorical-neurobiological feedback loops, how is change introduced and how does the system transform or undergo a phase-change? Second, where does her critique of feminism leave gender studies more broadly in terms of its contribution to understandings of the human or, as Wynter pithily puts it elsewhere, does gender studies or feminist theory help us understand “*genre studies*”? This section argues these two questions interlink in the importance of “liminal subjects” for introducing chaos into the systemic regeneration of Man2, suggesting a more complex role of feminist theory in Wynter’s work than just target of critique.

These two questions interlink through the meanings of “survival” at different scales. Sociogenesis as described here concerns the tense vacillations between two senses of survival: the conservative character of survival at the level of systemic analysis and the disruptive effect of survival at the level of embodied existence. The first sense articulated in Wynter comes primarily from the cybernetic theorist Gregory Bateson who defines it

to mean, “that certain descriptive statements about some living system continue to be true through some period of time.”¹¹⁰ The life/death codes of Man2 described earlier constitute a descriptive statement in this sense. Chela Sandoval, on the other hand, describes survival from the vantage point of systematic exclusion: “In attempting to repossess identity and culture, U.S. feminists of color during the 1960’s and 1970’s, U.S. punks during the early 1980’s, peoples of color and queers during the 1990’s developed *survival* skills into technologies for reorganizing peoples and their collective dreams for empowerment into images-turned-fact.”¹¹¹ Audre Lorde puts these two senses together in “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action,” “For to survive in the mouth of this dragon we call America,” she writes, “we have had to learn this first and vital lesson—that we were never meant to survive. Not as human beings.”¹¹² Almost paradoxically, registering the structural impossibility of survival for those bodies and populations marked for various forms of death and decay proves the most important survival tactic Lorde invents. Under current conditions of what it means to be human, in other words, there can be no survival for those to whom Lorde writes; and yet, in their very survival, they expose the limits of that genre of the human and prophesize a new human beyond the toxic fantasy spewed by this dragon. This question of survival, one Lorde would repeat as a refrain in her poem “A Litany for Survival,” represents the fundamental problematic of Wynter’s oeuvre. As Lorde puts it there, “It is better to speak/remembering/we were never meant to survive.” It is in the fissures and fault lines borne of the friction between these two senses of survival where Wynter finds the auto-

¹¹⁰ Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1972): 345.

¹¹¹ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 34.

¹¹² Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2012): 42.

poietic force of the current descriptive statement of Man and the disequilibrating force of chaos introduced by liminal subjects.

Borrowing the concept from Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana, Wynter contends that every human order is an “*autopoietic*, autonomously functioning, languaging, living system.”¹¹³ For Varela and Maturana, an autopoietic system is a “homeostatic machine” defined relationally rather than in terms of essential component parts, such that it “continuously generates and specifies its own organization through its operation as a system of production of its own components...under conditions of continuous perturbations and compensation of perturbations.”¹¹⁴ The systemic survival of a given descriptive statement occurs autonomously through the self-organization of human society, in other words, and the governing codes are retroactively projected as natural such that the process of organization *appears* automatic and stable—the appearance of stability creates self-stabilization as a secondary effect. The system self-corrects according to established codes of symbolic life and death to maintain dynamic equilibrium. If one sees Man2 as autopoietically instituted, for instance, perturbations like a labor strike or collectivization or a black power movement require political solutions that appear as self-corrections. The tortuous rhetorical language of “Right to Work” legislation, for instance, which destroys collective bargaining power for unions in the United States of America, discursively casts its anti-labor effects as the natural (and so apolitical and acultural) defense of citizens to buy and sell their possessive individualism

¹¹³ Wynter, “Unparalleled Catastrophe,” 32.

¹¹⁴ Humberto Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: Realization of the Living* (London: D. Reidel Publishing, 1980), 79.

as they “always have.”¹¹⁵ This is the power of the pre-given structure of political opposition in the United States, as Lisa Duggan argues, where Democrats and Republicans fight over a series of “cultural” battles disarticulated from their economic context, “with the overarching salience of global neoliberalism across this entire spectrum effectively ignored.”¹¹⁶

This autopoietic model helpfully imports a robust methodological advance from the natural sciences to bring rhetorical and physical structures into intimate and mutually contouring contact. In a review of the autopoietically inspired social scientific and humanities literature, however, Patricia Clough points out the limits of a homeostatic approach based on *closed* systems, that is an analysis limited to self-correction and stable replication.¹¹⁷ Clough asks how to methodologically incorporate disequilibrium and the possibility of phase-change and not just systemic reproduction. If Man2 stably auto-institutes, in other words, how do we go beyond the word of Man towards the human?

¹¹⁵ Steven Greenhouse, “Strained States Turning to Laws to Curb Labor Unions,” *The New York Times* 4 January 2011: A1.

¹¹⁶ Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004): xiii; Jean Baudrillard, for his part, labels this “metastasis, a cloning of the world and of our mental universe.” Baudrillard, “Disneyworld Company,” trans. by Francois Debrix, *Liberation*, 4 March 1996, available at <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-baudrillard/articles/disneyworld-company/>. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to address Wynter’s relationship to Baudrillard and the generation of post-Marxist French thinkers (Guy Debord, Jacques Ranciere) with whom she shares a serious reckoning around questions of the sensible, the visible, and the aesthetic as the heart of politics. For now, I would note similarities between her critique of the overrepresentation of Man as the limit of political discourse and Baudrillard’s critique here of metastatic divisions between “left” and “right” that fail to question the cloning of a narrow humanist’s cognitive architecture. The difference, of course, is difference itself. Baudrillard’s own limited mental universe admits no racial, gender, or sexual otherness and thus lacks any reckoning with liminal subjects, making it impossible for him to see beyond metastasis. The future closed off, he retreats to a nostalgia for a time before hyperreality and the time-space compression of globalization that is suspiciously free of the complications of alterity or Relation. See Massumi, “Realer than Real,” William Connolly, *Neuropolitics*; Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*.

¹¹⁷ Patricia Clough, “The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedica, and Bodies,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010): 215-217.

The problem concerns the meta-epistemological structure of an auto-poietic system, such that a component relationally instituted at a certain level of organization is constitutionally incapable of seeing itself in terms of a *higher* level of organization. As Wynter puts it, "...in the same way as the bee can never have knowledge of the higher-level system that is its hive, we too can in no way *normally* gain cognitive access to the higher level of the genre-specific auto-poietic living system of our status quo structured social worlds, one in whose terms we are always already initiated..."¹¹⁸ In that sense, it would seem Wynter runs into the same problems described by Clough in relying on a model of consciousness determined by rules of organization that we cannot hope to transform precisely because "we" are already instituted as a "we" precisely by those same rules. Crucially, however, the second sense of survival given earlier, taken from Sandoval and Lorde, interjects itself at this point making possible precisely the kind of meta-cognition "normally" impossible in an auto-poietic system. Wynter introduces the concept of the "liminal subject" to resolve this seeming paradox.

Fanon's experience on the train car exemplifies the power of liminality to reveal the truth of the system and to trace its outside. In the moment of "Look a Negro," Fanon's mind and body cleave together and apart as his "normal consciousness," auto-instituted as white in the full sense of Man2, is confronted by a black body and diagnosed as autophobic. This experience of profound alienation is simultaneously generative, according to Wynter, who describes it as the reaching of a threshold from which the liminal subject can generate a force of disalienation.

That negative identity entails for us a spearheading role in the counter-exerting thrust to regain the now lost motives of the self-interest of the human species. In other words, it is the very liminality (on the threshold, both in and outside) of our

¹¹⁸ Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 32.

category-structure location within the present "field of play" of the discursive symbol-matter information system that gives us the *cognitive edge* with respect to such a far-reaching transformation.¹¹⁹

She expands here on the sense of the liminal proposed by anthropologist Asmarom Legesse to describe subjects on the threshold of a new world in the midst of cultural ritual. Beyond a specific moment of cultural initiation, however, the liminal subject assumes a structural role at the limit of the overrepresentation of Man where the systemic truth of the descriptive statement lights up like a hologram, any single point revealing the interconnected image of Man². Hence the "cognitive edge" is the three-dimensional boundary marker traced by a liminal subject who survives as a human, abysally different from other humans and non-humans, yet necessarily exists as less than human or inhuman for the symbolic codes through which they themselves have auto-instituted.

This is the specific sense of expression deployed earlier (and expanded in chapter 3), the process by which liminality actualizes through a specific body but is not necessarily reducible to that body's concrete physicality. Thus, the "cognitive edge" Wynter describes differs slightly but importantly from notions of "epistemic privilege" in feminist standpoint theory where the diverse identities of investigators promise "less partial and less distorted" perspectives.¹²⁰ The cognitive edge of the liminal subject introduces the processual, dynamic relation between embodiment and standpoint that does not lay claim to an inherently revelatory perspective so much as makes the alienated body the point at which the overrepresentation of Man necessarily touches its outside. Wynter's theory of the liminal is not a rejection of standpoint theory then, but a

¹¹⁹ Wynter, "On Disenchanted Discourse: 'Minority' Literary Criticism and Beyond," *Cultural Critique* 7 (1987): 237.

¹²⁰ Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1991).

relocation of the standpoint into a spatio-temporal model of embodiment that makes epistemology always-already onto-epistemology. The standpoint model, with its faith in more and better information, falls prey to the homeostatic mode of autopoiesis given above that also inheres in classic liberal renderings of the public sphere. As the later discussion of Hurricane Katrina and the War on Terror suggest, faith in the power of information and images alone not only fails to effect an insurrection at the level of the human but tends to unwittingly feed status quo discourses of Man. Hence, the effect of Wynter's embodied mapping of liminality is two-fold: first, it productively reads the ambivalence of the racialized body, its blockages and openings, as a landscape of sinew and sentiment Wynter calls the "demonic ground," shifting the locus of revolutionary change from abstract information to embodied consciousness; second, it reimagines Afro-Caribbean and feminist philosophy beyond the confines of "race" or "gender" identity studies and towards the practice of *genre* studies or how different *kinds* of humans emerge at different moments and how to imagine their co-habitation of overlapping, even intertwined, worlds that are variegated yet equally *habitable*.¹²¹

To illustrate the first effect, the body as a site of blockage and opening that can become "demonic ground," I begin with the relationship between Fanon and Henri Bergson, one of the philosophers at the forefront of the reinvigoration of embodied thought in feminist theory and new materialism more generally, particularly given his influence on the work of Deleuze and Guattari. Bergson has received a swell of critical attention in the last decade because of his incisive critique of idealism at the beginning of the twentieth-century, providing a useful point of entry for materialist accounts of

¹²¹ The second effect, the shift to genre studies, is taken up in the next chapter.

embodied consciousness.¹²² Despite the extensive critical attention, few commenters have noted Bergson's presence in Fanon's self-reckoning in *Black Skin, White Masks*.¹²³ Here, his relationship to Fanon helps me define what a *body* can do, so we can then ask how specific bodies become the vantage point for imagining the world otherwise.

In the crucial chapter entitled "The Lived Experience of the Black Man," Fanon refers elliptically to Bergson, only mentioning him once by way of a Sartre quotation, but articulates the task of sociogenesis and revolutionary humanism in direct conversation with Bergson's sense of *intuition* and its counterpart *duration*. Fanon mentions "Jews who have made intuition the basic category of their philosophy," clearly referencing Bergson, inspiring him to "enthusiastically...[research] my surroundings."¹²⁴ Intuition for Bergson is a way of thinking in terms of duration, a truly temporal category where the present is a constant unfolding into the future that simultaneously draws upon the past.¹²⁵ The world then is made up of a multiplicity of irreducible durations; Bergson's famous example is waiting for a sugar cube to dissolve in water and sensing in his own human impatience the irreducible durations of the elements involved.¹²⁶ As Deleuze puts it,

¹²² See Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Zone Books, 1990); Leonard Lawlor, *The Challenge of Bergsonism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003); Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹²³ Donna Jones is a notable exception. Her reading of Negritude as an "Afro-Bergsonism" is limited primarily to a critique of Bergson and his irrationalist tendencies. As this reading of Bergson and Fanon by way of Grosz suggests, I do not entirely agree with her critique of Bergson or his uptake in Césaire. For a response in particular to the charge of irrationalism and mysticism in Bergson, see Hantel, "Bobby Between Deleuze and Levinas, or Ethics Becoming-Animal," *Angelaki* 18.2 (2013): 105-126. Donna Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Négritude, Vitalism, and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

¹²⁴ Fanon, *BSWM*, 98-99.

¹²⁵ I say properly temporal because, according to Bergson, most accounts of time are actually "spatialized" in that they freeze the unfolding of time into a rigid block isolated moments represented additively.

¹²⁶ Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2003): 10.

intuition is “the movement by which we emerge from our own duration... [and] make use of our own duration to affirm...and recognize the existence of other durations.”¹²⁷ For Bergson, only intuition allows us to go beyond the brute facticity of existence, a snapshot of stable entities, to the conditions of that existence and their openness to radically other futures. The notion of intuition powerfully dismantles a materialist-idealist dualism, then, as it shows perception is born out of *action* instead of contemplation. We perceive durational objects that interest us and engage us, in other words, like the sugar cube engaging Bergson’s duration. Thus, rather than a material-ideal split (a false problem, in Bergson’s view), the question is the virtual and the actual. Perception remains a formal category that marks the moment where a *virtual* action emerges, or an imprint of the unrealized capacities of what we perceive. Perception becomes *actual* by force of an affect or embodied action through which the virtual emerges. Neither materialist nor idealist, Bergson shows that materiality includes virtual, non-present capacities and forces that may or may not actualize through their relations with other bodies and entities.¹²⁸ By spatializing time, mapping difference and encounter synchronically, theorists artificially eliminate duration. And so, the method of intuition shifts the frame: “Questions relating to subject and object, to their distinction and to their union, should be put in terms of time rather than space.”¹²⁹

Readers of Fanon will notice the reverberations of this shift in *Black Skin, White Masks* where Fanon writes, “The problem considered here is one of *time*. Those Negroes and white men will be disalienated who refuse to let themselves be sealed away in the

¹²⁷ Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 33.

¹²⁸ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by Palmer and Paul (New York: Zone Books, 1988): chapter 1.

¹²⁹ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 218.

materialized Tower of the Past.”¹³⁰ Fanon recontextualizes the Bergsonian question to the colonial situation, finding that the ground of politics is the body as the point at which history might translate into a seemingly impossible future, actualized by a decolonial commitment. Similarly, feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz has argued that Bergson reanimates freedom as “the condition of, or capacity for, action in life.”¹³¹ For Grosz, Bergson again escapes a poorly formed dualism—determinism versus free will—by undermining the notion of “possibility” upon which it relies, replacing it instead with the category of the virtual described earlier: “Acts, having been undertaken, transform their agent so that the paths that the agent took to the act are no longer available to him or her except abstractly or in reconstruction.” In acting, which is to say actualizing the virtual, we transform ourselves and our relations such that the past become a spatialized reminiscence abstracted from the moment of action and the specific durations involved.

For Grosz, this notion of freedom-in-action articulates the political valence of new materialist thought because it no longer reduces freedom to the narrow possessiveness of an empowered (usually white, male, European) subject able to mobilize choice, instead finding freedom as part of matter itself in the indeterminacy between the virtual and the actual. “Indetermination is the 'true principle' of life, the condition for the open-ended action of living beings, the ways in which living bodies are mobilized for action that cannot be specified in advance. The degrees of indetermination are the degrees of freedom.”¹³² Hence, freedom becomes a question of time in the properly Bergsonian sense, just as Fanon argues decolonization becomes a question of time. In following the

¹³⁰ Fanon, *BSWM*, 226.

¹³¹ Grosz, “Feminism, Materialism, and Freedom,” in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, Politics* eds. Coole and Frost (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010): 140.

¹³² *Ibid*, 149.

sociogenetic method, however, the follow-up question becomes what the auto-institution of the color line in the projection of a supposedly neutral “human” duration means for the temporal relationship described as the indeterminacy between the virtual and the actual.

Fanon’s excitement over the methodological advance of intuition, an explicitly anti-intellectualist doctrine, stems from his impatience with the “cat and mouse” game of reason that he endures in scientific and political discussions over colonial subjectivity, which leaves the black man dehumanized even as formal abstract reason promises his humanity. The most famous example, perhaps, is Sartre’s intellectualization of Fanon’s lived experience as the minor term of the dialectic.¹³³ Bergson’s intuition, at its best, promises an unmediated point of confluence between past and an open future at the site of the unalienated body: “And when this distance is nil, that is to say when the body to be perceived is our own body, it is a real and no longer a virtual action that our perception sketches out.”¹³⁴ In hopes of following Bergson then, finding the freedom of indeterminacy embodied, Fanon “enthusiastically set to cataloguing and probing [his] surroundings” to bring his body into line with its own durations and the rhythm of other durations.¹³⁵ To become disalienated from racialization, no longer “locked away,” means a simultaneous closing and opening: eliminate the imagined distance between the body and consciousness such that the actualization of the virtual can occur through *action*;

¹³³ Fanon, *BSWM*, 132-133; this theme in Fanon, the rearticulation of racialization, makes clear how the color line operates as a processual, auto-poietic mechanism rather than a discrete set of essential component parts. As he tells the tragic epic of his searching movement for meaning and humanization through science, poetry, and politics he realizes, “So they were countering my irrationality with rationality, my rationality with the 'true rationality.'” (113) And so the push and pull of anti-racism and racialization goes, such that the successful deconstruction of race as biological essence becomes the handmaiden of colorblind racism and a Supreme Court that dismantles affirmative action in the name of anti-racism.

¹³⁴ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 311.

¹³⁵ Fanon, *BSWM*, 199.

secondarily, hold open the space between the virtual and the actual such that the disalienated body and the world it inhabits may become otherwise.¹³⁶

As we already know from Wynter's analysis of sociogenesis and the famous train car scene, intuition fails Fanon in the first instance because of the autophobia that pries apart his black body and his white consciousness and because of the visual economy that gives him autopoietic meaning. His attempt to enter the flow of duration and make of his body the point of transversality between past, present and future, their point of indetermination, is weighed down by the chains and shackles of an external gaze, a coerced history. His corporeal schema catches him in the tripartite trap he describes as being responsible for "my body, my race, my ancestors" forcing him to "discover his blackness."¹³⁷ The gap between body and consciousness opens to a yawning abyss; the distance between actual and virtual seemingly shuts.

Thus, the corporeal descriptions littering *Black Skin, White Masks* ought not be understood as metaphorical. The racialized epidermal schema replaces the corporeal schema: "I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without."¹³⁸ Fanon becomes the somatic point of encounter between the material and ideal described by Bergson, but must experience it as a shackling rather than an opening. The racialized body cannot

¹³⁶ While I do not explore this connection directly, the inevitable spatializing metaphors that thinkers of time like Fanon, Bergson, and Grosz fall back to (i.e. distance, intervals, gaps) point to the inextricable articulation of duration in landscape. This insistence on the spacing of the body and its connections form the core of chapter 4 on Glissant and his concept of the rhizome. This double movement of closing and opening I have described here, however, also structures Glissant's approach in a manner worth investigating in future research. Glissant writes, "Distancings are necessary to Relation and depend on it: like the coexistence of sea olive and manchineel." (*Poetics of Relation*, 157). Glissant embeds the distancing in a specific landscape, its ambivalence to human duration marked by the infamously poisonous fruit of the manchineel tree.

¹³⁷ Fanon, *BSWM*, 112.

¹³⁸ Fanon, *BSWM*, 116.

achieve the dual distancing celebrated by Grosz and Bergson; after the cry of “Look a Negro,” the sociogenesis of a blackened subject, Fanon finds his “body returned to [him] spread-eagled, disjointed, redone, draped in mourning on this white winter’s day.”¹³⁹

Under current conditions of the overrepresentation of man, duration (as a pure temporal category) is impossibly spatialized or balkanized by the color line. The idea of living at the point of the interpenetration of past and present in a way that gives us indeterminacy as a condition of freedom inherent to life as such is necessarily denied to liminal subjects whose very corporeal schema is trapped or distorted through habituation and feedback loops, a pernicious ontologism emerging from abstract ontology.

Hence, the body becomes the site of the two senses of survival, creating the recurring motif of bodily tension throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon examines racialization in terms of the establishment of a bodily schema, or the place of the self as matter and movement within a spatio-temporal horizon. The bodily schema is definitive because it “creates a *real* dialectic between my body and the world.”¹⁴⁰ Unlike Sartre’s intellectualization of the black experience as a sublated minor term, the “real” dialectic emerges out of the tension of the black body moving through white space. It is a body in motion and a productive, subjectivizing space that is not just metaphorically white, but quite literally secretes whiteness in the autopoietic sense diagrammed by Wynter. This is the tension between the system’s survival and the liminal subject’s survival, the black subject diagnosed by Maldonado-Torres as “sentenced to death but who nonetheless continues living.”¹⁴¹ Fanon finds himself suspended between various conceptual edifices that have no room for the lived experience—the real dialectic—of his body. So the

¹³⁹ Fanon, *BSWM*, 100. Note: this citation is from the Philcox translation.

¹⁴⁰ Fanon, *BSWM*, 111.

¹⁴¹ Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*, 135.

position of the black subject mired in coloniality is often discussed in stasis, as if this suspension implies a lack of movement; interpellated to carry a burden so heavy that they appear stationary, shackled to the triple self of the body, the race, and the ancestors. But that suspension is a parallax movement across the terms of the dialectic, the body and the world, that is absolutely *real*. As Fanon puts it when he recounts the violence of Bigger Thomas from Richard Wright's novel *Native Son*, "In the end, Bigger Thomas acts. To put an end to his tension, he acts, he responds to the world's anticipation."¹⁴² He acts to pry open the gap between the actual and the virtual and to enhance the body's freedom to become otherwise.¹⁴³ This move claims the power of a liminal existence, that even as grafts of skin and muscle painfully stitch together a self-instituting system, one can fleetingly feel the air of an outside.

IV. From Fanon and Bigger to Fanon and Kanye

I want to turn to a mass mediatized moment of "tension" like Fanon describes, this time around the specific context of Hurricane Katrina and its relationship to the narrative feedback loops of liberal humanism. On September 2, 2005, *A Concert for Hurricane Relief* aired live on NBC, the first nationally televised benefit after Katrina done specifically for the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund. The hour long special is generally remembered for one moment and one moment alone. Kanye West declaring, "George Bush doesn't care about black people." While many remember the

¹⁴² Fanon, *BSWM*, 139.

¹⁴³ This is like the discussion of "spontaneous" violence in Fanon; the question in later chapters of *Black Skin, White Masks* and in the transition to *Wretched of the Earth* is tying the moment of spontaneous violence to the creation of a new species, and so maintaining its ethical stance. Drucilla Cornell, "Fanon Today," in *The Meanings of Rights: The Philosophy and Social Theory of Human Rights*, eds. Douzinas and Gearty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): 126.

declaration in isolation, very few take it seriously as the opening of a liminal subject in the way understood by Wynter or the negotiation of a structural tension in the way understood by Fanon. Instead, dominant academic frames for West's declaration see him as an inadequately rigorous social commentator:

...media coverage and social commentary on Katrina frequently individualizes racism, for example...with Kanye West's claim that 'Bush doesn't care about black people.' But, ... the quest for racial justice cannot be reduced to a search for hidden bigots or uncaring politicians. It must involve an examination of the systemic problems of vulnerability and racism.¹⁴⁴

Returning to the scene of enunciation, however, suggests a much more complex explosion of racialized embodiment from the strictures of a deracialized narrative of Katrina as an American tragedy.

We remember Kanye's¹⁴⁵ outburst today as a violent punctuation, an archetypally angry black man losing control and raging against a political machine he hardly understands.¹⁴⁶ Those who remember the moment fondly in the heroic terms of speaking truth to power still tend to erase any complexity from the event beyond Kanye's singular accusation of racial malice. Of course, video of the event is widely available, reproduced endlessly on the news afterwards and saved forever on Youtube and comparable video hosting sites. The evident disjuncture between what the tape shows and how it is

¹⁴⁴ Keith Wailoo et al, "Introduction: Katrina's Imprint," in *Katrina's Imprint: Race and Vulnerability in America*, eds. Wailoo et al (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010): 4.

¹⁴⁵ I weighed the decision to refer to Kanye throughout the text as either Kanye or West, the latter being the more traditional academic mode of citation for an engagement with source material. I ultimately decided on Kanye not to reassert the line between him as a rapper versus a "proper" academic source, but to keep an emphasis on his complex positioning as a black celebrity, famous and knowable as "Kanye" even while trying to enunciate how the qualifier of "black" can constitute a negation.

¹⁴⁶ In today's most popular mode of writing online, the "listicle," Kanye's outburst is often included in lists such as "Top 10 Outrageous Kanye West Moments," by *Time*. Available at time.com.

remembered in popular and academic outlines of Hurricane Katrina suggests that memory serves as a particularly powerful political technology; in this case, different narrative strategies make Kanye's racial dyspepsia more easily digestible for the body of Man2, dissolving the profound challenge to the overrepresentation of Man issued by his fleeting grasp of liminality. A close analysis of this scene in terms of the arrangements of bodies and words is a point of departure to flesh out the discussion of autopoiesis at a granular level.

Kanye West and Mike Myers stand side by side, staggered by a large screen in the background between them and another large screen to Kanye's left. The screens play on loop different stills and videos taken from post-Katrina destruction, alternating between roving aerial shots of flooded urban space and close up images of suffering (black) faces. Myers, a white actor from Canada, begins reading the teleprompter that lays out the need for charity as the camera slowly zooms in, leaving only the screen playing aerial images of widespread destruction visible between the upper half of each celebrity. The script begins, "With the breach of three levees protecting New Orleans, the landscape of the city has changed dramatically, tragically and perhaps irreversibly. There's now over 25 feet of water where there were once city streets and thriving neighborhoods."¹⁴⁷

Textually, the sense of "thriving" neighborhoods invoked here certainly demands attention as a precursor to political discourses displacing the harm of Katrina onto the random cruelty of an Act of God, setting up private charity as the final limit of available responses. But even before the representational implications of the script, it is clear in

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIUzLpO1kxI>; Transcripts also available at http://www.democracynow.org/2005/9/5/kanye_west_bush_doesnt_care_about

watching the video that Kanye's bodily comportment effectuates the kind of tension described by Fanon: what I earlier described as the tensing of the virtual in the interval before actualization, an especially taut relationship between body and space for the liminal black subject in the normatively white sphere of charity. With his hands in his pockets, Kanye's chest gently heaves as he seems to try to control his breathing, his anxiety given away by frequent but irregular blinking.

I do not mean to retroactively project meaning onto these details so much as to describe how meaning itself and the subject as the bearer of meaning emerges out of a series of pre-individuated series and fields, in this case the arrangement of the looping images of disaster framed by a simultaneously symmetrical and asymmetrical white and black face directed toward a real but unseen audience of millions through the mediation of the camera lens. This pre-individuated field speaks to the rethinking of the body through the terms of affect, a philosophical genealogy including not only Bergson but stretching back to Spinoza and forward to Deleuze and Guattari. Spinoza defines a body according to its capacity to affect and be affected: not what is a body or what is the value of a body, questions of form and function, but what can a body do?¹⁴⁸ The incessant play of rest and movement that defines a body, necessarily in relationship to other bodies in relative states of movement and rest, gestures towards what Brian Massumi calls the "autonomy of affect." That is, affect as bodily intensity occurs at a pre-conscious and

¹⁴⁸ Benedictus de Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 154. For other editions, see Part III, Definition 3 of the *Ethics*.

pre-subjective level, while still having subjectivizing effects. Affect is expressed through a body but is never reducible to said body.¹⁴⁹

This point marks the crucial difference between affect and emotion, a common conflation in works identified as part of the affective turn. “Formed, qualified, situated perceptions...are the capture and closure of affect. Emotion is the most intense (most contracted) expression of that capture—and of the fact that something has always and again escaped.”¹⁵⁰ In crude terms, emotion is a term used when the coordinates of a pre-given and discrete subject are accepted in advance—emotion describes the perception of an interiority, a feeling from inside moving out, that expresses the significations of a recognizable body. Affect is far messier. As it criss-crosses the body from a pre-subjective, or extra-subjective space, it disarticulates neat conceptualizations of the autonomous, rational, and intentional subject; and while it disturbs the subject, affect is also the condition of possibility for the emergence of a body as a temporary localization of matter-energy flows.¹⁵¹ It is the field in which individuations occur.

Read that way, we do not know what Kanye’s tension *means* so much as we can feel its valence much like an electric charge in the air before an electrostatic discharge—there is no guarantee of a specific outcome, but there is suddenly a field of potentiality surrounding the script scrolling down the teleprompter. This field is the virtual: we do not and can not *know* what comes next; crucially, neither does Kanye in the sense of possessive individualism (where a formed thought sits like an object in a brain-container

¹⁴⁹ Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Sensation, Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002): 30-33.

¹⁵⁰ Massumi 35; see also Clough, “The Affective Turn,” 205-208, for a helpful disarticulation of affect and emotion.

¹⁵¹ This chapter focuses on a specific technology of affective capture, narratives of sentimentality; the later chapters on the relationship between Glissant and Deleuze and Guattari pick back up this aspect of affect, that is as a theory of dynamic materialism relating bodies and landscapes.

waiting for verbalization), although the multiplicity of the virtual has material effects, or it is *real*, even before he actualizes any of the possible outcomes. His breathing and his blinking are just two of the many autonomic and proprioceptive traces of his body's immanent dynamism at the moment of the interval.

Myers finishes his assigned portion of the pre-written script. There is a hitch in Kanye's voice when he clears his throat and gathers his vocal apparatus into a temporary unity. "I hate the way....they portray us...in the media." He begins slowly, wavering and seemingly unconfident; yet, it is clear *something* is happening in this field initially defined through the narrative institution of a neoliberal tale, charity and natural disaster. Kanye's deviation from the script hits Myers who turns uneasily to his co-presenter during the casting of sides, the invoked "they" and "us" with Kanye uneasily self-positioned on both sides.

Kanye continues, "You see a black family, it says, 'They're looting.' You see a white family, it says, 'They're looking for food.'" He refers here to a specific pair of photos that became infamous in the aftermath of Katrina from the Associated Press and AFP/Getty, respectively, due to different captions for differently racialized subjects.¹⁵² Beyond the specific captions, however, Kanye brings us back to the stakes of survival in

¹⁵² The first from the AP featured a young black man with the caption, "'A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005.'" The second from the AFP/Getty showed a white man and a white woman with the caption, "'Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana.'" The conversation sparked by the photos ended up revolving around individualized editorial decisions and standards, with justificatory statements made in reference to what the photographers did or did not see before the snapshot itself. (For a helpful aggregating of the media debate that ensued, see Aaron Kinney, "Looting or Finding?," *Salon*, http://www.salon.com/2005/09/02/photo_controversy/). As the later discussion of media frames and the discursive circulation of imagery suggests, reducing the photos to questions of what any one photographer did or did not see to ascertain the "truth" of what happened misses the point Kanye raises about the media as a structuring force for the prescribed visual field of whiteness.

the ontologism of Man2 where material possession and whiteness mutually confirm each other through the biocentric discourse of the natural order of things. Thus, the seemingly self-evident stakes of life and death are qualified through narratively inscribed symbolic codes and somatechnically enforced arrangements of bodies and space. The camera captures a moment of “fugitivity” in the broad sense of an improvised black life incompletely contained by black death, but still forced into intimacy with the latter, always proximate and even submerged in it at times.¹⁵³ The caption assigns criminality to the escape, forcing black life back into the necropolitical frame; the moment of survival is a moment of theft, a short sip from a well of life from which blackness is not supposed to drink. He took what is not his. He should know, along with the rest of us, it was not his because he was “never meant to survive.”¹⁵⁴

In this rendering of the “us” and “them,” moreover, Kanye turns to the accusatory second-person, saying “you know” why you are seeing what you are seeing even if you refuse to see it. “And, you know, it's been five days because most of the people are

¹⁵³ Fugitivity is borrowed from Fred Moten and Stefano Harney in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, particularly chapter three, “Blackness and Governance.” While I do not wish to engage an extended polemic with the emerging field of “Afro-Pessimism,” I believe this moment described by Kanye and further articulated by Moten and Harney points to a fundamental mistake at the heart of Afro-Pessimist theory, namely the totalizing embrace of black social death as the condition of civil society and governmentality. Black life outstrips the ascription of death, what Wynter calls the symbolic codes put in place in Man1 and Man2, and racialization through narrative condemnation takes shape in response to those moments of escape. In other words, the most violent racism, the most necropolitical tools of casting blackness down the evolutionary chain, have black life as their condition of possibility and black death as their secondary and always incomplete effect. This reordering is important both in terms of reading strategies and organizing principles. Can we begin, as Moten and Harney ask, as if there is nothing wrong with blackness? In this way blackness is perhaps the ultimate instantiation of Deleuze’s attempt to rethink the labor of the negative through affirmation (see Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*).

¹⁵⁴ Kanye here begins the investigation into the frame of living death that characterizes so much biopolitical analysis of post-Katrina New Orleans. Kanye and Wynter push theory to make more precise the terms of death and life, giving them phenomenological and ontological weight, rather than simply taking the event of black death as retroactive confirmation that whatever floating corpse we see was always already dead anyways.

black.” He introduces, in other words, the disjuncture between a self-evident will to truth as the driving force of proper politics and the shared public sphere on the one hand and the power of framing and pre-existing circuits of meaning on the other. The problem revealed by Katrina is perhaps not as straightforward as simple ignorance of the existence of systemic, racialized poverty in America. Slavoj Zizek argues along these lines that the mistake of traditional Marxist ideology critique is the assumption that only a veiled truth, self-evidently meaningful if revealed, is at stake. The problem is that our very “social reality” is guided by a set of fantasies to which we become affectively attached.

Everyone *knows* that the machinations of global capitalism includes an incredible number of human and environmental casualties, he suggests, but that truth is mediated by various illusions which sublimate our potential outrage and concern.¹⁵⁵

What Zizek does not describe, however, and what Kanye adds to this argument is the way the denomination of various pronouns here—us, them, you—relies upon a stable positing of an “I” for coherence. Such a consolidated “I,” however, is precisely what Fanon sociogenetically diagnoses as lacking in the constitution of blackness under the order of Man. Kanye continues,

And even for me to complain about it, I would be a hypocrite because I've tried to turn away from the....TV because it's too hard to watch. I've even been shopping before even giving a donation, so now I'm calling my business manager right now to see what is the biggest amount I can give, and just to imagine if I was down there, and those are my people down there.

Where Zizek critiques the truth model of unveiling in “false consciousness” for how it is always already mediated, Fanon and Kanye critique the more fundamental category of consciousness itself as always already racialized such that the projected “I” who knows, watches, or learns does so under conditions of autophobia and self-misrecognition.

¹⁵⁵ Slavoj Zizek, *Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989): 26-29, 33.

Kanye's cadence has picked up at this point, breathing frequently and sharply while describing the interpellation of the televised imagery of Katrina, a hailing to which he cannot adequately respond like a massified version of Fanon confronting a child's cry of "Look, a Negro!" His inflection and volume emphasize an "I" that could be down there. But, of course, he is not down there so he must only imagine it even as he draws himself into that community. "...my people down there..." This subjectivizing split is the literal sense of hypocrisy he cannot but admit to, the etymological sense of *acting* that brings together the black skin and white mask or how embodied blackness still comes to an "I" through a whitened consciousness.¹⁵⁶

Kanye continues,

So anybody out there that wants to do anything that we can help—with the way America is set up to help the poor, the black people, the less well-off, as slow as possible. I mean, the Red Cross is doing everything they can. We already realize a lot of people that could help are at war right now, fighting another way—and they've given them permission to go down and shoot us!

He draws New Orleans, specifically the looping images of destruction playing behind him at this point, into a geopolitical relationship with other occupied spaces throughout the world. The "thriving neighborhoods" Myers nostalgically lamented are reframed by

¹⁵⁶ Kanye West is not simply a historical successor to Frantz Fanon and I in no way want to suggest that. Indeed, it would be hard to draft Kanye into anything resembling a Fanonian politics, especially given how quickly he disavowed this particular moment of racial discussion. To see Fanon and Kanye as inherently or self-evidently aligned would be precisely to ignore the power of sociogenesis as described in the previous chapter. My claim is more narrowly that Kanye can be read as a liminal subject in the way argued by Wynter's redeployment of Fanon. As Wynter puts it, "The starving fellow, (or the jobless inner city N.H.I., the global New Poor or les damnés), Fanon pointed out, does not have to inquire into the truth. He is, they are, the Truth." The liminal subject structurally embodies an opening to the outside not reducible to the perspectival equation of identity to consciousness, the transparent view of subaltern subjects famously critiqued by Spivak (although, as later chapters suggest, her attribution of this problem to Deleuze and Foucault remains specious: see n571). Kanye's liminality is simply an opening of the interval between virtual and actual that makes posable the question of becoming-otherwise. Racialization as a political technology and mode of self-knowledge works to close that gap. Thus, in the following chapter, I turn to Wynter's concept of the "demonic ground" as a necessary next step to spatio-temporally locate and hold onto a liminal opening.

this connection to global war. On the one hand, the ongoing immiseration and abandonment of inner cities that preceded Katrina goes hand in hand with the neoliberal rhetoric of personal responsibility; on the other hand, an “imaginative geography” of the city takes hold as part and parcel of the drive to securitize the “domestic front” in the War on Terror through militarized policing and intense surveillance.¹⁵⁷ As I will argue in a later section, these two seemingly countervailing forces in governmentality around post-Katrina New Orleans actually work in concert even as they can take on many different directions. Similar in trajectory to what Aimé Césaire called the “boomerang effect of colonization,” the war on American cities Kanye draws out stages crucial questions about how domestic racialized imprisonment connect and conjugate with a global politics of occupation.¹⁵⁸

Remaining with the scene at hand, however, it is here that Kanye finds himself cut off by Myers’s return to the script. Myers takes over,

And subtle, but in even many ways more profoundly devastating is the lasting damage to the survivors’ will to rebuild and remain in the area. The destruction of the spirit of the people of southern Louisiana and Mississippi may end up being the most tragic loss of all.

While Myers nods uncomfortably, the script returns viewers to a general atmosphere of tragedy free from concerns of justice or politics. The script picks up at an exact moment of rejecting Kanye’s historically specific marshaling of evidence—the use of National Guard troops to secure property in New Orleans as a first priority through deadly use of

¹⁵⁷ Stephen Graham, “Cities and the War on Terrorism,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30.2 (2006): 258; see also “Cities Under Siege: Katrina and the Politics of Metropolitan America,” *Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, 11 July 2006, <<http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Graham/>>

¹⁵⁸ Aime Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000): 41.

force—trying to pull his uneasy wavering between “us,” “them,” and a racialized “I” into the generic terms of a shared “spirit” that all Americans might take as a site of identification. Viewers are supposed to see the evidence of that spirit in “rebuilding” and “remaining”; yet Kanye effectively prophesies the terms of post-Katrina urban renewal where “the poor, black-people, the less well-off” become obstacles like so much storm detritus to be cleaned up in the celebration of a new New Orleans. The spirit of survivors, in other words, is endangered not by natural causes but by the political economic forces that invest in the regeneration of Man2.¹⁵⁹ Myers’s return to the script, moreover, effectuates the capture of affect Massumi describes through a closed circuitry of emotion. The spiritual revival narrative reintegrates Kanye’s process of individuation and critique of racialized self-consciousness at the scale of embodiment, literally drawing the affectively *open* black body into the charitable fold; scaling up, the narrative manifests the same drive for partial incorporation at the level of the body-politic, as Myers mourns a broadly shared tragedy, one that touches all Americans.

“George Bush doesn’t *care*/about Black people”

Facing apprehension by the script of proper sentimentality and continually finding his body “returned to [him] spread-eagles, disjointed, redone, draped in mourning,” Kanye

¹⁵⁹ As Richard Baker, a ten term state representative in Louisiana, put it: “We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn’t do it, but God did.” <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/09/AR2005090901930.html>>; the trope of New Orleans as a “blank slate” became a dominant media frame for discussing development, even from traditionally sympathetic outlets. <<http://www.bestofneworleans.com/blogofneworleans/archives/2012/07/02/new-orleans-became-a-blank-slate-after-hurricane-katrina-struck-in-2005>>; more recently, see this interview with a prominent New Orleans real estate developer on the profound opportunity Katrina created for “revitalization.” <<http://truestories.gawker.com/destroy-and-rebuild-a-q-a-with-one-of-new-orleans-bigg-1684973590>>

acts.¹⁶⁰ Like a lightning strike there is an electric discharge temporarily resolving the palpable tension in the space between Myers whitened script and Kanye's blackened evasion. Quoting Nietzsche, Elizabeth Grosz explains, "The popular mind separates out the lightning from its flash and takes the latter for an action, for the operation of a subject called lightning..." She adds, "As subjects, we are as evanescent as lightning, as indiscernible from our effects as lightning from its flash."¹⁶¹ One could specify the liminal subject here: it is not a pre-existing consciousness or autonomous neutral rationality that inquires into the truth and how to possess it; instead, the liminal subject exists in the tension it structurally effectuates and, in certain moments, becomes perceivable through a crackling of truth. Microphones are quickly cut and the camera takes us to a different black celebrity, Chris Tucker, temporarily stunned and stumbling over the words in front of him. Tucker (re)composes himself and begins reading from the script.

V. Narrative Condemnation in Wynter and the Feminist Critique of the Public-Private Divide

¹⁶⁰ Fanon, *BSWM*, 100.

¹⁶¹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Nick of Time* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2004): 127. This sense of lightning "flashing" helpfully puts my affective reading of the liminal in conversation with Edouard Glissant's primarily one sided critique of mass media as what he calls "flash agents," producing a temporary but illusory effect or "pseudoforce," a "transience of fashions" that substitutes the appearance of interconnection for the actualized emergence of something new or the substantive weight of Relation. (Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 165-175). While I am sympathetic to Glissant's concern, particularly in our current moment where the utopian dreams of "cyber democracy" seem dangerously myopic and further consolidation of information networks (between media conglomerates, universities, and corporations) create the conditions of metastasis described in n51, I believe this moment and its afterlives speaks to an uneven ambivalence in "flash agents." I have in mind, for instance, Fanon's discussion of technology in the context of the Algerian resistance where radios became, in a sense, flash agents for the revolution particularly vis-à-vis the French perception of inherent technological backwardness amongst the opposition. See Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), particularly chapter 2, "This is the Voice of Algeria."

The scene at the “Concert for Hurricane Relief” plays out what Wynter calls the “narratively condemned status” of liminal subjects.¹⁶² Specific narratives serve as political technologies of capture, circumscribing the openness of bodily affect and redirecting it into emotional states and modes of attachment that regenerate the overrepresentation of Man. In this case, there is literally a script centered on acts of private charity and national belonging—the indomitable American spirit—that works continually to draw viewers back into the abstract promise of citizenship and away from the tragic and frustrated particularity of Kanye’s “people down there.” In this section, I argue that feminist political theory, especially concerning studies of sentimentality, is a crucial tool for sociogenesis because of its distinct history of troubling the division between the public and private realm and so connecting narrative condemnation to structures of ontologism. After a brief review of how feminist theory enriches this aspect of Wynter’s argument, I will offer a specification of the types of narratives indexed by Kanye and Myers and further develop the argument in relationship to another site of post-Katrina sentimentality, the realm of sports.

The division between the public sphere of political reason and the private sphere of the irrational passions is a foundational tenet of liberal universalism and liberal democratic citizenship. Indeed, for Wynter, the production of this caesura represents the original moment of the autopoietic institution of Man:

...no longer projected as being to the negative legacy of Adamic Original Sin, the concept of enslavement was carried over and redescribed as being, now, to the irrational aspects of mankind’s human nature. This redescription had, in turn, enabled the new behavior-motivating “plan of salvation” to be secularized in the political terms of the this-worldly goals of the state. Seeing that because the “ill” or “threat” was now that of finding oneself enslaved to one’s passions, to the

¹⁶² Wynter, “No Humans Involved,” 15.

particularistic desires of one's human nature, salvation/redemption could only be found by the subject able to subdue his private interests in order to adhere to the laws of the politically absolute state, and thereby to the common good.

Wynter describes here the move from the descriptive statement of the Christian to Man1 through a reordering of salvation according to a ratiocentric universe. No longer divided by Spirit versus Flesh, the single substance of the universe was now divided by reason and unreason materialized through the state form taking shape in Europe. As feminist political theorists have persuasively argued, a gendering of reason subtended this shift to a rational public sphere.

In *The Sexual Contract*, Carole Patemen engages one of the most dominant philosophical models of citizenship to emerge out of this rethinking of the relationship between the body and the state, the social contract. She examines the work of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, especially the contention that individuals in a "state of nature" come to an agreement by which they give up certain aspects of their absolute freedom to form a collective body. The possibility of political freedom is born in this moment, the thinking goes, as the notion of a public and the public good binds otherwise atomized individuals. According to Pateman, moreover, contract theorists contend that this willing and rational exchange—the individual gives some level of obedience and loyalty in return for guaranteed rights and protection—is in contradistinction to the rule of paternal law. In terms of the question of citizenship, that means one's political status as an equal subject before the law is assured by virtue of the social contract instead of bloodlines; additionally, in the newly created public sphere, "paternal right" is limited.

Pateman shows how the inappropriate conflation of paternal right with the whole of patriarchy has created a blind spot in political theory such that the abstract equality of the contract—equal parties entering into a rational agreement—covers over the massive inequality of the sexual contract. Women are also incorporated into the new political order, but not as originary members of the social contract. While the social contract may push beyond the narrow confines of paternalism, the sexual contract enshrines patriarchy as a broader sense of what Pateman, following Adrienne Rich, calls “male sex right.”¹⁶³ Thus, citizenship understood in these terms is precisely a fraternity founded on the constitutive exclusion of women from political life based on their natural inferiority to and dependence on men.

The sexual contract, according to Pateman, also establishes a stark division between the public and private sphere.¹⁶⁴ The public sphere, the space of civic reason and democratic deliberation, requires participation by abstract individuals. That is, particularities like race, class, gender or religion have no weight. The private sphere is the irrational other to civil society, based on special relationships of care like the family and group ties like ethnicity or religion transcended by the public good. The gendered division between public and private has proved a blind spot in political theory throughout much of the 20th century. Accepting it as a natural division between politically relevant and apolitical spheres, the liberal model of citizenship requires one to transcend embodiment, or at the very least leave behind the specific concerns of “private life,” to

¹⁶³ Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1988): 2-3.

¹⁶⁴ Crucially, it is not *reducible* to that division for Pateman as male-sex right moves between the public and the private spheres as well.

partake in civic life.¹⁶⁵ Feminist approaches to political theory and history are crucial in not only troubling the natural status of the public-private divide but also tracing how the very demarcation of the boundary serves to produce the citizenry liberalism claims to merely protect in a negative sense.¹⁶⁶

The work of historian Thomas Laqueur provides a helpful, specific example of how Pateman's argument around the public and private took shape through understandings of differential embodiment. Looking at the history of Western science and philosophy, Laqueur asks why reproductive biology went from a "vertical" to a "horizontal" model in the eighteenth-century, or a shift from homologous bodies to a "physiology of incommensurability" often labeled the one-sex and two-sex model,

¹⁶⁵ Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, 176; 225-227. The crucial mechanism by which women are taken out of the state of nature is the "marriage contract," as Pateman argues. "What many regard today as the foundational texts of liberal theory therefore deny women any place in the public political sphere created by consent, yet simultaneously depict women as saying "yes" all the time in private, and in so doing agreeing to their inferior status in both spheres." (O'Neill et al., Introduction) At the time of this writing, the Supreme Court is currently hearing oral arguments over the issue of state-issued gay marriage licenses in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. The only compelling state interest in heterosexual marriage clearly defended on the first day of oral arguments was "procreation." When pressed by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on whether that means the state might deny elderly heterosexual couples the right to marriage, the attorney defending "traditional marriage" emphasized that a seventy year old man is "still fertile." In the 2013 oral arguments, the attorney defending traditional marriage also made sure to note that "very few men outlive their fertility." Let us not put away our copies of *The Sexual Contract* too hastily. (<http://www.npr.org/2013/03/26/175351429/audio-supreme-court-arguments-on-california-gay-marriage-ban> and <http://blog.legalsolutions.thomsonreuters.com/top-legal-news/10-quotes-from-the-same-sex-marriage-supreme-court-oral-arguments-and-what-they-might-mean-part-1-2/>)

¹⁶⁶ I have chosen Pateman for the schematic clarity of her argument, but she is in line with an extensive and compelling bibliography of feminist political theory. See also, Catharine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*; Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman*; Iris Marion Young, "Polity and Group Difference: A critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship," in *The Citizenship Debates: A Reader*, ed. Gershon Shafir (Minneapolis, 1998). Also, to be clear, I do not take a stance on the specific normative stakes of her argument within political theory—whether contractualism is possibly emancipatory or even useful for feminists or whether it is problematic as such—but merely note the descriptive claim borne out by history that the historical and political division between public and private requires a gendered account of embodiment. (For debates over the normative question, see Joanne Boucher, "Male Power and Contract Theory: Hobbes and Locke in Carole Pateman's *Sexual Contract*"; Susan Moller Okin, "Feminism, the Individual, and Contract Theory," *Ethics* 100 (April 1990): 658-669; Carole Pateman and Charles Mills, *Contract and Domination* (London: Polity, 2007).

respectively.¹⁶⁷ New developments in scientific knowledge do not explain the shift, according to Laqueur, both at the theoretical level that “inversion” never compellingly explained anatomical difference (i.e. the penis as an externalized, protruding and so inverted vagina) or at the evidentiary level as the same countervailing data pre-existed the generalized uptake of the two-sex view. “Instead of being the consequence of increased scientific knowledge, new ways of interpreting the body were rather, I suggest, new ways of representing and indeed of constituting social realities.”¹⁶⁸ The new social reality in question is the Enlightenment era embrace of liberal universalism and its attendant division of the public and private sphere. Thus, Laqueur argues the shift to incommensurability serves a political function by reproducing patriarchy within a new philosophical system that, *prima facie*, defends universal human rights. If men and women can be shown to be not justly differentiated by degree but fully different in kind, then one can defend a disembodied theory of citizenship and the rational public sphere without giving up gendered hierarchy.

In relation to Pateman’s argument, Laqueur’s most compelling example is the work of Rousseau. Liberal theories of citizenship posit a neuter body untouched by concerns for the passions or desires and radically equal in terms of access to reason. For Rousseau, biological incommensurability makes possible such a broad egalitarianism with the specific social force of male domination. Laqueur identifies the key

¹⁶⁷ Laqueur, “Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology,” *Representations* 14 (1986): 3-4. In the one-sex model, something akin to what we now might call gender vertically organized reproductive biology. Common significations of masculinity (strength or virility) were biologically inscribed most often through the explanatory power of “heat.” Laqueur writes, “‘Humans are the most perfect of animals, and men are more perfect than women by reason of their ‘excess of heat.’...the male is a hotter version of the female, or to use the teleologically more appropriate order, the female is the cooler, less perfect version of the male.” (4).

¹⁶⁸ Laqueur, “Orgasm,” 4.

prestidigitation in Book 5 of Rousseau's *Emile*. "In everything not connected with sex, woman is man....In everything connected with sex woman and man are in every respect related but in every respect different." To begin, then, Rousseau lays out the two sides of liberal universalism and biological incommensurability. The trick comes next, by which Rousseau naturalizes women's inability to access the public sphere through a transcendence of embodiment that defines citizenship in the regime of Man. "The male is male only at certain moments. The female is female her whole life...Everything constantly recalls her sex to her."¹⁶⁹ To restate the argument, Rousseau says men and women are completely equal except when it comes to matters of sex, but unlike men, women cannot escape sexed embodiment. And so, women and men are completely equal except when they're not (always). Beholden to passions and desires and betrayed by their bodies, women cannot fully transcend particularity to join the neutral political space of the public sphere.

It is in this sense that Wynter's sociogenetic analysis actually takes shape according to a mapping of "male" and "female" bodies in differently located spaces of the public and private. Thus, Wynter argues that "gender" represents the enacting code of the Man as the overrepresented genre of the human, "by enabling it to be anchored and mapped onto the anatomical difference of the sexes, and therefore...the archetypal form of such codes, [although] it is not the code itself."¹⁷⁰ The code itself for Wynter is the symbolic meaning of life and death, the second-order birth, that differentiates humans from their others. In the ratiocentric universe of the liberal humanists, demarcation ran

¹⁶⁹ Rousseau, quoted in Laqueur, "Orgasm," 20.

¹⁷⁰ Wynter, "Re-Enchantment of Humanism," 186. Chapter 3 more fully takes up the question of "gender" and feminism in Wynter. As my deployment of this quotation presages, however, I think it is clear that Wynter can and should be read through a feminist analytic if her humanism is to be fully understood and its revolutionary potential fully realized.

along the axis of rationality and irrationality. More recently, in the post-Darwinian-Malthusian biocentric order, demarcation ran along the axis of natural selection through material accumulation. In each case, however, Wynter is focused on the autopoietic feedback loops that narratively condemn liminal subjects by instituting and reproducing the overrepresentation of Man (whether Man1 or Man2). This latter point explains the preceding detour through feminist political theory, because it means the socially imagined cartographies of the body and the capacity for self-transcendence represented by struggles around the blurry boundaries of the “public” and “private” are also the site of any given codes enactment, even though the “code itself” might articulate through multiple sites of difference including race or class.

Of course, the shift to the biocentric order of Man2 centered racial distinctions in delimiting the human as argued in the preceding section. The archetypal code of gender inscribed on the body, investigated by Pateman and Laqueur, took shape through processes of racialization that themselves remapped the borders of desire. Colonialism and slavery reordered proper citizenship around an erotics of racial attachment, such as the obsessive policing and desire for miscegenation or rethinking of domestic space exported from the metropole to the colony.¹⁷¹ Thus, Wynter’s point is not the *replacement* of a gendered code of liberal subjectivity by race. Instead, the public-private divide relied upon by someone like Rousseau, shifting from the “one-sex” to the “two-sex” model becomes structured through racialization, its scaffolding reliant on the elaboration of racialized bodies. The permanent stain of “sex” attributed to women

¹⁷¹ For representative examples see, Sander Gilman, ‘Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature,’ *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (1985): 204-242; Evelyn Hammonds, “Black (W)Holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality.” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 9.3 (1994): 31-45; Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2002).

becomes coherent in relation to a discourse saturated by black sexuality, reshuffling the public and private divide around simultaneous racial and sexual modes of bodily comportment.

Anne Norton, for instance, describes this confluence in the wake of the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012, an unarmed seventeen-year-old black man¹⁷² gunned down in a gated community in Florida. “White women (I am a white woman) were once, and perhaps remain, a threat to black men. The lies that led to lynching were one of the means used to close public places to black men. White women are still taught, though more discreetly, to fear black men.”¹⁷³ The pedagogies of fear Norton describes and their atomizing effects bring us back to Wynter’s understanding of autopoiesis as a process of narrative institution. Just like the tension gripping Kanye’s black body in the space of white charity, Norton describes fear as a corporeal inscription of both “the sign and substance of danger.”¹⁷⁴ That is, while we imagine fear as an individualized sense of external threat, the fear of the privileged actualizes as a threat to those less privileged. And so the logic of lynching is one example of how those “naturally selected” as Man2 reproduce a specific genre of the human through a narratively instituted economy of fear circulating between less-than-humans and non-humans: white women and black men.

Thus, I contend that sociogenesis requires an account of the constantly shifting divide between public and private enacted in the first instance vis-à-vis a gendered mapping of bodily difference conflating anatomical signification with degrees of

¹⁷² Uneasiness over whether to refer in this case to Trayvon Martin as a Child or a Man is emblematic of precisely the point made by Anne Norton. For a specific and searing history of this slippage, see Elaine Brown’s chapter on the “Black Man-Child” in *The Condemnation of Lil’ B*. Wynter refers to Brown’s work in her 2006 interview with Greg Thomas in *ProudFlesh*.

¹⁷³ Anne Norton, “Fearful Privilege,” *Theory and Event* 15.3 (2012): muse.jhu.edu.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

rationality. The question then becomes why under contemporary conditions, evaluating a scene like the charity event for post-Katrina New Orleans, is a feminist critique of the neutral public sphere uniquely helpful for tracing and ultimately disarticulating the narrative institution of Man2? Can we more precisely identify the different modalities of narrative autopoiesis contouring Kanye's exchange with Myers and their role in the broader affective landscape of post-Katrina New Orleans? The insistent attempt at enfolded the recalcitrant black body into the pre-written script of private charity through the mass mediatization of celebrity bodies indexes the generalization of one cleaving of the public-private: sentimentality.

The concept of sentimentality deployed here comes from Lauren Berlant's charting of emergent liberalism of the early twentieth-century political sphere in America as "an affective space, a space of attachment and identification...national sentimentality is not about being right or logical but about maintaining an affective transaction with a world whose terms of recognition and reciprocity are being constantly struggled over and fine-tuned."¹⁷⁵ Sentimentality is political in the sense that it shows a yearning for a certain past in relation to a reconciled future, but it eschews the trauma of transformative political change in the name of the act of yearning itself. Liberal sentimentality in the American case is particularly structured around the dream of an easy transference between legal inclusion through formal mechanisms like the vote and a nationally shared affective constellation. Much like Laqueur sees the shift from one-sex to two-sex model of anatomical embodiment as a political technology making possible patriarchal equality, Berlant argues the generalization of the sentimental mode of citizenship works to

¹⁷⁵ Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008): x-xi.

integrate the inclusion of newcomers to the American political scene (abolition and emancipation, women's suffrage) with the regeneration of structural inequality. Women did not simply move from the private sphere to the public sphere in their politicization around issues like slavery and suffrage, but reworked the public sphere by mobilizing the "critical intelligence of affect, emotion, and good intention" that those in power considered the proper domain of the feminine.¹⁷⁶ This rewiring of the political occurred through the circuitry of mass media and consumption, often imagined as private sites of domesticity that uniquely marked the formation of "women's culture" as a specific intimate public.¹⁷⁷ In other words, the discursive and juridical inclusion of women into formal avenues of political expression birthed new modes of public-private mediation.

As should be clear from the preceding discussion, that destabilization and reification of the gendered boundary between public-private materializes through processes of deracination, racialization and classism as well. Angela Davis, for instance, persuasively argues that the political grammar of the suffragettes played on racial fears of black political power to gain momentum. Davis looks at the compromises made by famous Suffragists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who came to see the fight for enfranchisement as a zero-sum game with the movement for black rights. Having to appeal to middle and upper class Southern women, they narrowly tailored their positions to extending white privilege. As Davis compellingly shows, many suffragists tapped into racialized discourses of the day, particularly the burgeoning eugenics movement, to not only gain powerful allies but also to add urgency to their calls (giving white women the vote became an antidote to black political power). Working class

¹⁷⁶ Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, 2.

¹⁷⁷ Berlant's larger work makes this historical case that "Women's culture was the first...mass-marketed intimate public in the United States of significant scale." (5)

women also found themselves excluded from this coalition based on political equality, first because their concerns about economic equality were not legible and secondly because modes of proving one's civic rationality embraced by mainstream suffragists (namely literacy tests) tended to disqualify them.¹⁷⁸

Taken together, Berlant, Norton, and Davis all suggest that the public and private divide should not be understood in the static terms of reified spatiality (i.e. the private sphere is *here*) or the sedimentation of a rigid boundary project. I have introduced this distinction as central to feminist thought through the foundational work of Carole Pateman, but want to keep in mind an animate sense of the public-private as a sort of open cut in the body politic that constantly rematerializes and reactualizes.¹⁷⁹ As Berlant puts it, “no population has ever erased the history of its social negativity from its ongoing social meaning. There are elaborations, amnesias, shifts, new potentials constantly released in the activity of living, but historical wounds always remain available for reopening.”¹⁸⁰ Thus, in turning to sentimentality and the afterlives of the “female complaint,” I am not simply transposing a specific historicization of affective attachment onto the site of Hurricane Katrina, but arguing instead that post-Katrina New Orleans as a discursive formation only comes into view—in the full range of the sensible—through a historically US American infrastructure of sentimentality even as it, inevitably, reworks those affective circuits as well. Instead of creating a stable geometry of affect, emotion,

¹⁷⁸ Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983). Chapter 7, “Woman Suffrage at the Turn of the Century: The Rising Influence of Racism.”

¹⁷⁹ And, indeed, much of the debate around Pateman's notion of sexual contract concerns this lack of dynamism in relation to multiple sites of power and the everyday microphysics of the public-private distinction. See Moira Gaitens, “Paradoxes of Liberal Politics: Contracts, Rights, and Consent,” in *Illusion of Consent: Engaging with Carole Pateman*, eds. O'Neill et al (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008); Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002): particularly chapter 1, “Public and Private.”

¹⁸⁰ Berlant, *Female Complaint*, 9.

and politics, working through feminist critiques of sentimentality shifts focus to how the public-private divide as a technology of the overrepresentation of Man is differentially porous and unequally mobilized.

I borrow this more haptic and proprioceptive sense of the divide from an ingenious reading of Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* by Michel Serres who reorders the analysis of stratification through questions of "direction":

What is a border or boundary? It is, first of all, the line that is drawn, let us call it its "ridge"; its significance is one of definition. This boundary this line, always has two sides. If I trace around myself a closed contour, I keep myself in and defend myself against. One side of the line protects me and the other side excludes others. ... Let us then consider how the line of division is situated, in which direction it is drawn.¹⁸¹

The directionality of the border, who can mobilize exchange across it and how, the porosity it can abide while maintaining structural integrity, the nodes of connection between multiple ridges: these questions tell us what the public-private divide *does* instead of what or where it *is*. Centering analysis on the orientation of the border rather than the border as such thus renders a theory of sentimentality crucial for my understanding of Wynter's concept of genre, because the public-private divide becomes a site of partial incorporation and subjectivization rather than purely exclusion. That is to say, sentimentality becomes a particularly forceful way of putting white masks on black skin, as Fanon might say. And indeed, as the "public" space of the train car scene attests, Fanon's experience of this archetypal caesura is a crucial aspect of embodied racialization.

Thus, the feminist excavation of the shifting tectonics of public and private is indeed foundational for Wynter's periodizing of the episteme of Man. Of course, this

¹⁸¹ Michel Serres, "The Geometry of the Incommunicable: Madness," in *Foucault and His Interlocutors*, ed. Arnold Davidson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997): 42.

move represents a key challenge in thinking with a philosopher of Wynter's magnitude who situates her arguments in the *longue duree* of history: how "archetypal codes" like gender outlive their founding and foundational moment and become reanimated through new socio-political forces and emerging codes of the human. So something like the public-private divide as an initially gendered caesura is bequeathed to us as a racialized political technology that is no longer, or perhaps never was, reducible to gender, but still inextricably braids social imaginaries of the masculine versus feminine or male versus female. The upshot—and here we return finally to specific scenes of sentimental attachment around Katrina—is that feminist critiques of sentimentality are a necessary aspect of sociogenesis because any onto-epistemic shift (i.e. from Christian to Man1 to Man2) is affected by and affects the dominant structures of attachment and identification that serve to capture affect in the name of the overrepresented descriptive statement of the human. Man1 and Man2 as processes of ontologism can only become sites of subjectivization through inegalitarian mobilization of such affective circuits. In this case two aspects of sentimentality as theorized by Berlant are most noticeably at work: juxtapolitics and the sacro-political.

VI. The Sacro-Political and the American Dream (Team)

Berlant asks, "Who is to say that emotional artifice is empty if insincere, or when it is? In this context it makes no sense to trivialize as a kind of mass bad taste the collective urge to mourn the political in these cases of recent mass witnessing."¹⁸² She is referencing here a specific type of memory politics that she locates in the mourning over two untimely celebrity deaths: Princess Diana and John F. Kennedy Jr. Princess Di and

¹⁸² Berlant, *Female Complaint*, 165.

JFK Jr. each straddled the worlds of media celebrity and official institutional power but were not contained by either category. Their respective deaths elicited an intense outpouring of emotion from ephemerally intimate publics. And despite the two years separating each tragedy, the two of them were indelibly linked by their “iconic proximity”: “When John F. Kennedy Jr.’s plane crashed in 1999, the statue of Diana became a means for his secular deification: throughout the weeks following tourists left notes and signs and other traces of homage to Kennedy on Diana’s monumental body.”¹⁸³ Berlant finds these two figures so interesting because of what she calls their “juxtapolitical” nature. That is, as the label suggests, their proximity to a political world of formal office and power: they “move in undivided and undivisible realms near but not in politics.”¹⁸⁴ What makes them such compelling figures then is that they allow us a political attachment without all the messiness of politics. To mourn Princess Di and JFK Jr.—their lost potential, their iconic resonance as figures always adjacent to cries for a better world, their simultaneous “alterity and intimacy”—sounds a yearning for change that comes to take solace in the yearning itself rather than the change. In the US American context, it is to imagine a democracy-to-come without having to entertain the disconcerting visions of traumatic social, economic, or political change that such a radical break would require.

The social bodies serving as nodal points of juxtapolitical attachment become sites of intense civic optimism, seemingly beyond the sordid affairs of daily political negotiation even as they hold together an abstract feeling that the good life might one day come. Berlant calls this the “sacro-political” body, invoking a sense of the *sacred* as

¹⁸³ Ibid, 160.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 164.

transcendence. In the sacro-political, what is reborn is not the material being or living flesh, but an abstract set of ideas. This concept helpfully elucidates how the spirit/flesh distinction that defines Christian Man, for Wynter, continues to haunt the civic humanism of Man1 and biocentric selection of Man2: in this case, what makes it sacred is that it seems to rise above the distinction of the very code itself, the shifting contours of politics or the directionality of the caesura. So the rebirth that followed Diana's or JFK Jr.'s death included a whole set of hopes and dreams suddenly left on their public monuments. I would propose that, after Katrina, New Orleans became a similar site of sacro-political optimism: it remained a material location, of course, but the overcoming of tragedy reaffirmed a certain descriptive statement of Man not just as a violent structure of exclusion but as a site of affective enfolding.

George W. Bush's speech after Katrina takes a sacro-political rendering of the city as its point of departure. "Americans want the Gulf Coast not just to survive, but to thrive, not just to cope, but to overcome. We want evacuees to come home, for the best of reasons—because they have a real chance at a better life in a place they love."¹⁸⁵ Very few would disagree with wishing well to victims of Katrina. Indeed, everyone everywhere should have a real chance at a better life in a place they love. Bush was hardly alone in this sentiment, though, as the indomitable spirit of New Orleans in the wake of tragedy became a nexus point for visions of a better tomorrow, even as New Orleans itself continued to suffer the internal rot and social stratifications that made Katrina a "disaster" in the first place.

¹⁸⁵ Bush, Remarks on Katrina. Reading this line, it is hard not to wonder what exactly *less good reasons* might be for wanting evacuees to come home.

Writing about the economic outlook in post-Katrina New Orleans, for instance, *Industry Week* is almost irreverent with this pun-rich headline: “Post-Katrina, a Wave of Optimism Floods New Orleans: More than four years after Hurricane Katrina submerged 80% of New Orleans, the Crescent City may be on the precipice of yet another perfect storm.”¹⁸⁶ The perfect storm, this time, is a convergence of positive indicators that point to New Orleans’ emergence as a successful economic hub beyond just tourism. In the article, the CEO of a local non-profit shares the narrative he envisions. “In Act 1, the city experienced ‘decades of slow decline.’ In Act 2, Hurricane Katrina brought the city to its knees. Act 3, in the words of Hecht, is the ‘redemption story.’”¹⁸⁷ President Obama too found inspiration in New Orleans, asking the rest of America to look to the city’s recovery as an index of resiliency in the face of many dangers including terrorism and swine flu. He claims this transmogrification of grief as “a quintessentially American notion – that adversity can give birth to hope, and that the lessons of the past hold the key to a better future.”¹⁸⁸ These literary renderings of recovery convey a political logic that anyone can get behind without actually committing to an agenda for transformation. The redemption story of New Orleans also serves as a redemption story for the American dream, the former insulating the latter from the sudden visibility of liberal democracy’s dark underside.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Cable, “Post-Katrina a Wave of Optimism Floods New Orleans,” *Industry News*. 18 March 2010. Accessed 10 April 2015. < http://www.industryweek.com/articles/post_katrina_a_wave_of_optimism_floods_new_orleans_21376.aspx?ShowAll=1>

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Barack Obama, “Weekly Address,” 9 August 2009. Accessed 3 June 2015. < https://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Weekly-Address-President-Obama-Marks-Fourth-Anniversary-of-Hurricane-Katrina-Will-Visit-New-Orleans-Later-This-Year>

¹⁸⁹ The recent movements across cities including Baltimore, New York, Oakland and others in response to the ongoing murders of unarmed black men and, more generally, linking up to social justice movements concerned with black life and the destruction of urban space have made local

If one takes seriously the importance of neoliberalism and spatial segregation in creating the disaster of Katrina, then it is clear what kind of politics would actually undergird a struggle for the transformation of New Orleans into a democratic space. As Cornel West cautions, “do not confuse charity with justice.”¹⁹⁰ Developers and local politicians have tried to capitalize on the widespread destruction of public housing, starkly claiming their intention to accelerate gentrification and possibly leave thousands homeless or in sub-standard housing, compounding the spatialization of race that existed before Katrina¹⁹¹; evacuees remain displaced, excluded from rebuilding decisions, disenfranchised, chronically unemployed, and incapable of returning home.¹⁹² The symbolic resurgence of New Orleans, however, provides a useful site of emotional investment that performs what Berlant identifies as “the tradition of aversion to democracy’s political instantiation within a national-political sentimentality.”¹⁹³ Intimate publics form around wanting to want a prosperous New Orleans replete with delocalized and deracialized jazz music and Creole cooking, but the commitment hinges on

and national conversations over issues of race and class hypervisible, much like they were in the immediate aftermath of Katrina. The question of the role of social media as a differentiating factor here (how one might imagine Kanye’s statement about Bush resonating in a world of twitter, for instance) is but one avenue for future research around post-Katrina racialization in America. Of course, as I describe here the diffusing of structural critique through powerful sacro-political scripts described here, I hope to also turn to #blacklivesmatter and other related movements emerging now as they experiment with different tactics to elude capture in the lurking sentimental traps.

¹⁹⁰ Cornel West, “Exiles from a City and a Nation.” *The Observer (UK)*. 11 September 2005. Accessed 10 April 2015.

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/sep/11/hurricanekatrina.comment>>

¹⁹¹ Alecia Long, “Poverty Is the New Prostitution: Race, Poverty, and Public Housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans.” *The Journal of American History* 94.3 (2007): 795-803; Rachel Luft, “Beyond Disaster Exceptionalism: Social Movement Developments in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina,” *American Quarterly* 61.3 (September 2009): 499-527.

¹⁹² Mike Davis, “Who is Killing New Orleans?” *ZNet*. 26 March 2006b. Accessed 10 April 2015. <www.zcommunications.org>; Beverly Wright and Robert D. Bullard, *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice After Hurricane Katrina Struggles to Reclaim, Rebuild, and Revitalize New Orleans and the Gulf Coast* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009).

¹⁹³ Berlant, *Female Complaint*, 150.

transcending the risky and painful process of politics itself needed to ever really imagine such a world, much less make it.

What always defers the dream of a fully reconciled, post-political society is the stubborn persistence of embodied flesh, the material demands of conviviality not met by the spiritual resources of the civically integrated sacred. Hence, Berlant calls this figure the “sarco-political.” The sarco-political is “organized around the flesh of those deemed not to have the capacity to overcome their historic banishment from normative social membership.”¹⁹⁴ The sarco-subject, then, interrupts the fantasy of liberal sentimentality, in part at least, by making visible the ways in which violence attaches to particular bodies. Their enfleshment indexes their experience of exclusion and violence, such that they can never truly transform from “the subject of politics” to the true “subject of feeling,”—the citizen bound to an intimate through the sacro-political—because there is always a remainder, however small, of their particularity that interrupts the move towards universality. The sarco-political specifies one particular modality of the concept of liminal subject posited earlier, particularly how certain bodies negotiate their “narratively condemned status” that is simultaneously a narrative of overcoming.

With this conceptual vocabulary, look again at the exchange between Kanye and Myers. The sacro-political continually claims Kanye, subsumes him through abstraction without fully assimilating him. Even as a juxtapolitical celebrity his body tenses at the enfleshed contradiction of wealthy charitable giving and seeing his *self* down there. Wolf Blitzer of CNN eloquently and inadvertently described this positioning and the liminal opening it produced when, during round the clock coverage of the destruction of New

¹⁹⁴ Lauren Berlant, “Uncle Sam Needs a Wife: Citizenship and Denegation,” *Visual Worlds*, eds. John R. Hall et al. (New York: Routledge, 2005): 16.

Orleans, he let slip: “So tragically, so many of these people, almost all of them that we see, are so poor and they are *so black* and this is going to raise lots of questions for people who are watching...”¹⁹⁵ The liminal subject as the truth of the system raises these questions, in other words, and the challenge of a transformative sarco-politics is following those questions beyond the overrepresentation of Man. It is not about rejecting the politics of affective attachment writ large—indeed, an impossible task once we understand the autopoiesis of human descriptive statements that take place so strongly through symbolic codes—but refusing the sentimental and seductive promise, even when it feels so right, that *this time* we can heal the wounds of liminal subjects and reconcile the cuts of the body politic without a fundamental insurrection at the level of the human.

The rhetoric of the “spirit of New Orleans” reached a fever pitch in 2009 due to the victory of the New Orleans Saints in the Super Bowl. Alongside the symbolic and material space of New Orleans as a sacro-political subject, the Saints’ famous quarterback also came to embody a site of affective attachment. While sports always remain shot through with the realities of different political situations, they encourage one to temporarily suspend concerns about difference and celebrate an abstractly shared human spirit. From the moment Drew Brees—a handsome, successful athlete already famous for his achievements in football—arrived in post-Katrina New Orleans to be the Saints new quarterback, he took on such a role as a sacro-political subject in whom fans could trace the sentimental resurgence of the city:

¹⁹⁵ Wolf Blitzer, video available on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Sfo32rlkiE>.

This city and I—we have some similarities. A lot of people think we may not come back.’ They have both been beaten up. Brees tore the labrum in his throwing shoulder at the end of last season, enabling San Diego to lowball him during free agency. The Chargers, who benched Brees in 2003 and drafted his replacement in 2004, finally found a way to get rid of Brees, their Pro Bowl quarterback. Shoulder surgery was an easy excuse. ... But his tough spirit appealed to the Saints, for obvious reasons. Brees has mastered an underdog's mentality.¹⁹⁶

Brees positioned himself as an embodiment of the city's struggles, creating an intimacy between himself and the residents of New Orleans at the same time that his status and wealth clearly set him apart.

As the Saints marched towards a Super Bowl victory, the comparisons moved from a shared struggle to a shared success story. Importantly, the Saints morphed into “America’s Team” and rooting for them became something of a civic duty. In a piece entitled “Saints: Soul of America’s City,” Wright Thompson avers, “The team’s rise from the weight of the past mirrored a similar rise of the city.” His point is not simply that the Saints’ wins should be conceptually rolled up with the process of rebuilding, but that the Saints’ victories are reflections of the final success of the city’s re-emergence: “The Saints aren't encouraging people to rebuild, or providing comfort to a wounded city, or any of that. They are showing the world what has been rebuilt.”¹⁹⁷ Any and every article about Drew Brees or the New Orleans Saints drew such comparison incorporating the soul of the city, the gutsy resilience of the quarterback, and their drive towards renewal.

¹⁹⁶ Jenkins, Lee. “QB Brees, New Orleans Have Plenty in Common.” *New York Times* reprinted in *San Francisco Chronicle*. 3 September 2006. Accessed 8 April 2015. <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgibin/article.cgi?f=/chronicle/archive/2006/09/03/SPGE6KTF9I1.DTL>>

¹⁹⁷ Thompson, Wright. “Saints the Soul of America’s City.” *ESPN*. 19 December 2009. Accessed 9 April 2015. <<http://sports.espn.go.com/nfl/columns/story?page=hotread14/Saints>>

Covering the penultimate game of the Saints' season, Drew Sharp unintentionally sums up the sacro-political affects embodied by the team: "[T]he city of New Orleans is the biggest star tonight. This will be an early Mardi Gras, a celebration that'll jump out of our high-definition televisions, something they couldn't have imagined possible in September 2005 when it looked as though the city died. New Orleans might never fully recover economically from Katrina, but it confounded the experts who thought it should sacrifice the NFL for the sake of saving the rest of the city."¹⁹⁸ In the face of economic injustice and the continued abandonment of millions, we are asked to rejoice simply in the survival of the spirit of New Orleans embodied in the on-field play of a man who has successfully recovered from shoulder surgery—for the most part, we happily comply. The success of the Saints football team begins to blend seamlessly with perceptions of material recovery as the two are constantly rendered equivalent such that rooting for the Saints is its own little act of charity and contribution to the rebuilding of New Orleans. The political finally trumps politics; the American Team attaches metonymically to the American Dream.

¹⁹⁸ Andrew Sharp, "Saints Help Restore Spirit of New Orleans," *Detroit Free Press*. 24 January 2010. Accessed 9 April 2010. <<http://www.freep.com/article/20100124/COL08/1240481/Saints-help-restore-spirit-ofNew-Orleans>>

Chapter 2

From Liminality to Demonic Ground: Wynter, Foucault, and the *History of Sexuality* Along the Color Line

The previous chapter argued that liminal subjects exist at the blurry borders of a specific episteme's ontology, what Wynter calls ontologism, embodying the *truth* of the system's auto-instituting rules and indexing an outside. I turn now to this relationship between inside and outside, articulated by the relationship of bodies and truth, asking how the liminal subject's process of disalienation becomes a political program of disenchantment more broadly. This shift begins with the merging of the epistemological and ontological in Wynter's work through the figure of the "demonic ground" occupied by liminal subjects. I route this discussion through Wynter's philosophical engagement with the work of Michel Foucault, the great thinker of power and sexuality, because one of the seeming impasses in his work is precisely the relationship between inside and outside, or how to think a *beyond* of status quo arrangements when one is hopelessly mired in them. When what Foucault calls "the deployment of sexuality" is properly understood in terms of Wynter's notion of *ontologism*, new avenues for feminist thought open up based on at least the following insights: first, it reimagines "gender studies" as "genre studies," the analysis of human *kinds*; second, it connects previously disparate aspects of Foucault's work, namely his analysis of the relation between sexuality and neoliberal economics; finally, it brings into relief how Foucault sees the modern maintenance of something akin to the color line as the key modulating mechanism for his theory of biopolitics. Reconnecting Foucault's work on sexuality to the broad framework of the overrepresentation of Man resolves many of the supposed shortcomings of his

work for decolonial and feminist thought. Indeed, the shift to genre studies and the provisional auto-poiesis of the color line, I argue, makes Foucault a profound resource for decolonial thought.¹⁹⁹

This argument runs counter to the dominant view of Wynter as an oppositional corrective to Foucault's inadequate thinking on the question of race. As I note below, I do not want to diminish the force of omission in Foucault's description of power's workings. On the other hand, following a commitment to affirmative reading, it becomes clear that the color line and the overrepresentation of Man is a structuring force in Foucault's work (whether he intentionally articulates it or not) and so his understanding of power as part of the indigenous hermeneutic of the West allows us to effectively map the demonic ground from which we might struggle towards the human. My argument extends recent work on the relationship between "early" and "late" Foucault through Wynter's specific reading of that periodization, an ordering to which she does not accede. Writing on Foucault since her early work in the 1970's, Wynter always saw Foucault's investigations of the modern episteme and its spatial apparatuses in terms of his overarching concern with the invention of European man. Thus, the idea that Foucault is only concerned with "*individual* self-fashioning and the disrobing of the clothing of disciplinary power" while Wynter attends to a collective struggle fails to do justice to Wynter's profound rearticulation of Foucault as a decolonial thinker.²⁰⁰ This chapter argues that Foucault's

¹⁹⁹ As Amy Allen advises, "At this point, the feminist work that has been inspired by Foucault's analysis of power is so extensive and varied that it defies summarization." (In "Feminist Perspectives on Power," 2011). Hence, I stick primarily to affirmative readings of Foucault where he is useful for the Afro-Caribbean philosophical project of overcoming Man. The small sections of engagement with secondary sources is confined to pieces that also engage the pairing of Wynter and Foucault.

²⁰⁰ Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Before Man: Sylvia Wynter's Rewriting of the Modern Episteme," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke

thought is a necessary and crucial aspect of any sociogenetic account of modern Man and, given Foucault's massive effect on feminist theory and sexuality studies, that restaging the relationship between Foucault and Wynter might effect a disciplinary shift towards "genre" studies. A complementary rather than oppositional reading of Wynter and Foucault contributes to decolonial feminism concerned with identifying and disrupting the "coloniality," or the "racial axis" of global power that "has proven to be more stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established."²⁰¹ It does so precisely by insisting that *race as such* is not primary for either Wynter or Fanon, recalibrating our decolonial tools to attend to the microphysics (rather than metaphysics) of racial construction as practical sites of subjectivization.

I. The Order of Things and the History of Man

When Wynter cites Foucault, it is almost always from his earlier investigations of the human sciences in *The Order of Things* or his methodological exposition of archaeology as the study of different "epistemes" in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Thus, for Wynter, two primary insights guide her invocations: first, the supposedly universal figure of man is an epiphenomenon of rearrangements in the structure of knowledge in European culture over the last few centuries. As Foucault puts it in the passage perhaps most cited by Wynter,

[M]an—the study of whom is supposed by the naive to be the oldest investigation since Socrates—is probably no more than...a configuration

University Press, 2015): 104. While they arrive at their oppositional readings differently, Weheliye concludes similarly to da Silva: "Wynter's...reconceptualizations of race, subjection, and humanity provide indispensable correctives to...Foucault's considerations of racism vis-à-vis biopolitics." (5)

²⁰¹ Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla*, 1.3 (2000): 533.

whose outlines are determined by the new position he has so recently taken up in the field of knowledge. Whence...all the facile solutions of an 'anthropology' understood as a universal reflection on man, half-empirical, half-philosophical... man is only a recent invention.²⁰²

Man, in other words, as the organizing concern of philosophy, biology and psychology, and anthropology and sociology, only arose within the terms of these disciplines.

Retroactively, these intellectual approaches posited man as a neutral, pre-theoretical object available for study. Thus, Foucault and Wynter trace a similar chronology of the rise of “man” out of the preceding epoch dominated by Christian theology. Foucault calls this the “classical age,” defined by a combination of “mathesis, taxinomia and genetic analysis”²⁰³; in other words, the rational ordering of the world in quantitative and qualitative terms, primarily through apparatuses like the table, chart, and map, created a progressive hierarchy waiting for scientific discovery. While Wynter finds the source of this shift somewhat earlier than Foucault—fifteenth-century Italian Renaissance humanism rather than the mid seventeenth-century—she also describes the shift as one towards a “ratio-centric” universe defined by gradations of rationality here on earth (as opposed to salvation in the supernatural sphere).²⁰⁴

As detailed in the preceding chapter on female circumcision, Wynter sees the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in terms of a shift from “ratio-centric” to “bio-centric”

²⁰² Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994): xxii.

²⁰³ Ibid, 73.

²⁰⁴ Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality,” 277; While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate more fully the precise differences between Foucault and Wynter on the question of epistemes, I do not want to suggest they have the same interpretation. For future research, it would be fruitful to consider how Wynter and Foucault approach the question of historical continuity in relation to other philosophers of history and science who attempt to qualitatively describe periodization, such as Thomas Kuhn, Anibal Quijano, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Paul Feyerabend.

man: a new ethnoclass of man based on the model of the natural organism.²⁰⁵ Again, she locates this same periodization in Foucault's work, as he articulates a transformation in the classical Western episteme towards man as an evolutionary being: paradoxically, the epistemological historicization of language, economics, and life itself within the human sciences leads to the positing of a dehistoricized man defined in relation to economic scarcity and biological finitude. Foucault writes, "The human being no longer has any history: or rather, since he speaks, works, and lives... this gives us interpretations of history from the standpoint of man envisaged as a living species, or from the standpoint of economic laws, or from that of cultural totalities."²⁰⁶ Presaging his argument to come in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault illustrates how psychology, economics, natural sciences, and linguistics construct man *individually* as a biological machine processing natural and economic inputs and *collectively* as an aggregate of a species-being negotiating scarcity.

Secondly, Wynter clarifies Foucault's theory of power and subjectivity by way of his epistemo-historical investigation of the production of the human. This sequencing—epistemo-history as the ground for the production of the human—matters in two-ways given the hackneyed critique of Foucault as a totalizing and determinate thinker of power's overwhelming omnipresence.²⁰⁷ Contra the persistent notion that Foucault conceptualizes power as simply "ubiquitous" and "random"²⁰⁸ and so cannot account for

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 318.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 367-369.

²⁰⁷ See Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989): particularly Part 1, "Powers, Norms, and Vocabularies of Contestation." Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on power: a theory for women?" in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. L. Nicholson (London: Routledge, 1990).

²⁰⁸ Bridges, *Reproducing Race: An Ethnography of Pregnancy as a Site of Racialization* (Oakland: UC Press, 2011): 71.

sexism, racism, classism and so forth, Wynter uses Foucault to mark a new connection between epistemology and ontology: “these shifts in epistemes were not only shifts with respect to ... knowledge /truth, but were also shifts in what can now be identified as the ‘politics of being’ ... [the] instituting of each genre of the human.”²⁰⁹ Different epistemes simultaneously become intelligible in relation to a descriptive statement about the human and reify that descriptive statement. Far from random, power/knowledge strategically relates to an epoch’s ontological description of the human, from the Christian subject to ratio-centric and bio-centric man. Epistemic transformations occur when a new descriptive statement breaks through the seams of a given epoch’s ontological edifice and forces a reorganization of the human as both an individual and a collective.

This transformation, however, is *not just a break*. Crucially, Wynter reminds readers of Foucault that an epistemic shift does not just mean a sudden transcendence of power or a clean line of flight to a new world. Instead, epistemic shifts happen in a complicated and uneven matter, emerging from within and along the borders of contemporary boundary projects. Wynter cautions, “Their epistemes will be, like their respective genres of being human, both discontinuous and continuous.”²¹⁰ This point suggests two key aspects of Wynter’s rendering: first, epistemic shifts are immanent to the descriptive statements from which they cleave but not merely predictable, causal effects of a pre-given set of conditions of possibility; second, it means there is an “outside” to power that is, in a sense, virtually enfolded in the present conditions of

²⁰⁹ Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality,” 318.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

knowledge.²¹¹ Wynter's careful reading of Foucault pushes us past the so-called contradiction articulated by Nancy Fraser between his theorization of power as absolutely all-encompassing and his search for subversive practices that elude power.²¹² Instead, Foucault's method is precisely a way of uncovering the history of practices and perspectives obscured by power for the purpose of gleaning political resources in the present struggle to imagine the future otherwise.

There is a structural parallel, in other words, in how Wynter and Foucault conceive the relationship between their respective methods and the politics of an epistemic shift. If we accept Wynter's argument that each episteme is characterized by the unstable reproduction of a particular descriptive statement, then the question of intellectual method takes on a central importance for finding the fissures in hegemonic thought that might be pried open. Sociogenesis, as explained above, is the method Wynter deploys to locate a perspective from which an outside to power becomes not only thinkable but also necessary: she calls this perspective "the demonic ground."²¹³ While Foucault follows a similar path in that his methodological intervention also posits a certain perspective from which a rethinking of the human becomes possible, most of his interlocutors from queer and feminist theory separate these aspects of his thought (the methodological from the perspectival) resulting in an unfortunate forced choice: either a despairing Foucault as a thinker of total power or a celebratory Foucault as a libertarian

²¹¹ This sense of virtual enfolding is further elucidated in the chapter on Deleuze and Guattari, given Deleuze's use of the "ship" as image for understanding Foucault. See chapter 4.

²¹² Fraser, *Unruly Bodies*, 57-59; more recently see Elisa Glick, who argues "this contradiction is constitutive of Foucault's project." ("Sex Positive: Feminism, Queer Theory, and the Politics of Transgression," *Feminist Review* 64 (2000): 23).

²¹³ Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's 'Woman,'" *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*. Ed. Carole Boyce-Davies and Elaine Savory-Fido (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990): 356.

advocate of transgressive sexual practices. Mapping Foucault's work according to Wynter's model—the sociogenic articulation of the demonic grounds—will reveal, finally, that Foucault's theory must be understood in terms of the color line as the organizing principle of the production of the human.

II. Opening Up the Demonic Ground

The demonic ground, according to Wynter, is the vantage point,

outside the 'consolidated field' of our present mode of being/feeling/knowing, as well as of the multiple discourses, their regulatory systems of meaning and interpretative 'readings,' through which alone these modes as varying expressions of human 'life,' including ours, can effect their respective autopoiesis as such specific modes of being.²¹⁴

As we have seen, the overrepresentation of Man works through a specific descriptive statement about the human that also delimits a space of radical otherness where the human does not or cannot reside. The epoch of "Man1," for instance, the ratio-centric man who finds worldly salvation in the form of liberal citizenship, knows his own freedom in relationship to the Native and the African. The space of otherness in Man1, "discovered" through colonial adventures, comes to operate at the smallest scale of corporeal existence in "Man2," as geographical divisions become biocentric articulations of evolutionary difference. The demonic ground reveals itself when we move from understanding those spaces of otherness as ontological lack to reading them as alternative articulations of the human.

The demonic ground illuminates more than just a crass assertion of epistemic privilege, however, or a basic identity politics of suffering. The demonic ground is a

²¹⁴ Ibid 364.

structural condition of ontological otherization lived through the phenomenological experience of specific bodies. So it is not just that certain oppressed individuals “know better” through a reified concept of experience. Were that true, we would not methodologically require sociogenesis to map contemporary descriptive statements and their constitutive others; instead, paraphrasing Spivak, we might just “listen” to the subaltern and record what we find.²¹⁵ Wynter’s concept of the demonic ground represents a much more complex account. First, the demonic ground is a trans-scalar space that not only exists at the interface of the so-called “micro” and “macro”—refusing to simply privilege one over the other, the agent or the structure—but also allows us to explain how our conceptions of scale densely intertwine. Auto-poiesis, as theorized by Wynter, is not *sui generis*: locating the demonic ground requires a contingent view of our structural givens (capitalism, racism, the human and so forth) as emergent from sociogenetic processes at every level including the molecular. Second, sociogenesis explores the production of the subject of knowledge, especially self-knowledge and its conditions of possibility. Thus, the bodily existence of those excluded by the overrepresentation of Man indexes a fissure in our epoch’s knowledge, a demonic ground that is not *knowable* in a strict sense under contemporary conditions but still points to a constitutive outside. Hence, the demonic ground is the uneven, quaking, and transient foundation from which we can begin to imagine the Human as such.

The case of Fanon’s self-realization of liminality, for instance, in the autophobic moment of the train car becomes the impetus for assuming the demonic ground. Thus, the

²¹⁵ Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988): 271-313.; note that, while they do have overlapping concerns, I ultimately find Wynter’s reading of Foucault to implicitly break with Spivak’s famed reading of Deleuze and Foucault’s interview, “Intellectuals and Power.” See the final interlude.

last lines of *Black Skin, White Masks* might be understood as a description of the demonic ground and the sociogenic process that actualizes it: “Oh my body, make of me a man who always questions!” The human as such—as both an ontological condition and politically revolutionary vision of the future—is expressed through his body but not simply there or *discoverable*. Hence, he asks to be a man who always questions, not a man who decisively knows. That is the vantage from the demonic ground.

The structural relationship between method and constitutive outside described by Wynter inheres in Foucault’s approach as well. Perhaps his most lasting contribution to the many disciplines he has influenced, Foucault’s concept of genealogy marked a methodological shift from histories of ideologies, institutions, or juridical structures towards what he called “histories of the present.” In his essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy and History,” Foucault outlines how this shift changes the conventional historical relationship between past, present and future. Genealogy looks at contemporary regimes of practices and the truth attendant to them in terms of how a series of contingent, historical events made possible political horizons of power and resistance. The past is no longer consigned to *pastness* in the sense of a discoverable series of facts objectively in the historian’s rearview mirror. This contingent approach interpenetrates the past and the present in the sense that historical events become more than their “brute facticity”: while discrete and *prima facie* knowable events have happened, genealogy incorporates how they contour status quo sociopolitical formations into the historical investigation itself.²¹⁶ It is not just an inventory. Thus, genealogy rejects the search for origins in the sense of finding a causal, linear chain by which the germinal seed of the past sprouts in the present. It also rejects a teleological reading of historical events where a continuous narrative pre-

²¹⁶ Wendy Brown, *Politics out of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001): 140.

organizes history such that it will always have been moving towards a certain point.

Genealogy affirms that it could have been otherwise given the play of events and forces.²¹⁷

This play of conflict, domination and singular events is inscribed on and expressed through the body and in the very production of the body as a stable point in each regime of truth.²¹⁸ Historical method's most glaring reliance on a self-evident given is the idea of an ahistorical and naturally occurring body that remains unchanged over time and so can be unproblematically projected into analyses of the past; a fungible body moving seamlessly between ancient Greeks, the Ming dynasty, the antebellum South or modern Europe. To the contrary, Foucault sees genealogy as an investigation of how the body acts as the nexus for power and truth within different regimes of practices, suggesting the body itself is an unstable and contingent formation. From a Foucauldian perspective, then, Wynter's examination of female circumcision could be understood as a genealogical intervention into the positing of a universal female corpus by Western feminists: in ways discursive and corporeal, the clitoris produces manifold effects across different spaces and histories.²¹⁹

What Foucault makes clear in his lectures is that the condition of possibility of genealogy stems from the localized sites of struggle where forms of knowledge outside the master discourses of a given epoch create bits of friction that (with the right tactics) might produce sparks in the present. The supposed contradiction, in other words, between Foucault's focus on power's ubiquity and his celebration of resistance only

²¹⁷ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language: Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).

²¹⁸ Ibid, 83.

²¹⁹ See also Thomas Laqueur, "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology."

makes sense when genealogy, as the method for uncovering the complex workings of power, is divorced from the constitutive outside from which we can create maps of power's subtle contours. "You might object that there is something very paradoxical about grouping together and putting into the same category of 'subjugated knowledges,' on the one hand, historical, meticulous, precise technical expertise and, on the other, these singular, local knowledges, the noncommonsensical knowledges that people have, and which have in a way been left to lie fallow."²²⁰ To the contrary, Foucault asserts, the very definition of genealogy means examining the technocratic language of power in terms of the marginalized, unheard or not-said. Sociogenesis is impossible without some attempt to locate the demonic ground; genealogy is impossible without the subjugated knowledges that bring into relief the discursive reproduction of man.

So following Wynter, we have built a new conceptual edifice for understanding Foucault's work on sexuality that will become important in later articulations of decolonial feminism, in this chapter and the next, as the intergenerational transmission of survival tactics. As Foucault synthesizes it, "We can give the name 'genealogy' to this coupling...which allows us to constitute a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of that knowledge in contemporary tactics."²²¹ To summarize, then: first, Foucault's work all follows from his initial investigation of the "recent invention of man" and the ongoing struggle to sustain or dissolve this epistemo-ontological category; second, genealogies of "man" posit a vantage point from which alternative modes of knowledge, and by extension being, might be seized in the present.

²²⁰ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003): 8.

²²¹ Ibid.

III. The Deployment of Sexuality along the Color Line: From Gender

Trouble to Genre Trouble

Here we approach the question of contemporary feminist thought as it has taken up the work of Foucault. Perhaps the most famous line from *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, Foucault's ambiguous concept of "bodies and pleasures" remains food for ruminants in feminist and queer theory struggling over the political salience of sexual liberation. He writes, "The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures."²²² As Stephen Seely and Drucilla Cornell have shown, that line often ends up suggestively coupled with Foucault's elaboration in the interview, "The End of the Monarchy of Sex," that "the very desirability of the revolution is the problem today."²²³ The result, they argue, is that the seemingly oppositional relationship between the deployment of sexuality and bodies and pleasures became a cypher for all of *The History of Sexuality* and Foucault's work more generally. That is to say, both critics and proponents of Foucault's approach frame the book in terms of the "micro-politics" of sexual identity: is power overwhelming and inescapable in its imposition of normative sexuality or can it be transgressed through new "bodies and pleasures" that break the mold of sexual regulation? For these interlocutors, *The History of Sexuality* is a story delimited by sex absent broader questions of collective struggle. Along the lines laid out by Seely and Cornell, one can instead view *The History of Sexuality* about one strategic aspect of the production of the human, such that "bodies and pleasures" promise instead a revolutionary mode of articulating the human.

Foucault's argument in the *History of Sexuality* concerns what he calls "the

²²² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 157.

²²³ Foucault quoted in Seely and Cornell, "There's Nothing Revolutionary about a Blowjob," *Social Text* 32.2 (2014).

repressive hypothesis,” the common sense idea that gives a diagnosis and promises a cure for the modern condition: since the rise of the bourgeoisie and the ensuing hegemony of capitalism, sexuality has been either silenced or prohibited by those in power; given that sexuality represents our deepest truth and the true core of our being, the path to liberation requires sexual liberation as a necessary condition. Indeed, as Foucault wrote while witnessing the sexual energies of 1960’s and 1970’s social movements in France and the US, sexual liberation seemed to be *the* spark for liberatory possibility.

He tests this hypothesis according to three interrelated “doubts”: historical, theoretical, and political. Taken together, a rigorous historical examination reveals that the supposed silencing of sex in the eighteenth century actually entailed a discursive explosion around sexuality and the attempt to administrate and regulate sexuality based on the proliferation of information. Power, in other words, did not say “no” to sex but produced and regulated sexual identity through what Foucault calls “the deployment of sexuality,” a strategic power operation that labors under the name of negativity but is truly in a productive relationship with “sex” in particular and our subjectivity more broadly. Sexuality proves such an important node in the circulation of power because it links the disaggregated body to the aggregated body-politic. Sexuality, in other words, is the point where the “individual” and the “population” merge, making possible the rearticulation of sovereign power into what Foucault calls “bio-power,” or a power that takes life as its object. “One might say that the ancient right to *take* life or *let* live was replaced by a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death.”²²⁴ The history of sexuality is just one thread Foucault pulls to unravel this massive shift in the nature of

²²⁴ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990): 139.

power, a power strategically concerned with—if we recall the analysis from *The Order of Things*—the “invention of man.”

Politically, then, Foucault warns against the emancipatory potential of organizing around sexual expression. When we take up an identity founded in “sex,” we embrace an externally produced subjectivity that stems from the deployment of sexuality *as if* it emanates naturally from our innermost being. He is not saying that physical pleasure, conviviality, or one’s specific negotiation of power is completely irrelevant to the question of politics, a move that would surely replicate the worst aspects of a facile public/private divide. Instead, he is questioning the effects of the “artificial unity of sex” in which we group together “anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasure...and make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere.”²²⁵ Routing one’s subjectivity through sex actually expands the field through which modern power operates; the illusion of interiority, the idea that self-knowledge only comes through sexual self-expression, feeds a bio-politics that operates at the deepest and most minute scale of our affective, biological, and spiritual lives. As Seely and Cornell put it, “Far from a revolutionary action, then, the struggle for sexual ‘freedom’ is rather one of the most tragic ruses of the ‘dispositif of sexuality’ that allows for the control of our bodies, minds, and relationships at the deepest levels, all under the illusion of liberation or resistance.”²²⁶

²²⁵ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 154.

²²⁶ Seely and Cornell, “Nothing Revolutionary,” 13; Thus, they update the clarion call against a narrowly sexual politics at the end of *The History of Sexuality*: “The irony of this deployment is in having us believe that ‘liberation’ is in the balance” (159).

The most commonly cited example from Foucault's work is the case of homosexuality. The identity category of "homosexual" came about in the 19th century, the combined product of medical, psychological and criminological discourses systematically categorizing deviant behavior: "The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species."²²⁷ And yet, within the Western master discourse that triangulates subjectivity, self-knowledge, and sexuality, individuals took up this exterior identity as the very source of their liberation. From a Foucauldian perspective, the result could only be the further entrenchment of biopolitics because the artificial unity of sex expands the field of power's operation. And, indeed, the results of the mainstream gay rights movements have confirmed his suspicions. Much work has been done on the drive for gay marriage, for instance, and its depoliticizing focus on domesticity, uncritical deployment of the public/private divide, and racialized distinctions between "good" and "bad" homosexuals. Far from challenging the pernicious underside of biopolitics, in other words, the embrace of "gay identity" as a basis for legal recognition is easily absorbed into a larger project of exclusion.²²⁸ More recently, Jasbir Puar and Chandan Reddy have extended this critique to geopolitical questions, illustrating the connections between western self-understandings of sexual modernity and ongoing war in "backwards" countries marked by their non-western modes of sexual expression.²²⁹ Fanon's (in)famous claim, for instance, that there are "no homosexuals in Martinique" takes on a different light in this regard, once one understands how the

²²⁷ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 43.

²²⁸ Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pelegrini, *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Tolerance* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

²²⁹ Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

sexualization of authentic identity serves to mark good and bad subjects even, or especially, in a colonial context.²³⁰ The deployment of sexuality is not a route to revolutionary action or a mode of emancipatory politics.

Judith Butler's engagement with bodies and pleasures is suggestive of this impasse in studies of Foucault that disaggregate the history of sexuality from the invention of Man. She critiques Foucault for thinking he can inaugurate a clean break from sex-desire by way of bodies and pleasures, articulating the binary as one between sexual regulation and sexual freedom. "Bodies and pleasures' will be the names given to the time that inaugurates the break with the discursive regime of sexuality; these are bodies and pleasures that run counter to or disrupt the regulatory apparatus of sex-desire."²³¹ Bodies and pleasures names Foucault's utopic longing for a pre- or post-modern sexuality freed from the strictures of heteronormative social codes, a truly exterior break from power that will finally express the polymorphous desire of an

²³⁰ Fanon, *BSWM*, 158; it is worth noting here that this argument breaks from Wynter's rendering of the importance of homosexuality to the political projection of liminality. She writes, for instance, that "sexual orientation" cuts across all other role allocations in genre studies. (Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 33). Within my argument the charitable reading of this seeming identitarian emphasis on sexuality is two-fold: first, the notion of demonic ground makes sexual non-normativity an important source of disenchantment, rather than the taking up of sexual identity as a source of liberation. So Foucault's sexual practices, for instance, that he often discussed in interviews like "The Politics of Friendship" is not determinate to his work, but does effect his argument as someone both "selected" and "dysselected" by the overrepresentation of Man. Foucault's impatience with debates over whether homosexuality was genetically or biologically inscribed, for instance, suggest that one of the crucial political technologies in the kinds of homonormativity and homonationalism described by Duggan and Puar is the attempt to locate "homosexuals" within the biocentric order of evolutionary fitness (i.e. finding "evolutionary" reasons for existence, like the gay-best-friend argument). Hence, Wynter's view of sexual orientation here, while it can dangerously slip into the kinds of sexual identification both she and Foucault rigorously critique, can also serve as a demonic ground. Second, the diffuse but palpable effect of the deployment of sexuality as theorized by Foucault is precisely its ability to touch and bring into contact all aspects of human life through its "artificial unity." Hence, why modern biopolitics emerges in accordance with the generalization of technologies of sexuality. So in reading Wynter after Foucault, it is crucial to keep in mind the deployment of sexuality rather than sex as such whenever Wynter invokes sexual orientation.

²³¹ Butler, "Revisiting Bodies and Pleasures," *Theory and Event* 16.2 (1999): 16.

unencumbered subject. She casts doubt on Foucault's supposedly clean division between "sex-desire" and "bodies and pleasures." Butler asks, "What are the resources that counter the regulation of sexuality if they are not in some sense derived from the discursive resources of normative regulation?"²³² How could a new organization of bodies and pleasures escape the residual contamination of sex-desire if power (and the deployment of sexuality) is omnipresent? Instead of fantasizing about an apolitical sexuality before or after modern power, Butler argues we must find the resources to resignify sexuality from within the coordinates of sex-desire. In this paradigmatic case, one sees how the stakes have become limited to questions of sexuality: can non-normative sexuality escape normative constraints? Are there worse and better modes of sexual practice from a political standpoint? Is sexual identity inevitably tied to power or might it be part of a movement outside power altogether? Based on this powerfully influential reading, contemporary gender theory has inherited a version of *The History of Sexuality* in which power works to regulate normative sexuality through (primarily) discursive means and the force of resistance comes from the embrace of non-normative sexual practice. This is the realm of what Butler eponymously calls *gender trouble*.

Wynter's analysis of sociogenesis, however, makes clear that the restrictive understanding of *gender trouble* has obscured the fundamental tie between Foucault's work on sexuality and the problem of Western ontologism; Wynter pushes us to understand the history of sexuality as a problem of *genre trouble*. She affirmatively reads Butler's argument around gender roles, asking "Why not, then, the performative enactment of all our roles, of all our role allocations, as in our contemporary

²³² Butler Revisiting Bodies and Pleasures 14; Thanks to Stephen Seely for many conversations pointing out this aspect of Butler's argument.

Western/Westernized case, in terms of, inter alia, gender, race, class/underclass...All as *praxes*, therefore, rather than nouns.”²³³ Linking Foucault’s earlier work in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*—studies of the production of European man and its self-knowledge—to *The History of Sexuality* reveals that the latter is a facet of the much broader tale of “Western ontologism,” as Wynter puts it. The primary effect of Western ontologism, moreover, during the historical period which Foucault analyzes is the maintenance of the “color line.” We now turn, finally, to an understanding of power in Foucault and his notion of bodies and pleasures that asks how an outside to the current episteme of Man is possible, defined by the hidden infrastructure of the color line.

Far from random or undifferentiated (by virtue of omnipresence), power for Foucault is what he calls “intentional and nonsubjective.”²³⁴ It is intentional in the sense that it is a question of tactics and calculation: the agents and institutions through which power is expressed act in the name of particular objectives. It is nonsubjective in the sense that the preceding agents do not necessarily see themselves within the macro-terms of a strategy that is determining their actions: “let us not look for the headquarters that presides over [power’s] rationality,” Foucault cautions, urging us instead to seek out an “analytics” of power that works first by describing in granular detail the most localized and small scale modes of power relations and only then finding the ways these little bits of sediment come together to form the many layers of a historical formation.²³⁵ Thus, Foucault’s theory of power is neither “micro” nor “macro” on its own terms, but a tracing of what connects those scales, the feedback loops they create, and the way they are

²³³ Wynter, “Unparalleled Catastrophe,” 33; in chapter 3 and 4, I argue Wynter’s view of genre studies would be enriched by a decidedly less Butlerian approach from feminist theory through the work of Luce Irigaray, Elizabeth Grosz, and Jasbir Puar.

²³⁴ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 94.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

embodied.

Through Wynter's analysis of the production of European man in Foucault's earlier work, it seems a key aspect of power's intentionality—it's aims, objectives and calculations—is the question of the human. What Wynter provides, in other words, is a historical *longue duree* that contextualizes the history of sexuality, giving us a precise analysis of the onto-epistemological condition of possibility for the connection between the "micro-politics" of the body described in the history of sexuality and the discursive formations like medicine, criminology, biology and economics that—while working separately and non-subjectively—come together to form what Foucault calls the epoch of European man and what Wynter calls Man2. As Wynter puts it, "Our issue is the 'genre' of the human."²³⁶ *Genre trouble* as our frame for the history of sexuality suggests the concept of biopolitics ultimately turns on the maintenance of the color line: Foucault articulates power's machinations, not always advertently, through the racialization of certain bodies and the denial of humanity according to the evolutionary gradient proceeding from its zero point (black) to Man (white).

Colonialism weighed on Foucault when he began to understand power as a productive force rather than just a force of repression. In his 1973 lectures, published as *Psychiatric Power*, he argues that the beginning of the disciplinary apparatus of power can be traced to Jesuit interventions in South America. He writes, for instance, about the colonization of the Guarani people in Paraguay,

It was a kind of permanent penal system...which was an absolutely permanent system of punishment that followed the individual throughout his life and which, at every moment, in each of his actions or his attitudes, was liable to pick out something indicating a bad tendency or inclination, and that consequently entailed a punishment which, on the one hand,

²³⁶ Wynter, Interview in *ProudFlesh*, 15.

could be lighter because it was constant, and, on the other, was only ever brought to bear on potential actions.²³⁷

The Jesuits turned to these “disciplinary microcosms” as part of their critique of the “brutal and, in terms of the consumption of human lives, costly and poorly organized practice of slavery.”²³⁸ The techniques of power needed refining to better assimilate the Indians into the Catholicism and expose them to Jesus’s salvation. Just as importantly, a new disciplinary apparatus promised a more effective form of the *encomienda* system, marrying theological arguments to a proto-economic discourse of efficiency gains. In formal terms, the formation of power as a subjectivizing force at the corporeal level (i.e. the “permanent penal system” turning Indians into Christian subjects of European rule) works in parallel to, but is not reducible to, the creation of “docile bodies” open to exploitation, expropriation and possibly death (i.e. turning Indians into a specifically American version of serfs).

Foucault does not analyze, however, what specifically connects these parallel systems that are seemingly irreducible and yet strategically in concert. It is Wynter’s analysis of that particular epoch’s descriptive statement of the human—in other words, the reigning Western ontologism—that reveals the condition of justification for this crucial transformation in power’s operation. Without establishing that connection, we will see, it is impossible to conceptualize why the colonies become a laboratory for European power and eventually reverberate in the contemporary structure of racialized

²³⁷ Foucault, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973-1974*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2003): 69. This quotation also pushes back against the facile periodizations of Foucault as a thinker of “modernity” alone, or a thinker of discontinuous breaks: Giorgio Agamben’s popular interpretations, for instance, of biopower as *replacing* sovereign power are clearly not sustainable. See Berlant, “Slow Death.”; Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1998).

²³⁸ Foucault, *Psychiatric Power*, 69.

neoliberalism. Hence, I break from Weheliye's claim that "racism [for Foucault] only attains relevance once it penetrates the borders of fortress Europe."²³⁹ To the contrary, racism is the infrastructure of Foucault's thought, which is why Wynter turns to his analytics of power in the first place. In Wynter's analysis of the famous Las Casas-Sepulveda debate, she takes on a similar historical moment to Foucault, but supplements his (correct) analysis of disciplinary power with the much broader view of what it meant for Western ontologism to start treating Indians as quasi-human subjects.²⁴⁰

The Jesuits described by Foucault were not alone in their theologically based disgust at the enslavement of the Indians. The most famous "protector of the Indians" happened to be a Dominican, Bartolomé de las Casas, but he also expressed righteous anger at a Spanish colonial system, ostensibly justified by papal sanction and the authority of God, that would treat souls-to-be-saved in this manner. Las Casas, according to Wynter, launched his missives firmly ensconced in the onto-epistemological position of the "theocentric 'descriptive statement' Christian."²⁴¹ The Christian descriptive statement mapped the key ontologizing distinctions of life/death and order/chaos onto God's cosmos and worldly others denied access to salvation.²⁴² Thus, this paradigm for humanity proceeded in primarily binary terms: you were either an enemy of Christ, having rejected your savior, or you had accepted the Lord as the only pathway to erase the mark of original sin.

Working from within this model, Las Casas argued that the Indians could not be

²³⁹ Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 57.

²⁴⁰ The following section is a long summary of Wynter's analysis from 283-303 of "Unsettling the Coloniality"; it is presented this way out of deference to Wynter's style and the complexity of her narrative.

²⁴¹ Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality," 264.

²⁴² Wynter "Beyond the Word of Man," 642.

enslaved as heretics, infidels, or enemies of Christ insofar as they were technically innocents: they had never *rejected* Christ because they had never been confronted with the teachings of the church. For Las Casas, the Iberian empires ought to fulfill their higher mission, passed down to them by the papal decrees on the New World, and actually take on the difficult missionary tasks of turning these innocents into servants of the Lord. "This was, therefore, to lead him to make a fateful proposal," Wynter writes, "one that was to provide the charter of what was to become the Black-diasporic presence in the Americas."²⁴³ Las Casas believed, based on a tragic misunderstanding that would forever haunt him, enslaved Africans captured by the Portuguese were taken under "just title" based on a prior rejection of Christianity. His theocentric worldview could abide the importation of *these particular slaves* to maintain the *encomienda* system, setting into motion the large-scale use of enslaved Africans in the Americas. This distinction is evidence that historical analysis must begin with an excavation of the descriptive statement of the human in a given epoch: Wynter undermines the simple idea that Las Casas "replaced Indians with Africans"—a shift that would not make sense in his theocentric worldview of enemies and servants—by illustrating that he replaced "unjust title" with "just title."²⁴⁴

Las Casas staked out this position in the famous Valladolid Debate of 1550, hoping to convince King Charles V to enforce laws protecting Indians and limit Spanish expropriation. Providing theoretical guidance to the many who saw Las Casas as a threat to the profitability and geopolitical utility of the American colonies, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda defended ongoing war against and enslavement of the Indians. According to

²⁴³ Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality," 293.

²⁴⁴ Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality," 294.

Wynter, Sepúlveda posited an alternative descriptive statement of the human in his description of the Indians, and non-Europeans more broadly, as “natural slaves.” He attempted to supplant theocentrism with a “ratiocentric world view” that made *reason* the key distinction in demarcations of life/death and order/chaos. Reason as an ontologism has two primary implications for the debate. First, the bright-line approach in Las Casas model becomes a hierarchical gradation. Where one either had or had not come into contact with Christianity and non-coercively considered Christ’s teaching (delimiting the categories enemy, servant, innocent), one’s rational capabilities are a relative measurement along gradients restricted to worldly populations. As Wynter puts it, this creates “a systemic representational shift being made out of the order of discourse that had been elaborated on the basis of the Judeo-Christian Spirit/Flesh organizing principle...to the new rational/irrational organizing principle and master code.”²⁴⁵ No longer found in the cosmos, man’s life on earth and the cultural and political forms it took determined a uniquely human salvation.²⁴⁶ Second, and logically following from the centering of earth-bound reason, Sepúlveda’s position naturally set up a great chain of being in which European man’s rationality organized through emergent state forms served as zenith.

While neither side definitively won the argument in terms of instituting comprehensive reforms in their direction, they did combine to lay the theoretical basis for a form of racialization that would eventually transmogrify into the modern articulation of the “color line” in the twentieth-century. On the one hand, as mentioned above, Las Casas’ well-intentioned critique of slavery created a secondary distinction between

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 300.

²⁴⁶ The rise of the physical sciences, especially through the work of Copernicus and Newton, is a crucial part of this story as well, omitted here for brevity.

Indians and Africans. While he never meant it to imply an *a priori* difference, it provided an initial justification for the Portuguese slave trade, a practice that eventually solidified into an entire political-economic system. The transition from the Christian descriptive statement to ratiocentric Man1, brought about for reasons somewhat external to slavery, mooted the premise for Las Casas's distinction but left in place the political-economic arrangement it had served to justify. On the other hand, Sepúlveda's use of "natural slaves" fit the new humanism of the sixteenth century well. As detailed earlier, however, new descriptive statements do not simply erupt in the imagination and mark a clean break from their predecessors. And so residual aspects of the theocentric order find rearticulation in the ratiocentric order. Most relevant to our tracing of the color line, Sepulveda's humanism isolates the "Negro" of Africa as the zero-point of rationality in the chain of being, the final link between humanity's lowest forms and non-human animals. This stems, in part, from the inadvertent justification of black slavery produced by Las Casas and his allies which, while trying to make a functional distinction, created the appearance of blacks as innate slaves by virtue of their singular positioning as taken with "just title." Through reiteration a secondary difference became essential. Along with that discursive-material feedback loop, however, Sepulveda's humanism also found epistemological resources from the previous order's understanding of black skin as the "mark of Ham."²⁴⁷ Certain instantiations of the theocentric view explained African peoples' darker complexion according to their filiation with Ham, Noah's accursed son who appeared 'burnt' for his sins.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality," 307.

²⁴⁸ This example indexes the crucial importance of sociogenesis as a theoretical and historical methodology. The negative and positive feedback loops that work within the larger field of what it means to be human cannot be understood mono-causally, or in terms of either biological

Thus, Wynter and Foucault identify the same process of the partial incorporation of Indians onto the newly developed continuum of the human (as rational) through disciplinary techniques. The key omission in Foucault, however, is the location of the zero-point of this rationality from which the subjectivization of Indians makes sense. Yet, and this is crucial, Foucault's early focus on colonialism sets the stage for his analysis of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—the epoch of Man2 for Wynter—which will finally incorporate racialization, however haltingly, as the key hinge on which biopolitics turns. Moving forward chronologically, this connection becomes clear (made possible through sociogenesis) as colonialism remains a laboratory for the strategic power relations that interest Foucault. Take, for instance, Fanon's discussion of the Algerian case that sounds a similar note to Foucault's understanding of the Jesuits in sixteenth-century South America.

Gradually, however, the development of production techniques, the industrialisation...of the enslaved country, the increasing need for the existence of collaborators impose a new attitude on the occupying power. The complexity of the means of production, the development of economic relations, which, willingly or unwillingly, involve relations between ideologies, throw the system out of balance. Vulgar racism, in its biological form, corresponds to the period of the brutal exploitation of the arms and legs of men. The perfection of means of production inevitably brings about the camouflage of the techniques for exploiting men, and hence of the forms of racism.²⁴⁹

Again, in formal terms, Fanon describes a similar set of inputs and outputs to the colonial system in Algeria. The initial imposition of a violent, supremacist administration is

determinism or cultural determinism. A political economic system seeks justification through a new cultural imaginary, but becomes autonomous in such a way that it ultimately undergirds the shift to a different cultural imaginary; all the while, this process is brought to bear on the bodies of different populations (i.e. Creoles, Indians, Africans) that reinscribes the new value system justifying the political economic system. The complexity of these material-semiotic connections makes the turn to Wynter (and Fanon) urgently needed.

²⁴⁹ Fanon, "Racism and Culture," *Presence Africaine* 8-10 (1956): 125.

deemed unsustainable for the strategic perpetuation of colonialism, not least of all because it lacks a condition of justification. Without *actually dissolving* the Manichaean racial system put in place at the moment of colonization, colonial administrators modulate their techniques according to more subtle forms of exploitation and more invidious body-politics. Following Wynter, what is happening is that racism is rearticulated to further the overrepresentation of Man2—the color line does not go away, but it must be expressed, and even diffused, through the kinds of disciplinary apparatuses analyzed by Foucault (the factory, the school, the barracks, the church) to ensure its survival.²⁵⁰

Thus, I am suggesting that *race per se is not primary for either Wynter or Fanon*. As Fanon puts it in the same essay, "Racism has not attained sclerosis. It has to renew itself, to take on shades, to change its physiognomy. It has had to share the fate of the cultural whole which inspired it...Racism, as we have seen, is only one element in a larger whole, namely the systematic oppression of a people."²⁵¹ This coincides with Wynter's point, that our issue is the issue of genre. To be clear, the current descriptive statement of the human is often and even primarily expressed through racialization, but it is not reducible to that meaning of modern racism. Hence Fanon's warning not to set one's targets on a sclerotic vision of racism that, once defeated, will make way for a just and even post-racial society. Racism will find new expression according to what Fanon calls the cultural whole, or what Wynter would call the reigning ontologism. So, for instance, scientists, activists, and academics effectively and overwhelmingly disproved

²⁵⁰ This is the sense of 'survival' Wynter borrows from cybernetics theorist Gregory Bateson: "Survival' means that certain descriptive statements about some living system continue to be true through some period of time." Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 339.

²⁵¹ Fanon, "Racism and Culture," 123-124.

the notion of a properly biological basis for race in the twentieth-century. Confronted with evidence that race is not “real” in a substantive sense, the evolutionary hierarchy of race set up in the eighteenth century managed to preserve itself through thinly veiled “culture” arguments or, even more insidiously, a newfound utopia of “colorblind society.” And now, moreover, we see the rumblings of another rearticulation of race: the return of biological race arguments in the form of genomics. As the definition of the human shifts more and more towards the molecular level, the structural arrangements of Man2 will best preserve itself through a genetic justification and a strong denial, in fact, of colorblindness.²⁵² These brief examples illustrate why genre is the primary question, and only then can we understand how racialization operates as a particular technique of power.

IV. Bodies and Pleasures beyond *Homo Economicus*

And so the question, then, in thinking about Fanon’s analysis of colonialism alongside Foucault’s development of “biopower” in the *History of Sexuality*, is what genre of the human is being managed? Specifically for Foucault, how is the deployment of sexuality strategically calibrated to preserve a particular arrangement of the human over and against other possibilities? Wynter argues that contemporary Western ontologism forms from the intertwining of a post-Darwinian evolutionary hierarchy and the post-war economics of neoliberalism, giving us Man2: a biocentric being whose evolutionary fitness is measured by the accumulation of wealth and who, in turn, justifies massive wealth inequality through recourse to evolutionary fitness. With all of these theoretical resources in place, it is now clear why contemporary feminist and queer

²⁵² These shifts are discussed in chapter 3 around the concept of the “pieza framework.”

readings of *The History of Sexuality* as limited to the autonomous force of sex rob Foucault of his revolutionary potential and inadvertently feed back into the overrepresentation of Man. As Wynter puts it, “This modality was, is, that of being both biological beings and homo oeconomicus, for whom human fulfillment would come to equal, on the one hand, the experience of sexual pleasure, and on the other, the realizing of the American Dream of higher and higher material standards of living, and therefore of being.”²⁵³ The body produced by the deployment of sexuality connects capital accumulation with pleasure accumulation—neoliberal subjectivity, in other words, incorporates pleasure and self-discovery, creating an erotics of inequality and an affective investment in upward mobility. As the previous chapter’s analysis of how we remember Katrina suggests, these structures of identification become crucial in managing formal memory practices vis-à-vis the dream of American led capitalism.

With the publication of Foucault’s lecture series from 1979 entitled, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, I would argue it is clear that he saw the *History of Sexuality* as one narrative thread within the larger tale of the development of “homo economicus.” Foucault writes, “[Marriage, the education of children, and criminality] all revolve around a theme or a notion: homo economicus, economic man....to what extent is it legitimate, and to what extent is it fruitful, to apply the grid, the schema and the model of homo economicus to not only every economic actor, but to every social actor in general.”²⁵⁴ Very few commentators outside of Wynter have effectively put together these two strands of Foucault’s thought, realizing that *homo economicus* was simultaneously a biological

²⁵³ Wynter, “Genital Mutilation?”; I cannot emphasize this quotation enough as it distills Foucault’s argument from *The Order of Things* to *The History of Sexuality* so effectively, and in a manner still missed by the oppositional debates between Foucaultian and material feminists.

²⁵⁴ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2010): 268.

invention; that is to say, no matter how abstract their calculations become, neoliberal economists cannot avoid the persistent problem of the human *body* as an imperfect economic object. The deployment of sexuality works at this node between the disciplined individual (its desires, its needs, its inefficiencies) and the managed population to advance the cause of homo economicus, justified by a biological discourse of evolutionary superiority. What Wynter makes clear, moreover, is that pursuing that fulfillment—indeed, becoming incredibly good at the temporary satiation of desire through consumption—is in fact evidence of evolutionary fitness. It becomes the highest mark of the human she calls Man.

And what Foucault finally comes to argue, at least in part, in the *History of Sexuality*, is how the color line represents one of the vital strategic calculations of power given the biocentric racialization of Man². He continually refers to race as a crucial component of the turn to biopower, and perhaps more importantly, as the key to understanding the machinations of biopolitical regimes (especially how and why they are simultaneously always-already necropolitical). He writes, “...for the sake of a general protection of society and the race...the deployment of sexuality, elaborated in its more complex and intense forms, by and for the privileged classes, spread through the entire social body.”²⁵⁵ He is referring here to the beginnings of the deployment of sexuality, when the technology of confession from the Catholic Church became generalized to the population as a whole. His point seems to be that a conception of the “race” writ large, and its socio-biological well-being in the form of a population, was a necessary precondition to the intensification of power’s relationship to sex and the way it would eventually take life as its target (i.e. biopolitics). And just before he introduces the

²⁵⁵ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 122.

concept of bodies and pleasures, Foucault writes, “Racism took shape at this point (racism in its modern, biologizing, ‘statist’ form): it was then that a whole politics of settlement, family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, and property, accompanied by a long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, conduct, health, and everyday life received their *color* and their justification...”²⁵⁶ To put it schematically then, power relations operate according to the descriptive statement of the human at work, meaning that under racialized neoliberalism the color line is the animating force or the vital metric for strategic calculations of how to perpetuate the current socio-economic order. Foucault clearly gestures toward that here, arguing that the invention of European man as theorized in *The Order of Things* required a space of otherness by which it understood its own purity and justified its capturing of life through subjectivizing discourses like medicine, criminology, anthropology and psychiatry.

Finally, it is possible to understand how Foucault is, in his way, a thinker of coloniality and Fanon and Wynter are, in their way, thinkers of biopower. The critique of Foucault for an inability to understand mass violence at a macrological scale cannot be sustained because it is the virtual possibility of that violence in the name of maintaining the color line that animates all micrological social interventions he discusses. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, for instance, encapsulates Foucault’s linking of homo economicus to biocentric man through the deployment of sexuality. Katrina, however briefly, threw the descriptive statement of Man2 into question—at least in the United States—as it made the slow violence of neoliberalism into a mass spectacle of suffering and human detritus. To turn it into a site for reinvestment in the nation and its ruthless neoliberalism requires a reiteration of homo economicus’ evolutionary fitness: those left

²⁵⁶ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 149, emphasis mine.

in New Orleans found themselves there because of their own moral failings, evidenced by their lack of capital, and turned New Orleans into a “state of nature” once left to their own devices requiring civilizing occupiers to “save” the city through occupation and making it hospitable to a white elite. So the story went, at least.²⁵⁷ Within that discursive field, coloniality and biopolitics are two functions of the same code: the overrepresentation of Man2.

Similarly, the preceding analysis of Wynter suggests that the inverse critique of coloniality as only applicable to a “repressive” view of power misses the mark. Pheng Cheah, for instance, worries about coloniality’s negativity: “This different understanding of power as productive as opposed to repressive seems especially important in contemporary globalization where the flows of transnational capital fabricate the economic well-being of nation-states and their individual citizen.”²⁵⁸ Cheah is right in some sense that globalization’s subjectivizing effects must be taken into account. He errs, however, in seeing theories of coloniality as fixated on repression. Wynter’s reading of the Las Casas/Sepúlveda debate, for instance, makes clear that the production of the human is always a process of incorporation and exclusion. Similarly, Fanon saw colonialism as a great disciplinary apparatus that subjectivized bodies through the production of a “normal” consciousness and achieved necropolitical ends through the micro-politics of everyday life.

Having restated Foucault’s problematic as the question of the human, how does that change one’s reading of his cryptic line: “The rallying point for the counterattack

²⁵⁷ See the interlude after this chapter on New Orleans as a “state of nature” and the securitization of “refugees.”

²⁵⁸ Pheng Cheah, “The Limits of Thinking in Decolonial Strategies,” *Newsletter of the Townsend Center* .1 November 2006. Accessed 10 April 2015.
<<http://townsendcenter.berkeley.edu/publications/limits-thinking-decolonial-strategies>>

against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures.”²⁵⁹ Now bodies and pleasures appears as an insurrection at the level of Western ontologism itself, not simply a reorganization of economies of desire and pleasure within the current descriptive statement of Man. Recall the earlier use of Michel Serres’s reading of Foucaultian power dynamics as an excavation not of borders and enclosure but instead the directionality and orientation of a border.²⁶⁰ My reading of bodies and pleasures thus confronts power not as a stable entity producing race as such, or even race as a primary political category, but racialization as a processual modality that controls the directionality of the demarcation between humans and non-human others. For Foucault, “[p]ower’s condition of possibility ... is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender state’s of power”; the border, then, is this play of differentiation in relations of force, becoming “wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole.”²⁶¹ Read through Wynter in this way, Foucault’s description of race as a political technology that “[creates] caesuras within the biological continuum addressed by biopower” takes on a different valence because it means attacking the cut in the social body itself is of secondary importance to renegotiating and reorienting the attachments, connections, and subjectivizations made possible *across* and *along* the border.

So Weheliye’s oppositional reading of Foucault and Wynter, for instance, concludes that, “Foucault positions hybridity as a panacea for racial difference without

²⁵⁹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 157.

²⁶⁰ Serres quotation from chapter 1: “What is a border or boundary? It is, first of all, the line that is drawn, let us call it its “ridge”; its significance is one of definition. This boundary this line, always has two sides. If I trace around myself a closed contour, I keep myself in and defend myself against. One side of the line protects me and the other side excludes others. ... Let us then consider how the line of division is situated, in which direction it is drawn.” (42)

²⁶¹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 93-94.

querying the foundation upon which the idea of racial differences among humans is built.”²⁶² Once we understand racial caesuras as the site of biopower’s mobilization, especially through the emergence of *homo economicus* as the accumulating subject of sex-desire, the idea that Foucault would simply attack the site of difference itself and abolish it through the dream of absolute hybridity is unsustainable. Not merely the celebration of mixture and flux, bodies and pleasures redirects the racial cut from the unidirectionality of overrepresentation to the multiplicity of human *genres*.

This point suggests that the other dominant oppositional reading of Wynter and Foucault performed by da Silva is implausible. She argues, “[Each] locates the place of disassemblage at distinct levels: in Foucault’s technology of self (and theory of domination), the task is to be performed at the level of the *singular* human being’s self-refashioning; in Wynter’s project, the critical task requires the refashioning at the *collective* level.”²⁶³ My complementary reading argues, to the contrary, that Wynter allows us to recast Foucault’s concept of bodies and pleasures as a multiscalar insurrection against Western ontologism that works at the site where the “individual” is disaggregated by disciplinary techniques and reaggregated into the “population” as the target of racial caesuras and biopolitics. In this sense, the body is not a self-evidently given scale but precisely *made scaleable* by different political technologies, such as the overlapping regimes of liberal sentimentality, regimes of visual epidermalization, and regimes of coloniality.²⁶⁴

²⁶² Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 61.

²⁶³ Da Silva, “Before Man,” 99.

²⁶⁴ The next chapter furthers this point about how the singular body becomes a unit of exchange, particularly in the move from discipline and biopower to “control societies” where the enforced fungibility of racialized bodies serves a key purpose that Wynter calls the “pieza” framework.

As a concrete example of what my reworking of Wynter and Foucault together might enable, consider *négritude* as theorized by Césaire. Rather than an attempt to abolish the biopolitical cut of race, as if one could ever do so, *négritude* thought attempts a reorganization of the economies of bodies and pleasures, the direction of exchange and movement across the demarcation of the human and its others. Wynter writes, “If Foucault was to raise the question of the historical and therefore relative nature of our modes of subjectivity in the wake of 1968 cultural revolts in France, this question had been first raised poetically rather than conceptually by Aimé Césaire in his *Cahier*.”²⁶⁵ The *Cahier* refers to Césaire’s epic poem, “Notebook of a Return to My Native Land,” a key founding document of *négritude* thought.²⁶⁶ In assessing the future of Foucault studies, both inside and outside the field of feminist theory, Wynter’s parallel is crucial. *Bodies and pleasures* does not take on its revolutionary potential by redistributing physical pleasure to different parts of the body under the same (capitalist) market of sexuality or by glorifying self-fashioning. It is only revolutionary insofar as it challenges the overrepresentation of Man, which has defined the generic human as a singular body with normalized desires. Césaire’s *négritude* challenges this construction in the first instance by inventing a new humanity (humanities) out of the ontological zero-point of Man². It is, quite simply, revolutionary to attribute a social life and political meaning to blackness because it effectively dissolves the structure of Man². Wynter makes this argument while defending Césaire from charges of being “essentialist” or anachronistic

²⁶⁵ Wynter, “Beyond the Word of Man,” 640.

²⁶⁶ For reasons beyond the scope of this chapter, I focus on Césaire’s argument around *Négritude* rather than Leopold Senghor’s. There are important historical connections between the previous chapter on Bergson and this invocation of *Négritude*, as Donna Jones has argued, but I limit myself to this specific cry of black life and not the whole field. See Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Negritude, Vitalism, and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

in his valorization of blackness. “I argue...that since the nineteenth century representation of the Indo-European as the generic human...with all other population groups being its lack, was and is a function of the instituting of generic ‘Man,’ defined by the Word of Man, Césaire’s negritude, which refused the black’s imposed role as conceptual other to the representation of generic man, calls in question our present order of being and knowing....”²⁶⁷ Negritude’s only essentialism, in other words, is to insist on the humanity of blackness, a position that cannot coexist with Man². It is not about collapsing Césaire and Wynter into a Eurocentric narrative of self-emancipation, but instead follows Zakiyyah Jackson’s probing question about how a juxtaposition of parallel but historically distinct genealogies, “might...resignify and revalue humanity such that it breaks with the imperialist ontology and metaphysical essentialism of Enlightenment man?”²⁶⁸ This poetic articulation of a new human then is revolutionary in the sense proposed by Foucault’s notion of bodies and pleasures, because it should teach us anew how to live together in shared futures.

If power modulates a strategic calculus according to the color line as the key demarcation of the human, then our response must be equally strategic. To paraphrase Foucault and Césaire together, the work of revolutionary humanism has only just begun in the different *genres* of bodies and pleasures that challenge the overrepresentation of Man.

²⁶⁷ Wynter, “Beyond the Word of Man,” 647.

²⁶⁸ Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, “Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism,” *Feminist Studies* 39.3 (January 2014): 670; Jackson’s review also raises crucial questions about ordering in intellectual history, that is the way we conceive of periodization, declarations of “firstness,” or “patrilineal links” within disciplines. While I only gloss negritude here (although I return to it in later discussions of Glissant), I want to highlight Wynter’s profound interlinking of Fanon, Césaire, and Glissant by which she maintains their distinctions without falling into the trap of absolutely differentiating them or, perhaps worse, creating a fathers-and-sons drama of Afro-Caribbean philosophy.

If the color line is not a parameterization of *race as such* for Wynter, how to excavate the event of Katrina as a specific materializing of race rather than retroactively projecting a straightforward racial heuristic? Put differently, if the preceding argues that race is a political technology of the overrepresentation of Man that only comes into force and temporary stabilization through a set of arrangements not reducible to racial differentiation, how did Katrina emerge as a racialized disaster along the unsettled and shifting axis of the color line? This interlude tells the story of a suddenly “third-world” New Orleans where a geopolitical calculus of securitization and exotic otherness reframes the relationship between class and race, threaded together as the genre work called Man2.

After Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, the mainstream media, along with well-intentioned academics, quickly started drawing comparisons to the ‘Third World.’ This juxtaposition stemmed from the shock and rage provoked by images of rotting cities and decaying flesh that would make sense in news coverage of Latin America or Africa or Asia, but proved startlingly unintelligible to the sedimented beliefs of a First World frame of reference.²⁶⁹ “Sometimes this comparison was made with regard to the conditions,” Dave Eggers writes, “where hospitals were not open or working, where clean water and other basic services weren’t available.”²⁷⁰ In this rendering, the idea of the third world suddenly sprouting in New Orleans underscored not

²⁶⁹ Virginia Dominguez, “Seeing and Not Seeing: Complicity in Surprise,” *Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*. Organized by Social Sciences Research Council. 11 June 2006. Accessed 1 March 2015. <http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Dominguez/>

²⁷⁰ Dave Eggers, *Zeitoun* (San Francisco: McSweeney’s, 2009): 119.

only how exceptional the event and aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was, but also implied that the systematic poverty and rotting infrastructure glaringly exposed on CNN marked only the idiosyncrasies of one declining city.

The comparison worked even more viscerally, however, in reference to the color of the bodies left battling the storm: “the words were spoken over images of African American residents wilting in the heat [...] or standing on rooftops waving for help. There were unverified reports of roving gangs [...] Residents were being referred to as refugees.”²⁷¹ Not only did the incredible poverty on display beggar belief, but also racial demographics made the scene seem equally un-American. Eggers suggests that the “third-world” label implied an evaluative connotation that marked the remaining, non-white residents as a combination of primitive, violent, and helpless, something akin to a Hobbesian state of nature but set in the jungles of far away countries.

Indeed, “The name of Hobbes sprang from the keyboards of the commentators,” John Protevi notes, “as they heard the breathlessly reported rumors of savagery ... A ‘state of nature,’ they wrote, a ‘war of all against all,’ they assured us.”²⁷² Recall, the sexual and racial politics of the social contract brought into relief the border between private and public out of the messy chaos of the “state of nature,” a process Wynter identifies as central to the overrepresentation of Man. Thus, the return to the state of nature, here geographically mapped through the third-world status of post-Katrina New Orleans, affirms the natural dyselection of those who have failed to become good neoliberal subjects, whether on the Gulf Coast or the Persian Gulf Coast.

Rich Lowry in the *National Review* begins his article “A National Disgrace” by

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² John Protevi, “Katrina,” in *Deleuze/Guattari and Ecology*, ed. Bernd Herzogenrath (London: Palgrave Macmillans, 2009): 174.

framing Hurricane Katrina in relation to September 11. His invocation of Hobbes, however, explicitly draws another event into the mix. Arguing this would not be the first time looting has hurt Bush's cause, he says, "The other, of course, was in Baghdad in 2003. It is a matter of consensus now that the rip-the-the-place apart looting in the initial days after the fall of Saddam Hussein set the occupation off on the wrong foot...One wonders: Has anyone in the administration read their Hobbes?"²⁷³

His analogue for thinking about New Orleans appears puzzling. George Will, also cited by Protevi, follows a parallel twisted path. He argues that Katrina is directly tied to the debate over Iraq because failure in New Orleans implies the inevitability of failure in Iraq. As part of this argument, Will compares the conditions in New Orleans directly to foreign insurgents committing acts of terror: "Iraq's insurgents, the creators of an atmosphere of deadly suggestibility, are now attacking the power grid and other elements of urban infrastructure, an attempt, not unsuccessful, to create a Hobbesian state of nature."²⁷⁴ He could be read as comparing the insurgents in Iraq to the hurricane itself, dangerously positing Iraqi resisters as innately violent or irrational forces of nature. I would also read this sentence, however, as the almost paradoxical claim that the predatory gangs supposedly roaming New Orleans precipitated a "state of nature" at the same time they reside within a "state of nature," forever marked as outside of civil society. The cultural dynamics that pervaded America after September 11 make this kind of securitized response almost necessary, a logic institutionally expressed by the absorption of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) into the Department

²⁷³ Rich Lowry, "A National Disgrace," *National Review Online*, 9 September 2005, accessed 1 March 2015. <<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/215319/national-disgrace-rich-lowry>>

²⁷⁴ George Will, Will, George. "Leviathan in Louisiana," *Newsweek*, 12 September 2005. Accessed 1 April 2015. <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9014028/>>

of Homeland Security (DHS).

The non-fiction story *Zeitoun*, by Dave Eggers, illustrates the way September 11 framed Hurricane Katrina and conditioned government and citizen responses. Zeitoun is the name of a Syrian immigrant living in New Orleans who established a successful contracting company with business throughout the city. The narrative of events is as follows: he decides to stay in New Orleans as Katrina approaches in the hopes of limiting damage to his own house and the various properties he owns while his family leaves; after days of canoeing through the city, passing out food and lending a helping hand, he is picked up by unidentified police at a house he owns, along with a white tenant, a white stranger, and a Syrian Muslim friend of his; he goes first to a make-shift prison then to a maximum-security penitentiary, receiving special attention from the Department of Homeland Security; finally, he escapes this legal black hole thanks to some connections and good luck. The brute facts of Zeitoun's narrative represent the convergence and unequal impact of multiple identity registers. In this case, the traumatic situation post-Katrina—specifically the militarization of New Orleans—mixed virulently with the discursive formations of the War on Terror.

The day of Zeitoun's arrest brings these dynamics into stark relief. A group of heavily armed authorities, sporting police and military uniforms but not overtly displaying identification, show up at the house Zeitoun is sharing with Todd, Nasser, and Robbie. The following exchange occurs:

“Who are you?” one of them asked
 “I’m the landlord. I own this house,” Zeitoun said
 ...
 “Give me your ID,” one man said to Zeitoun.
 Zeitoun complied. The man took the ID and gave it back to

Zeitoun without looking at it.²⁷⁵

Zeitoun and his associates are shoved forcefully into the military boat without the chance to grab any personal items. The question is, what cultural dynamics prevailed at that moment in New Orleans when they experienced the full force of sovereign power and the apparent suspension of their rights and liberties?

Zeitoun's inner monologue points us towards one answer: "He knew there had been a mandatory evacuation in effect, and he assumed this had something to do with that."²⁷⁶ This comment seems absurd in light of their eventual brutal treatment at the hands of the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA, but it is actually quite accurate. Everyone who *could* get out of New Orleans did, the logic goes. This assumption is partially true, insofar as the economic stratification of New Orleans also implies an unequal distribution of mobility: the people left behind were much more likely to be impoverished (or suffer some other impairment to their ability to rapidly flee, such as the elderly). That the people left behind were overwhelmingly poor, and by extension comprised mostly of the black population in New Orleans, does not, on its own, explain Zeitoun's treatment. When this observation about the materially disparate impact of Katrina is wedded to an account of the representational practices that *framed* all those black bodies on CNN, however, a clearer picture begins to emerge.

The very presence of Zeitoun and the others in New Orleans implies some guilt, or some dyselection from the adaptive truths of Man2. This relationship between local citizens and the authorities was prefigured by the immediate militarization of the city after Bush declared a state of emergency; when tens of thousands of national guardsmen

²⁷⁵ Eggers, *Zeitoun*, 216.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 217.

are being sent to occupy a city, it follows that Zeitoun and his fellow travelers would be treated like insurgents caught in a war zone. The national guardsmen enter New Orleans amidst a media blitz about how “New Orleans had descended into a third-world state.”²⁷⁷ This glib comparison did not simply refer to an actually existing place, but instead to an imaginary projection of the third world as characterized by a fictive reading of Hobbes’s state of nature: lawlessness, death, and a people lacking any collective responsibility. This subtext represents, on the one hand, an explicitly racialized construction, as the comparison to third-worldness in the context of New Orleans is intended to evoke images of African civil war and refugee crises. Of course, however, Zeitoun is not black and neither are his clearly white associates. Even so, they get caught up in this racialized imaginary precisely because of inferences about their *class* status drawn from their geographical location.

The story continues to increase in complexity for Zeitoun (and Nasser) because of their Middle Eastern heritage. When Todd aggressively asks the police officers why they are in processing to go to prison, one responds, “You guys are al Qaeda.” Later, a soldier mutters “Taliban” at them.²⁷⁸ These utterances are not isolated, as the questioning and treatment Zeitoun and his associates receive suggests special attention to their possibly terrorist connections. So along with the class and racial implications of Zeitoun’s mere presence in New Orleans, the social mapping of Islam (here conflated with anyone who *appears* Middle Eastern) as a marker of deviance from American cultural purity obviates the rest of his model-minority resume.

Zeitoun's experience conveys a heterogenous account of identity during crisis,

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 119.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 222, 223.

particularly the "disaster" created by the confluence of neoliberalism and Hurricane Katrina. It is here that genre studies are particularly useful for attending to the multivalent and locally specific forces of the production of Man, where a prefabricated race or class grid cannot simply be stamped onto the event. If the color line serves as a porous, mobile, and cross-cutting border that enlivens the field of social belonging (and exclusion) for Wynter, then Hurricane Katrina becomes a material-discursive formation through preceding cultural circuits with which it conjugates and connects and/or from which it deviates and detours. This balancing of the strategic power of the color line as the infrastructure of overrepresentation with its unpredictable and emergent qualities requiring consistent remapping points to the concept of "assemblage" from Deleuze and Guattari, particularly its uptake by Puar as a way of thinking through biopolitics after September 11. As she has consistently argued, "The war on terror is an assemblage hooked into an array of enduring modernist paradigms (civilizing teleologies, orientalisms, xenophobia, militarization, border anxieties) and postmodernist eruptions (suicide bombers, biometric surveillance strategies, emergent corporealities, counterterrorism gone overboard."²⁷⁹ One cannot use the color line to display Hurricane Katrina in the future anterior, in other words, saying it always will have been a racial disaster. Instead the event of Katrina as disaster is itself the materialization of the color line and a rearrangement of the cultural dynamics that make possible the regeneration of Man². What makes historical moments distinct is precisely the way specific iterations of a dominant genre unevenly incorporate variegated identity markers in the demarcation

²⁷⁹ Jasbir Puar, "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages," *Social Text* 23.3 (2005): 84.

and uneven porosity of cultural boundaries.²⁸⁰ In the remainder of this interlude, I want to think about Hurricane Katrina as another part of a post-9/11 security assemblage partially incorporated by the Bush administration and the military-prison-industrial complex.

Zooming out to the national scale can contextualize the political forces indexed by the scars of the Zeitoun family. In a short piece called “National Security: An Accident Waiting to Happen,” James Der Derian excoriates the arbitrary territorialization of the nation-state scale which builds a “failure of imagination” into our very notion of security: “The intractability of disaster, especially its unexpected, unplanned, unprecedented nature, erodes not only the very distinction of the local, national, and global, but, assisted and amplified by an unblinking global media, reveals the contingent and highly interconnected character of life in general.”²⁸¹ It is hard to disagree with Der Derian’s sentiment when reviewing the record of government officials in response to Katrina

²⁸⁰ Along these lines, the War on Terror as such a process of enfolding forms the core of Puar’s argument in *Terrorist Assemblages* such that the partial incorporation of queer subjects becomes a political technology of neoliberal empire through the geopolitical deployment of sexual modernity and individual freedom. Hence, furthering the idea of the border as a “directionality” rather than a static divide, Bush’s infamous “with us or against us” speech about the axis of evil reveals neoliberalism as just such a technology of assemblage as it, “relies not on a straightforward binary [...] but a process of incorporation. It is not simply us versus them, but with us...” (Luiza Bialasiewicz et al., “Performing Security: The Imaginative Geographies of Current US Strategy,” *Political Geography*, 26.4, May 2007: 415).

In that context, Wynter’s halting engagement with the imagined geographies of “Islam” in the War on Terror is an interesting site for future research. She clearly apprehends the War on Terror as a modality of imperial absorption in the way I have described, arguing “Neo-liberalism is not just an economic thing... This is where the clash with Islam is interesting because Islam is saying, ‘No there’s another conception.’” But, she adds, “Islam has to go back. We’re saying, ‘No....for a new man...’” (Wynter, Interview in *ProudFlesh*, 10). My discussion of Zeitoun and the War on Terror here suggests a more complex set of possibilities for Islam as not only the Other to a “degodded” Man2, but also as a liminal site beyond the neoliberal order. While Wynter is careful, her rendering of Islam as going “back” teeters on the dangerous ground of epistemic violence and, more pressingly, on the brink of closing off what Seely and Cornell call, following Foucault, political spirituality borne from Islamic thought.

²⁸¹ James Der Derian, “National Security: An Accident Waiting to Happen.” *Harvard International Review* 27.3(2005). Accessed 1 March 2015.
<<http://hir.harvard.edu/index.php?page=article&id=1430>>

especially when their failures are juxtaposed with the simultaneous efforts of the War on Terror and war in Iraq.

Hurricane Katrina revealed the complete failure of both the national and the security in ‘national security,’ although not exactly for the reasons Der Derian isolates. As countless commentators have pointed out, there was not simply a ‘failure of imagination’ in the build-up to Katrina: the National Weather Service warned over 24 hours prior that it would be an epic catastrophe, internal memos about the scope of the coming humanitarian crisis found the president at least two days before, and that is not to mention years upon years of neglect and willful ignorance from every level of government.²⁸² The question then is not simply what threats are perceivable or predictable within a realist framework—historically prompt reactions to hurricanes in Florida illustrate that the government is capable of handling a Katrina sized event—but how risk ends up distributed amongst different populations, generally along race or class lines.²⁸³ In other words, Der Derian implies that the government fails because it thinks in terms of simply securing its own borders and the people within it (the homogenous ‘we’ posited at the beginning of his article). Such a position clearly needs nuancing in the context of an event like Katrina where the terms of citizenship and national belonging are precisely what is at stake. How else to explain the rhetoric of “refugees” when discussing victims in New Orleans? Clearly more is at play in defining citizenship than formal legal status.

²⁸² Smith, “No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster”; Luis Martinez. “Documents Show Katrina Warnings Ignored.” ABC News. 24 January 2006. Accessed 1 November 2014. <<http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=1537584>>;

²⁸³ Lee Clarke, “Worst Case Katrina,” *Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*. Organized by the Social Sciences Research Council. 11 June 2006. <<http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Clarke/>>

On September 20, 2001, George W. Bush gave a rousing speech to a joint session of Congress in which he delivered his now infamous ultimatum, “either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.”²⁸⁴ He framed his remarks, however, with an opening reflection on the political resource that had accrued over the last nine days: “Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution.” Some have read this particular line as creating a necessary opposition between grief on the one hand and anger and resolution on the other. Judith Butler interprets Bush as saying that “we have finished grieving and that *now* it is time for resolute action to take the place of grief.”²⁸⁵ Bush’s conception of grief should not be decoded as a simple cipher of substitution but instead an alchemical relation of transformation; he seems to say that we as Americans must take this profound grief and mine from it our national mission in the form of bringing vengeful justice to those who wronged us. With action, grief will recede over time as it is transformed into a righteous yell.

This difference proves important because it suggests that the outpouring of grief after 9/11 was directed towards a belief in American renewal and a sentimental investment in democracy and justice as uniquely American values. In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks, part of that investment included an uncritical embrace of American economic, political, and military might. The proposal for a gargantuan “Freedom Tower” embodied this reassertion of American dominance in built-form: “a

²⁸⁴ George W. Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress on 20 September 2001. Available at < <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/> >.

²⁸⁵ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2006): 29.

massive, monumental tower, 1,776 feet tall, commemorating ‘Freedom,’ footnoted by a contemplative parklike that will house the (literally) reflective memorial for the dead.”²⁸⁶ The Freedom Tower represents two different, seemingly contradictory, temporal registers invoked in the memorialization of September 11. On the one hand, there is the monumental history and future projection of America’s eternal greatness. A massive tower, symbolically measured at 1,776 feet serves as a reminder that the country was great before September 11 and that the terrorist attack, far from bringing America to its knees, was but a temporary blip in what will be the new American century.

At the same time, however, Dana Luciano points out that “9/11 has come to stand as another date distinguished by its inassimability into the flow of ordinary time.” She goes on to show that not only is this moment of radical rupture reconcilable with a monumental vision of America, it is indeed *necessary* to the maintenance of an ahistorical and teleological historiography of American greatness: “It is remarkable how common, and how necessary, such disruptions have become to the nation’s own account of itself. Endowed with sacred significance, these gaps in the flow of time create new foundations for the American story, sites that mask the ongoing revision of the very truths they affirm as timeless...”²⁸⁷ 9/11 then is complicated in terms of its eventual status because what makes it an event—a sudden break in the ordinary with a massive local, national, and global impact—is seized upon at the very same time to shore up an even stronger attachment to an unequal status quo and its infinite regeneration into the future.

After 9/11, Bush opened his speech with an ode to the American spirit, praising the exceptional courage of Todd Beamer (the passenger on United Flight 93 who died

²⁸⁶ Dana Luciano, *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007): 262.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 263.

while successfully stymieing the hijackers), emergency crews, and countless effected Americans. These actions alone have conveyed the state of the union, he says, and it is strong. There is a slight difference in focus when Bush delivers a similar speech from New Orleans' iconic Jackson Square on September 15, 2005. With his sleeves rolled up to the elbow and a rugged demeanor to match, he eventually starts praising a similar cast of people—first responders, singled out good Samaritans, medical staff—for reminding us all of a uniquely American spirit: “a core of strength that survives all hurt; a faith in God no storm can take away; and a powerful American determination to clear the ruins and build better than before.”²⁸⁸

In this particular speech, however, he opens with a short paragraph to acknowledge what makes Katrina a slightly more challenging disaster in terms of what it might reveal about the “American spirit.”

[W]e have seen fellow citizens left stunned and uprooted, searching for loved ones, and grieving for the dead, and looking for meaning in a tragedy that seems so blind and random. We have also witnessed the kind of desperation no citizen of this great and generous Nation should ever have to know—fellow Americans calling out for food and water, vulnerable people left at the mercy of criminals who had no mercy, and the bodies of the dead lying uncovered and untended in the street.²⁸⁹

The resources for national regeneration so abundant in an event like September 11 prove less forthcoming in the case of a disaster that, as Bush had to acknowledge, immediately laid bare systemic inequality and a woeful lack of institutional preparation. The remainder of his speech tarries with this apparent disjuncture by trying to absorb Katrina

²⁸⁸ George W. Bush, Transcript of Speech on 15 September 2005, “We Will Do What it Takes,” available at <<http://www.cnn.com/2005/POLITICS/09/15/bush.transcript/>>

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

into 9/11 and so domesticate the threat Katrina's aftermath posed to the integrity of the American dream.

There is a conceptual break in Bush's speech right after he implores everyone to "find their role" and "do their part" in supporting relief and rebuilding efforts. Suddenly, as if that line reminded him of Homeland Security's "See Something, Say Something" campaign, his listeners are emotionally transported to his speech on September 20, 2001. "Our cities must have clear and up-to-date plans for responding to natural disasters, disease outbreaks or terrorist attack."²⁹⁰ This point alone is not necessarily problematic since Katrina did clearly reveal shortcomings in our emergency management—of course, as mentioned earlier, a large part of the problem was that the Bush administration had reduced the agency charged with disaster management, FEMA, to another outgrowth of the War on Terror.²⁹¹ He continues, however, and goes well beyond the analytic mistake of conflating disaster preparedness with questions of terrorism. "In a time of terror threats and weapons of mass destruction, the danger to our citizens reaches much wider than a fault line or a flood plain. I consider detailed emergency planning to be a national security priority"²⁹² And finally, he makes the link explicit: "Four years after the

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Michael Eric Dyson tells the tale of FEMA's demotion from cabinet level position to part of the Department of Homeland Security in his book *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*. The results during the storm are well known at this point and borne out by the story of the Zeitoun family detailed earlier. Perhaps worse is what immediately happened after "the agency's focus had shifted from tornadoes to terror" (Dyson: 49). Along with generally hurting employee morale and gutting it of experienced bureaucrats, the move to the DHS resulted in resource depletion for FEMA who had to justify their spending requests in terms of terrorism instead of natural disasters (see Dyson 2006, especially chapter 4 and 7).

²⁹² Bush, "We Will Do What it Takes," Online.

frightening experience of September 11th, Americans have every right to expect a more effective response in a time of emergency.”²⁹³

In this swift move from Hurricane Katrina to the terror attacks of September 11, Bush performs three mystifying sleights of hand that I want to explore further. First, the analogy to the terrorist attacks paints what happened in New Orleans as a sudden, unpredictable event that reveals only an isolated threat from the outside. So even while acknowledging a certain degree of institutional failure, the hurricane is rendered an act of God on an unprecedented scale. As Bush says, “It was not a normal hurricane” but was “cruel and wasteful.” Framing his comments around the supposedly unprecedented natural force of the storm is a way of not only shrugging responsibility but also shifting focus away from the obvious class and race based disparities in crisis management. In particular, as Neil Smith points out, it denies the connections between human practices and natural processes, like global warming, that explain increasingly volatile natural disasters.²⁹⁴ This specific denial follows Wynter’s insight, that the degradation of “No Humans Involved” extends to the environment, such that we fail to pose much less address uneven ecologies of violence.

Secondly, shifting the affective field away from Katrina and towards September 11 makes the mourning narrative much more manageable through a strategy of “jumping scales”, to borrow Neil Smith’s phrase, or the move from one spatial frame to another (such as the local, regional, national or global).²⁹⁵ To jump scales is to institutionally reorganize or politically reframe an assemblage’s spatial field, particularly in relation to a crisis.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Smith, “No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster,” Online.

²⁹⁵ See chapter 4 for an extended discussion of scale.

We have already seen one discussion of scale, with James Der Derian's analysis of how Hurricane Katrina exposed the fictive and inadequate construct of the nation-state as a defining boundary of human security. In the case of Bush's speech, jumping scale happens as a way of guiding the remembrance of Katrina. This rhetorical move occurs in multiple and seemingly contradictory ways. On the one hand, the profound localness of Hurricane Katrina and the places it devastated is diffused into a more amorphous and dispersed fear, tapping into the affective circuits conditioned since September 11. The specific correlations between race, class, and the distribution of safety and mobility can be minimized this way and overshadowed by, once again, a vision of *national* regeneration. The American spirit, so intimately tied to an ethic of pulling oneself up by the bootstraps, is to be seen rising from the rubble of New Orleans; importantly, the shadow cast by its phoenix-like flight is supposed to obscure the connection between the institutionalization of precisely that ethic and the aftermath of Katrina.²⁹⁶

On the other hand, the specific scenes of brutal inequality that emerged after Katrina are localized to imply they exist in opposition to the broader fabric of American democracy. In the same breath that Bush acknowledges the visceral and racialized imagery that had flooded cable news, he emphasizes the exceptional nature of such a scene. "As all of us saw on television, there is also some deep, persistent poverty in that region. And that

²⁹⁶ Henry Giroux compellingly argues that Katrina made all too clear "the consequences of the long legacy of attacking big government and bleeding the social and public service sectors of the state" (Giroux, *Reading Hurricane Katrina: Race, Class, and the Biopolitics of Disposability*. *College Literature* 33.3 (Summer 2006): 194). The gutting of FEMA described earlier is an example of Giroux's claim. Similarly, Adolph Reed Jr. argues that the continued abandonment of the impoverished after the storm was directly tied to a neoliberal logic dedicated to maximizing profits by cutting social services, evicting poor families to make way for higher rents, and ensuring the redevelopment of the city would primarily serve corporate interests (Reed Jr., "Undone by Neoliberalism." *The Nation*. 31 August 2006. Accessed 12 April 2015. <<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20060918/reed>>

poverty has roots in a history of racial discrimination, which cut off generations from the opportunity of America. We have a duty to confront this poverty with bold action.”²⁹⁷

The inverted relationship between the sickness and the medicine is again misconstrued, with “bold action” entailing mostly free market solutions that looked to the private sector for what they wanted out of the process.

So in affective terms, Katrina is scaled nationally, where not only can the tragedy be equally shared, but the pleasurable investment in the American dream and accompanying fantasies of collective overcoming can be doubled-down. In material terms, however, the sudden visibility of masses of urban poor who were overwhelmingly non-white was scaled to the urban and regional level as the idiosyncrasies of a particular class system which, the thinking went, does not reflect on the broader integrity of the American dream. As Rosa Brooks puts it, “Even using the federal government's Scrooge-like definition, about 13% of Americans — and 18% of American children — live in poverty. They live in poverty all year round, not just on special occasions like during hurricanes. And they're all over this nation, not just in New Orleans.”²⁹⁸ The language of the “third-world” suddenly invading American shores, described in the introduction, reflects this particular logic which paints poverty and racism as aberrations in a country intrinsically tied to equality of opportunity and immense wealth.

In decrying the injustice of the storm, Bush refers always to citizens: “the kind of desperation no citizen of this great and generous nation should ever have to know,” “fellow citizens left stunned and uprooted,” “to help low-income citizens.” He clearly

²⁹⁷ Bush, “We Will Do What it Takes,” Online.

²⁹⁸ Brooks, Rosa. “Our Homegrown Third World.” *Los Angeles Times*. 7 September 2005. Accessed 10 April 2015. < <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/sep/07/opinion/oe-brooks7> >

means this term to convey the formal sense of citizenship defined by nothing except the legal connection to a territorial state. As a legal construct, the citizen-subject is neutral and universal. But what if we instead take his statements to their logical conclusion, by accepting the premise that indeed no “citizen” would ever be subject to such state-sanctioned abandonment or violence? The sense of citizen in this formula changes towards an affect of national belonging and a material proximity to certain idealized conditions. Hence Berlant’s argument that the mass consumption of scenes of violence or national trauma is one of the likely ways this vision of citizenship is enacted. The discussion of the memory work around September 11 and its simultaneous relationship to, on the one hand, a sense of national rebirth and, on the other, an intensified policing of difference exemplifies her point: nationalist citizenship, thought more broadly in terms of political intelligibility, was the site of the (re)investment in a monumental vision of America’s past and future. For certain groups of people, however, this hagiography to a collective future was lived in the present as virulent social exclusion all too commonly manifested in material violence.

The spatiality of memory work brings into relief, finally, the way the overrepresentation of Man operates like a global terraforming force carving out the conditions of life for *homo economicus*. Bush delivered the address in the French Quarter’s historic Jackson Square, with the partially lit up St. Louis Cathedral looming over his shoulder. New Orleans remained mostly without power at this point and almost half the city sat under water. The reason Jackson Square remained dry and available for presidential use is directly tied to racialized spatial arrangements that prevailed in early plans for the city. 18th century city planners designed Jackson Square, so renamed from

Place d'Armes in 1850 in honor of General-cum-President Andrew Jackson, as a military parade ground and it evolved into an area of natural beauty over the next few centuries becoming the tourism hub it is today.²⁹⁹ Jackson Square has always been a white space, as blacks generally congregated in a converted open-air slave market known as Congo Square. Craig Colten argues that “the two prominent social spaces for African and European American citizens exemplify the subtle topographic and racial segregation in the Crescent city. With greater means and power, the white population occupied the better-drained sections of the city while blacks typically inhabited the swampy ‘rear’ districts.”³⁰⁰

This bit of place-based history was probably not lost on many of the displaced residents watching Bush promise that the city would be reborn. The simultaneous cultural fermentation within and degradation of Congo Square suggests that a spatial politics prevails in New Orleans in which certain populations are systematically disadvantaged at the same time that they become rooted to structurally abandoned neighborhoods. Moreover, Bush’s promise of rebuilding New Orleans bigger and better while firmly anchored in a traditionally white space presaged the racial disparities of that process: “from the perspective of the white spatial imaginary, New Orleans should be rebuilt for the convenience of investors ... working-class blacks are not people who have problems, but instead are problems.”³⁰¹ Genre studies—here a process of urban sociogenesis—is a first step in describing and disrupting the reciprocal play between the

²⁹⁹ Craig Colten, “Environmental Justice in a Landscape of Tragedy.” *Technology in Society*. 29.2 (April 2007): 75-76.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 77.

³⁰¹ George Lipsitz, “. “The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape.” *Landscape Journal*. 26.1 (2007): 21.

overrepresentation of Man and the spatio-temporal work of memory practices in New Orleans and beyond.

Chapter 3

Genre Studies Between Regeneration and Intergeneration: On Creolization, Sexual Difference, and the Pieza Framework

If genre studies, defined earlier as a shift from the narrow frame of gender studies, represents Wynter's methodological shift toward the study of human kinds, what of the specificity of internal differentiation in sociogenetically produced subjects? How does the inter-human difference analyzed in the previous discussion of female genital mutilation or negritude re-articulate an understanding of intra-human difference, or the cross-cutting attachments, subjectifications, and identifications that we call race, class, gender or sexuality? The question of linking multiple sites of difference, both as they materialize as strategic targets for political technologies of domination and as they provide loci of enunciation for political technologies of survival, remains one of the central challenges of feminist theory. In this chapter, I provide a new reading of Wynter's relationship to intersectionality based on a historical topography of race and gender in her work that moves feminist theory beyond the limits of current identity politics claims (discussed in the introduction) and the persistent recourse to "depth" models that posit one marker of difference as inherently foundational. I also investigate the parallel limitations of contemporary Afro-Caribbean thought to address itself to feminist concerns around embodiment, a persistent issue mentioned earlier as the framing device of Caribbean philosophy as a "fathers-and-sons" drama.

Part I addresses the first question by analyzing interviews with Wynter concerning the role of feminism in her work, an important resource that very few have turned to in understanding the development of *genre studies*. This section clarifies

Wynter's position as more complex than just a repudiation of feminism or a feminism defined by internal critique. My strong reading suggests that genre studies requires a feminist account of embodiment, particularly feminists' engagement with the concept of the "intergenerational" as a temporal plotting of the merely intersectional. Part II illustrates the importance of this approach by staging a theoretical encounter between two seemingly irreconcilable theoretical edifices that importantly define contemporary feminist and Afro-Caribbean philosophy, respectively: sexual difference in the work of Luce Irigaray and creolization in the work of Edouard Glissant. Where the process of creolization in Glissant's work lacks an account of sexual difference, even as it derives much of its revolutionary power from the immanent force of the latter, Irigaray's commitment to sexual difference lacks an account of the geographical spacing of bodily difference in a world of colonialism and racialization. Thus, I triangulate their accounts through Wynter's work on sociogenesis to defend the inextricability of a sexual difference theory of creolization and a creolized theory of sexual difference that suggest a new direction for feminist thought: genre studies as an erotic geography of intergenerational difference that might challenge the overrepresentation of Man.

I. What Should Feminists Want to Hear? The Emancipatory Opening

In the previous chapters, I have followed Wynter's exegesis of Fanon closely in a manner that might suggest a straightforward repudiation of feminist analysis in the name of privileging race as the primary marker of ontological difference in the episteme of Man². Excavating the force of the color line in Foucault's theory of biopolitics, for instance, or describing the racialized body's incapacitation within Bergson's deracinated

account of the virtual, would seem in line with Wynter's own self-conscious account of genre studies as not fit for gender studies: "Now when I speak at a feminist gathering and I come up with 'genre' and say 'gender' is a function of 'genre,' they don't want to hear that."³⁰² Indeed, this moment in Wynter along with her critique of Western feminism in the discussion of female genital mutilation leads to an understanding of her work as either detached from feminist concerns or actively hostile to them.

Shirley Toland-Dix, for instance, sees Wynter's engagement with feminism as "subsets within her analysis of Western humanism and the consequences of its racially based definition of 'man.'"³⁰³ For some, the ordering principle of a racially derived human "leads [Wynter] to the *repudiation* of gender analytics as such" or even that "Wynter's conclusions ultimately lead to a *repudiation* of feminism as a site of emancipatory imagining."³⁰⁴ Is the negative gesture of repudiation the only direction of Wynter's engagement with feminism? Despite what it may seem, my foregoing analysis of the color line in Wynter's work and blackness as the zero-point of humanness does not support this view. While I do not want to gloss over the complexity of feminist engagement with Wynter's work, I believe it is clear that the force of feminist analysis is a necessary aspect of genre studies.

To understand Wynter's work as a "repudiation" of either feminism or gender analytics would require two premises to hold: first, that at some point "race" *replaced* "gender" in differentiating humans such that an analytics of gender had no valence in the

³⁰² Wynter, ProudFlesh Interview, 23.

³⁰³ Shirley Toland-Dix, "The Hills of Hebron: Sylvia Wynter's Disruption of the Narrative of the Nation," *Small Axe* 25 (2008): 58.

³⁰⁴ Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 40; Natasha Barnes, *Cultural Conundrums: Gender, Race, Nation, and the Making of Caribbean Cultural Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006):142.

overrepresentation of Man³⁰⁵; second, that race itself becomes a real phenomenon defining human embodiment through auto-poietic institution and thus other aspects of embodiment become epiphenomenal of that single master code.³⁰⁶ I have already addressed the first premise in the previous chapter on Foucault and Wynter, specifically in the section discussing their shared idea of the episteme. That is to say, the historical movement from one episteme to the next cannot be understood by a simple cipher of substitution. The elements of a given epoch autopoietically reorganize and rearticulate in relationship to new institutional arrangements, ideological and discursive formations, and collective groupings; the elements and their horizons of meaning, moreover, move through feedback loops in multiple directions. The epoch of the Christian, for instance, that loosely organized Eurocentric constitution of the self in terms of divine salvation did not simply disappear upon the rise of the humanists in the 15th and 16th century (Wynter's Man1). Salvation became an earthly category represented by reason and assured in the formation of the well-ordered, territorial state. As Enrique Dussel has shown, moreover, that sense of proper reason, Man1's "ego cogito," took form against the backdrop of the "ego conquiro," or the conquest of the New World by the Spanish and their "discovery" of barbarians.³⁰⁷ The Las Casas-Sepúlveda debate analyzed earlier, for instance, exemplifies how the divisions between humans and non-humans under the metrics of the

³⁰⁵ Weheliye, for instance, writes: "it assumes that beginning with the colonization of the Americas, race (physiognomy) dislodges gender/sex (anatomy) as the systematizing principle according to which the Homo sapiens species is categorized into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans" (40).

³⁰⁶ Wehilye, again: "Thus, race, rather than representing accessory, comes to define the very essence of the modern human as "the code through which one not simply knows what human being is, but experiences being." Accordingly, race makes its mark in the dominion of the ideological and physiological, or rather race scripts the elision of the former with the latter in the flesh" (24).

³⁰⁷ Enrique Dussel, "Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism," *Nepantla* 1.3 (2000): 471.

Christian epoch transmogrify in relationship to new political economic arrangements simultaneously made possible by those same debates. Today, in the heart of the episteme of Man2, it is clear that the original dictates of Christian salvation remain in apparitional form, rearticulated through the prosperity church of neoliberal economics. The coming presidential elections in the United States, for instance, promise the heated religious rhetoric of supply-side economics and the damnation of those citizens who fail to grasp their god given earning potential. Put simply, my point is that epistemic shifts are moments of refashioning not replacement. Thus, the historical centrality of a biocentric understanding of race in the episteme of Man2 should not be understood as the end of gender analytics in Wynter's thought. Instead, it means we are compelled to trace the importance of gender anew, to map its dislocations and displacements, to picture its apparitions and after-images in contemporary racial logics.

If race does not replace gender in Wynter's thought, then the second premise—the essential substance of race—also becomes unsustainable. In this, Wynter closely follows Fanon's rejection of a foundational concept of race quoted in the previous chapter. Fanon warns about the danger of a sclerotic analysis of race, because of its shape shifting powers in relation to "the systematic oppression of a people."³⁰⁸ For Wynter, that systematic oppression is the overrepresentation of Man and so I read her as reciting Fanon's warning when she cautions, "I am trying to insist that 'race' is really a code-word for 'genre.' Our issue is not the issue of 'race.'"³⁰⁹ How does the category of genre work then, in terms of the interlocking of multiple registers of identity? Wynter is not interested in race as such, yet still accords a singular density to the fantasy of race as a

³⁰⁸ Fanon. "Racism and Culture."

³⁰⁹ Wynter, Interview in *ProudFlesh*, 15.

specific feedback loop sustaining the overrepresentation of Man2 (illustrated in the previous chapters). In this first section, I want to argue that the understanding of race as a function of genre, and the attendant critique of the many possible rearticulations of race, emerges out of Wynter's early engagement with feminism, which I interpret as a generative and intergenerational discourse.

The idea that Wynter's understanding of race and genre as synonymous excludes a "gender analytic as such" only makes sense through a dehistoricized account of her philosophical development searching for clean breaks from work to work. Indeed, turning to interviews where she accounts for the emergence of her theory reveals a decisively central role to feminist debates. As she explains in an interview, the shift in her understanding of sociogenesis from a specific technology of racialization to a more generalized mode of the production of human kinds stems directly from feminist engagements in the 1960's. "Gender functioned as an emancipatory opening for me. Because for a long while the debate had become *sterile*. It was either race first or class first. We were stuck. There was no opening."³¹⁰ How to explain this opening, as she puts it, an explicit move beyond debates over priority and a reanimation of politics out of the "sterility" of single-axis accounts? More precisely, how to understand this claim within the parameters of her theory of overrepresentation and not simply as a rupture in her thought from racial priority to sexual priority, a depth model she explicitly rejects in this intellectual history?

First, in juxtaposing this declaration of feminism as an emancipatory opening with Wynter's self-conscious declaration that she took positions "feminists did not want to hear," I want to be clear that an affirmative reading (like that explained in the

³¹⁰ Wynter, "Re-Enchantment of Humanism," 183.

introduction) is not just a flight of fancy, but part and parcel of the intergenerational feminist ethics defended from here on. As Clare Hemmings convincingly argues, the stories feminist theory tells about itself tend to be narratives of loss or progress, often coalescing around specific figures as either new beginnings or tragic endings (depending on how one feels about, say, the work of Judith Butler or Donna Haraway).³¹¹ Against this narrativization embodied in the citational practices of our field, Hemmings “[advocates] an approach stressing the links rather than the discontinuities between different theoretical frameworks, as a way of challenging the linear ‘displacement’ of one approach by another.”³¹² Wynter’s debates with 1960’s feminism, the push and pull of their historical and theoretical concerns, is part of a feminist narrative in this view rather than signaling its end (i.e. from gender to race) or a new beginning (i.e. toward, at last, a “proper” feminism). Hence, the next section’s triangulation of Glissant and Irigaray by way of Wynter plays on the unexpected co-citation of seemingly irreconcilable conceptual edifices—creolization and sexual difference—to put a detour sign around fantasies of “linear displacement.”³¹³ Affirmative reading is not just an allergy to polemic, in other words, but a commitment to intergenerational ethics through institutional design and citational practice. This move represents the kind of “opening” I believe Wynter refers to in her view of feminism, an opening that the next section elucidates as feminism’s unique commitment to intergenerationality, especially Afro-Caribbean feminism’s multi-directional commitment to generations past and future.

Second, to further parse Wynter’s admittedly brief feminist invocation, what is the nature of the emancipatory “opening” to which she refers? Chapter one developed an

³¹¹ Hemmings, “Telling Feminist Stories,” *Feminist Theory* 6.2 (2005): 115-139.

³¹² Ibid, 131.

³¹³ Ibid.

analysis of Fanon's sociogenetic method in *Black Skin, White Masks* as precisely this kind of "opening," the brief moment when a liminal subject's autophobia serves as a resource to sense the outside to the current overrepresentation of Man. The opening is a spatial term for what is in Bergson and Fanon a temporal movement: reclaiming the site of indeterminacy between the virtual and actual such that the future can be imagined otherwise from liminal embodiment. Thus, my development of the Bergsonian theme in Fanon recontextualizes the force of the virtual to the colonial situation where racialization is a blockage, a closing down, a shackling to determinacy. It is the sense of "sterile," in other words, that Wynter invokes here in the dead-end political debates of either-or priority between race and class.

These debates are "sterile" because life, understood as the indeterminacy between virtual and actual, is lost when the raced or sexed body is removed from time and duration. That is to say, pernicious racialization and the suppression of sexual difference work through the continuous limiting of a body's virtual capacities and relations. To respond to those processes by accepting the inherently and timelessly raced and sexed body—what Wynter earlier describes as the difference between seeing race as such and race as a political technology—recapitulates the closure of alternative futures. We limit actualization to the parameters of the overrepresentation of Man. Returning the body to temporality through Fanon's defense of a decolonial virtual, an opening made paradoxically possible by the autophobia of the train car scene, is the crucial first step of an "emancipatory opening" as described by Wynter.

But what makes this opening feminist, or even systematically political? To answer the latter first, the move from the liminal subject to the demonic ground—categories too

often collapsed in analysis of Wynter's thought—means first collectivizing the singular liminal subject and second expressing the temporal openness of a body through the scalar geography of a landscape. Think back, for instance, to the moment of indeterminacy asserted by Bigger Thomas as analyzed by Fanon. Bigger Thomas, the tortured protagonist of Richard Wright's *Native Son*, “explodes.” But that momentary explosion does not, in and of itself, challenge the overrepresentation of Man even as it makes possible such a challenge by bringing into stark but momentary relief the limits of the current episteme and the possibility of an outside. Drucilla Cornell has analyzed this distinction in Fanon as the difference between spontaneous and ethical violence, where spontaneous violence boils over out of the “claim that one is human and can fight back.” The challenge of decolonial philosophy for Cornell, represented in some sense by the move from *Black Skin, White Masks* to *The Wretched of the Earth* in Fanon's work, is to not let the opening snap shut: “The violent struggle must self-consciously grasp itself as part of the creation of a new national culture, which is inseparable from the becoming of a people out of their own self-mobilization.”³¹⁴ It is the specific mechanism of this creation in Wynter that I am referring to as an intergenerational feminist ethics integrally connected to the struggle against the racialization of sexuate being.

In a separate interview, she makes gender analysis the center of her countervailing critique of the sterility of race and class depth models. Wynter, perhaps surprisingly to those who have read feminism out of her work, avers:

If you think about the origins of the modern world, because gender was always there, how did we institute ourselves as humans: why was gender a function of that? I'd just like to make a point here that is very important. Although I use the term 'race,' and I have to use the term 'race,' 'race' itself is a function of something

³¹⁴ Cornell, “Fanon Today,” in *The Meanings of Rights*, eds. Douzinas and Gearty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014): 127.

else which is much closer to 'gender.' Once you say, besides ontogeny, there's sociogeny, then there cannot be only one mode of sociogeny; there cannot be only one mode of being human; there are a multiplicity of modes. So I coined the word 'genre,' or I adapted it, because 'genre' and 'gender' come from the same root. They mean 'kind'....Now what I am suggesting is that 'gender' has always been a function of the instituting of kind.³¹⁵

Pace the dominant post-feminist reading of Wynter today, the idea of gender as “always” a function of genre suggests a much more complex multiplicity of identity within and across epistemes. Taking liberties with my reading of Wynter, the previous chapter suggested that the category of gender in Wynter operates closer to the sense of “sexuality” described by Foucault, the technology of self-knowledge by which a body becomes subjectivized through identificatory structures and affective attachments. The work of sex-desire, as Foucault calls it, is a particularly problematic mode of the deployment of sexuality whereas bodies and pleasures speaks to altogether different forms of embodiment beyond the overrepresentation of Man.

Hence the category of “ontologism” in Wynter’s thought, elucidated in chapter one, focuses on the autopoietic institution of human kinds as a historical process, rather than ontology per se.³¹⁶ If race is the master code of symbolic life and death under the order of Man², it is not primary in the sense of foundational but it is the mode of articulation for all other markers of human difference such that it would not make sense to discuss “gender” or “class” today outside of race. Importantly, however, that also means the inverse is true, that if race serves as the mode of articulation for the human and

³¹⁵ Wynter, Interview in *ProudFlesh*, 14-15.

³¹⁶ The term ontologism only appears once in Wynter’s work, in the article on female genital mutilation. I emphasize it as it helpfully encapsulates the nature of human autopoiesis she defends.

non-human distinction, we also must trace the process of racialization by way of its expression.³¹⁷

Unfortunately, Wynter sees contemporary feminism, at least its dominant iterations, working within the coordinates of the status quo Western ontologism. That is, making claims for an abstract category of “woman” that might gain equality within the biocentric terms of Man2, but no longer challenging the fundamental tenets of the latter’s overrepresentation. She calls this mistaking the “map for the territory,” that is believing one particular route to a human kind is the unmediated truth of the human qua human.³¹⁸ This cartographic injunction suggests that the temporal challenge of the Fanonian-Bergsonian body must be rearticulated in relation to specific geographies of struggle, such that reclaiming the indeterminate gap between virtual and actual cannot be abstracted from particular landscapes. A new project of the human must, in a sense, take root.

Thus, the following section elaborates this interlinking of the temporal and the spatial in the figure of feminist intergenerationality by turning to the work of Édouard Glissant on creolization and reading it through and against Luce Irigaray’s commitment to sexual difference. Up to this point, I have rearticulated Wynter’s conception of feminism as an opening in primarily formal terms such that “gender” is a key analytic for her because it speaks to the body’s mode of auto-institution over time, intimately linking it to the notion of “genre.” What makes this distinctly feminist, I argue, is the way the individual scene of sociogenesis garners its power as both descriptive and ethical tool only through intergenerationality: that is, how the overrepresentation of Man moves

³¹⁷ This is the sense of “expression” defined in the next chapter on Deleuze and Guattari and Glissant.

³¹⁸ Wynter, “On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory,” 116.

through time and how humans move through the generations, in our ethical commitments to the past and future. And so, one way to grasp the emancipatory opening of feminist thought described by Wynter is to not accede to a geographically exclusive view of sexual difference theory as narrowly European or a patriarchal view of creolization as narrowly masculinist. Taken together, finally, I thread the preceding arguments on the body, gender, and the virtual as follows: creolizing sexual difference leads to a decolonial feminism of intergenerational struggle through specific landscapes of domination and memory.

II. Genre Studies: A Sexual Difference Theory of Creolization

a. The Trace of Sexual Difference

Throughout his work, Édouard Glissant rigorously describes the process of *creolization* in the Caribbean and beyond. His later work in particular considers creolization through the planetary terms of Relation, “exploded like a network inscribed within the sufficient totality of the world.”³¹⁹ As his philosophical importance rightfully grows, many note the dual risk of overgeneralization and abstraction haunting continued expansion of his geographical and theoretical domain.³²⁰ In light of that danger, this section examines how questions of *the ontological nature of embodiment*³²¹ as raised by feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray ground, both implicitly and explicitly, processes of

³¹⁹ Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010): 29.

³²⁰ See Shu-mei Shih and Francoise Lionnet, “Introduction: The Creolization of Theory,” in *The Creolization of Theory*, ed. Shu-mei Shih and Francoise Lionnet (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2009): 1-33, cf. 20-32.

³²¹ As I argue later, Irigaray’s ontological conception of sexual difference is better understood as a cross-genre field for the emergence of ontologism at historically specific moments. For now, I keep them analytically separate and generally accede to Irigaray’s usage of ontology to make more stark the argumentative turn in the later section on creolizing sexual difference.

creolization. Narrowly speaking, such a reading of Glissant suggests the possibility of a richer understanding of creolization as a historically lived process and its emancipatory promise in the present. More generally, the linking of Glissant and Irigaray solidifies my deployment of Wynter's notion of ontologism as a crucial tool against the overlaid effect of racialization and phallocentrism. Thus, the investigation begins with a concrete question of historical interpretation that stages the embodiment of cultural contact.

The *Comentarios Reales de los Incas* (1609) is a vital text in the colonial history of Latin America. Written by Garcilaso de la Vega, known in his day as "El Inca" because of his Incan mother, the *Comentarios* represented the authoritative text on indigenous Peruvian culture for centuries. Written while he was in Spain, El Inca describes a childhood spent with his maternal relatives in Peru. It is this fusion of multiple perspectives, times and places that makes the *Comentarios* so important for considering the philosophical implications of racial and cultural mixing: a child born from a Spanish conquistador and Incan royalty leaves for Spain at twenty-one where he articulates an elite version of his people's history by translating the oral tradition of his Quechua-speaking family into Spanish.

What becomes clear throughout this amazing text is how El Inca tries to negotiate the two sides of his identity through a dialectical sleight of hand. Caught linguistically, emotionally and spatially between Spain and Peru, he puts his proud Incan heritage at the service of a broader identification with the Spanish and Christian imperial project. That is, the Incas represented a crucial intermediary step in the cultivation of civilization that the finally perfected Spanish bring to fruition. So he dedicates his work to the empire of Christendom, "by whose merits and intercession the Eternal Majesty has deigned to draw

so many great peoples out of the pit of idolatry...”.³²² The Inca are partially aligned with the Spanish in his version of their origins, then, because they brought at least a modicum of civilization to the various beastly peoples they conquered. While he laments the loss of some of the glories of Incan culture, and at times overtly wishes the Spanish would show the natives more respect, the monumentalism of Spanish teleology wins the day. He undertakes the task of writing about his love for his native country to displace flawed conceptions of its history at the same time dedicating his work to the discursive formations that ineluctably engender such violent misrecognitions. Thus, a pervasive part of his narrative is to render the animalistic and idol worshipping pre-Inca Indians as a common enemy of the Incas and Spanish.

At least *prima facie*, then, it seems evident this narrative does not represent the radical shock of creolization “allowing each person to be there and elsewhere, rooted and open,” but instead captures cultural mixing “in the thought of an empire.”³²³ While a lengthier treatment of the text might point to a multiplicity of factors, here it serves as a point of departure to suggest one explanatory possibility for the frustration of creolization: the suppression of sexual difference. This claim is, for now, not a causal one but merely to say the capture of creolization by empire can be traced like a shadow through the constitutive darkness of sexual difference in the text.

What Pheng Cheah calls “the trace of sexual alterity”³²⁴ marks the *Comentarios* both in its content and its material production. First, women’s bodies are the connective tissue in the dialectical sublation of Incan civilization to Spanish empire. In Chapter XIII,

³²² Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas, and a General History of Peru*, trans. Harold Livermore (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987): 4.

³²³ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 34/28.

³²⁴ Pheng Cheah, “The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell,” with Elizabeth Grosz, *Diacritics* 28.1 (1998): 28.

Garcilaso describes the dress of the Indians and shows heightened concerns about the indecency of women. “The women went in the same dress, naked...But out of proper respect for our hearer, we had better keep to ourselves what remains to be said...they resembled irrational beasts, and it can be imagined from this bestiality in adorning their persons alone how brutal they would be in everything else.”³²⁵ The women of a population as gatekeepers of domesticity and virtuous modesty repeatedly become metonymic for the whole state of a society. In settling the new villages of the Inca Empire, for instance, Incan ruler Manco Capac (as rendered by de la Vega) sounds rather close to a European colonizer in his attempt to teach the “dictates of reason and natural law” to heathens. Women again figure prominently: “He enjoined them particularly to respect one another's wives and daughters, because the vice of women had been more rife among them than any other.”³²⁶ Proper modes of domesticity, measured primarily through women, are crucial to the civilizational narrative established by Garcilaso. In Book VIII he describes the torturous beauty practices of Incan women who desire long black hair. Wondering at how ridiculously severe such a treatment appeared, he notes, “However in Spain I have ceased to wonder, after seeing what many ladies do to bleach their hair by perfuming it with sulphure....I do not know which treatment is more injurious to the health, the Indian or the Spanish...This and much more will the longing for beauty induce people to undergo.”³²⁷ From his perspective, given here as more of a funny aside, the disciplining of the female body—however ridiculous—is a *sine qua non* of any claim to civilization.

³²⁵ Vega, *Royal Commentaries*, 38.

³²⁶ Ibid, 53.

³²⁷ Ibid, 507.

Even more glaring is the suppression of the maternal body. El Inca Garcilaso's absorption of Incan culture into Spanish teleology structurally parallels how the repression of sexual difference framed his cultural identity: given the ideas about hereditary lineage prevalent then, he would assume that his paternal Spanish heritage dominated his maternal Inca heritage. His maternal lineage is subsumed in this model. El Inca Garcilaso is able to join the patriarchal economy of the father's name since a Spanish conquistador declared in court: "...he is my natural son and as such I name and declare him."³²⁸ The repression of the maternal body from which he came is doubled in the production of the *Comentarios*, transcribed by El Inca Garcilaso's illegitimate son born from a servant who is now but a legal footnote in imperial Spanish history.³²⁹ The female servant haunts this complex account of a mixed identity, indexing the unspeakability of sexual difference under phallocentrism even within the supposedly radical potential of geographical and racial hybridity.³³⁰

Based on the embodied questions raised here, the remainder of this chapter tries to further systematize the claim that something akin to sexual difference is a constitutive feature of processes of creolization and, conversely, that the suppression of sexual difference represents a particularly pernicious capture of creolization's radical potential.

³²⁸ Castanien quoted in Jonathan D. Steigman, *La Florida del Inca and the Struggle for Social Equality in Colonial Spanish America* (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 2005): 29.

³²⁹ John Grier Varner, *El Inca; the life and times of Garcilaso de la Vega* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968): 274 and 375.

³³⁰ In beginning with El Inca Garcilaso, I do not mean to collapse respectively Caribbean and Latin American debates about the nature of creolization and *mestizaje*. I merely find his work a useful point of departure for considering the limits and promises of scholarship surrounding cultural heterogeneity. While helpful for my investigation of a Francophone Caribbean concept here, El Inca is at the center of discussions within Latin American studies around the ambivalent status of Creole subjects (with Creole having a precise historical meaning). See for instance Jose Antonio Mazzotti, "Mestizo Dreams: Transculturation and Heterogeneity in Inca Garcilaso de la Vega," in *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America*, ed. Robert Blair St. George (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2000): 131-147.

Relocating the scene of sexual difference to the colony and the plantation, however, it becomes clear that what is at stake is the earlier stated question of *intergenerational* difference, more capacious category than just sexual difference. To this end, both Édouard Glissant and Luce Irigaray confront the metaphysical power of the One through a radical poetics. They overlap particularly in their focus on the force of fluidity to overturn temporal stasis and spatial balkanization in how we conceive identity and relation. Juxtaposing them reveals how Glissant's theory of creolization can obscure the ontologizing significance of sexual difference in the production of previously unimagined socio-cultural formations grounded in the creativity of the natural body, even as his theory acquires its force at least in part from the power of such a cross-genre formation.

b. Creolization and the Mechanics of Fluids

Édouard Glissant's oeuvre theorizes the irreducible cultural and geographical specificity of the Caribbean in terms of an open multiplicity he calls a "poetics of Relation." His challenge in general philosophical terms is to express how "every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other."³³¹ The Caribbean is the epicenter of this rhizomatic mode of identity he calls Creolization, held in contradistinction to the European model of filiation: "Relation rightfully opposes the totalitarianism of any monolingual intent."³³² Creolization for Glissant is not only the descriptive recognition that pure origins and monolingual insularity are illusory, but also the revalorization of the unpredictable and creative effects of cross-cultural encounters.

³³¹ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11.

³³² Ibid, 19; the next chapter analyzes the development of the rhizome specifically in the relationship between Glissant and his French interlocutors, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

The Martinican landscape suffuses Glissant's many works. In his fiction and his theoretical tracts, he focuses on the beaches of his homeland—caught between the mountains and the sea—as the revealing knot for his view of identity extended through the other. The mountains are the historical home of the Maroons who escaped slavery to set up their own society; the Caribbean Sea is the island's opening onto the rest of the world. He privileges neither setting on its own terms, cautioning against the romanticizing of a mythic past as well as the fantasy of an unencumbered future. A Caribbean consciousness as the embodiment of a poetics of Relation cannot arise from either a narrow reclaiming of an authentic origin or a naively postmodernist view of unrooted identity. Thus, Glissant draws them together through Martinique's Lézarde, the snaking river that cuts through the island as it descends from the hills to the open water, "[linking] the mountain, as 'the repository of Maroon memories,' with 'the unfettered sea' and therefore [linking] the tradition of the Maroon repudiation of the plantation to a new future..."³³³

The river is central not only because it suggests a complex rapprochement between the reclamation of the past and a radical openness to the future, but because its very geophysical dynamics are suggestive of an identity in Relation. Describing how the Other destabilizes without annihilating, Glissant writes: "This is an aesthetics of turbulence whose corresponding ethics is not provided in advance. The other of thought is always set in motion by its confluences as a whole."³³⁴ The fluvial dynamics of the I-Other and cross-cultural relationship are described here as flows undergoing confluence with unpredictable results, even for those flows that begin in a laminar state.

³³³ Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man," 638.

³³⁴ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 155.

Creole linguistics, for Glissant, are a concrete example of turbulent flow. “An idiom like Creole, one so rapidly constituted in so fluid a field of relations, cannot be analyzed the way, for example, it was done for Indo-European languages.”³³⁵ He is interested in the dynamic process of Creolization, as opposed to a study attempting to fix Creole in place (render a regularized written language) or articulate it as merely the sum of certain constituted languages. The creative possibility of Creole, in turn, brings into relief the ways celebrations of stasis or universality are merely fantasies built on the suppression of difference. So the standardization and imposition of a supposedly universal French language, for instance, mask a long-history of internal differentiation and struggle behind seemingly neutral rules of usage. Glissant sees two common pitfalls in approaches to Creole: the essentialist celebration of Creole as an authentic identity with origins in Africa that is superior to decadent and corrupted European identity (the Negritude of Senghor, for instance); or the assertion that Creole has sedimented enough that it should be considered on par with European languages in demarcating a foundational creole identity and range of cultural expression (the Creolité of Raphaël Confiant, Jean Bernabé and Patrick Chamoiseau).³³⁶ Neither of these approaches actually challenge the structural condition of monolingualism, which divides the world into neat and hierarchically distributed geographic and linguistic root identities: the former flips the hierarchy while the latter flattens it, but each leaves in place the boundaries that constitute the Oneness of cultural identity.

³³⁵ Ibid, 96.

³³⁶ Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant. "In Praise of Creoleness." Trans. Moharned B. Thaieb Khyar. *Callaloo* 13(1990): 886-909; for Glissant's most concise distinction between creolité and creolization, see Edouard Glissant, "L'imaginaire des langues: entretien avec Edouard Glissant," with Lise Gauvin *Etudes francaises* 28.2/3 (1992): 11-22.

The metaphysical comfort of the root is not easily escaped, however. While creolization never stops, according to Glissant, its radical potential is diffused by the hegemony of European filiation:

One can imagine language diasporas that would change so rapidly within themselves and with such feedback...that their fixity would lie in change...This linguistic sparkle, so far removed from the mechanics of sabirs and codes, is still inconceivable for us, but only because we are paralyzed to this day by monolingual prejudice.³³⁷

Until Caribbean thinkers find a way to articulate an imagination beyond this “monolingual prejudice” and to live the embodied radicality of creolizing identity, they will remain in the trap of a Eurocentric world where the only horizon is to become the New Europe or Europe’s equal. Or, as Fanon puts it, “Let us decide not to imitate Europe and let us tense our muscles and brains in a new direction. Let us endeavor to invent man in full, something which Europe has been incapable of achieving.”³³⁸ Fully living the aesthetics of turbulence—what Glissant calls the *chaos-monde*—by giving oneself up to a confluence with others makes possible the move from the totalitarian root of identity to the rhizome submerged in the open sea.

What is not always clear in Glissant’s work, however, is the source of this transversal confluence. Or, in other words, if illusions of fixity and stasis break into turbulence when irreducible but connected entities meet in Relation, how is their meeting initiated and embodied? I have already suggested in the previous section that women’s bodies are a crucial gateway in narratives of cultural encounter, as sexual difference marked an exemplary text in form and content through the trace of the repressed maternal

³³⁷ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 98.

³³⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004): 236.

body. Glissant himself articulates how his view of the rhizome over the root arose from a network of formative feminine figures:

Pour notre culture, héritée des Africains, la famille est beaucoup plus étendue. Ce n'est pas seulement ma mère qui m'a élevé, mais aussi ma grand-mère, mes tantes, mes sœurs aînées, et même les voisines, une vaste famille très féminine, comme un matriarcat collectif dont la mère serait la figure centrale. Le père, lui, n'est jamais là... La figure de ma mère, quand j'étais tout petit, reste donc associée à cette multiplications de visages féminins, à ces *das*, celles qui portent les bébés, nourrices, marraines et autres.³³⁹

[For our culture, inherited from Africans, the family is always extended. It is not just my mother who raised me, but also my grandmother, my aunts, my older sisters, and just as well my neighbors, a vast feminine family, like a collective matriarchy in which the mother remains the central figure. The father, he is never *there*... The figure of my mother, from when I was very small, still remains associated with the multiplicity of the feminine face, to their *das* with which they carried babies and nursed them, godmothers and others.] (my translation)

What is notable here is that the multiplicity of the world, the privileging of the rhizome over the root, and the valorization of difference against the flattening out of Eurocentric globalization are all expressed through the body of the mother without being reducible to it. In this sense, the body of *la mère* works in the same way as the body of *la mer* for Glissant, since his creolizing poetics are grounded in a corporeal landscape that is simultaneously the point of relation to the unpredictable chaos of the world. He argues, for instance, “La mer Caraïbe ...est une mer ouverte, une mer qui diffracte...Ce qui se passe dans la Caraïbe pendant trois siècles, c'est littéralement ceci: une rencontre d'éléments culturels venu d'horizons absolument divers et qui réellement se créolisent.”³⁴⁰ [The Caribbean sea...is an open sea, a sea that diffracts...What has

³³⁹ Édouard Glissant, “Ma mère,” in *A Ma mère: 60 écrivains parlent de leur mère*, eds. Marcel Bisiaux and Catherine Jajolet (Paris: P. Horay, 1988): 173.

³⁴⁰ Édouard Glissant, *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996): 14-15

occurred in the Caribbean for three centuries is literally this: a meeting of cultural elements from absolute difference that genuinely creolize.] In some sense, Glissant takes the force of fluidity for granted, detailing its historical power to envelop totalitarian boundary fantasies and scramble illusions of purity but never quite analyzing the ontological source of its effectivity. Far from accidental, however, *la mer(e)* in Glissant's work points to the way phallocentrism organizes materiality and identity. Turning now to the work of Luce Irigaray will allow me to bring into relief this fundamental if incipient relationship between creolization and sexual difference.

In her challenging essay "Mechanics of Fluids," Irigaray maps science's "historical lag in elaborating a 'theory' of fluids" onto psychoanalytic discourses of desire. Why is it, she asks, that fluids can only be thought in terms of a teleology of solidification? And furthermore, how does a "complicity of longstanding between rationality and a mechanics of solids alone" enforce and maintain the centrality of the phallus and the phallic economy?³⁴¹

While this essay is often read only as a critique of scientific rationality, it is clear that Irigaray primarily targets the Lacanian theory of desire. Lacan argues for instance, "The *objet a* is something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as organ. This serves as a symbol of the lack, that is to say, of the phallus, not as such, but in so far as it is lacking. It must, therefore, be an object that is, firstly, separable and, secondly, that has some relation to the lack."³⁴² Upon entering the

³⁴¹ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex which is not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985): 106-107.

³⁴² Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1998):112.

symbolic order—which means entering the psychic economy of the phallus³⁴³ based on acceptance of the name of the father, or the big Other—the subject’s desire is based on a constitutive lack because they are cut off from unmediated access to the real. To compensate for this lack, desire attaches to partial objects or *objet a* that, as Lacan says in the above quote, serve to demarcate boundaries of the subject and mark traces of the founding relationship to the Other. The exemplary case is feces precisely because it comes from within but is ultimately externalized, articulating the inside/outside boundary through the severing of an intelligible object.

For Irigaray, this hierarchy of solids over fluids (or the teleological absorption of fluids into solids, such as the sperm-fluid always represented as the future child in psychoanalytic models of desire) is one way the centrality of the phallus is shored up in the face of the excess of fluidity. The penis is the literal model for this hierarchy, the rigid *res extensa* that contains fluidity within determinate borders in a visibly apprehended volume. As a result, “The sex of the woman is an absence of sex, and that she can only have one desire: to possess a penis...It’s an attempt which constitutes the female sex as the complement and the opposite necessary to the economy of the male sex.”³⁴⁴ The excess of fluidity against which the phallus works is a feminine desire not founded on lack, indexed by the morphological possibility of an autonomous female sex: “These two lips of the female sex...return to unity, because they are always at least *two*, and that one can never determine of these two, which is one, which is the other: they are continually interchanging.”³⁴⁵ Irigaray is suggesting, in turn, that the phallus and the

³⁴³ Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, 110.

³⁴⁴ Luce Irigaray, “Women’s Exile: Interview with Luce Irigaray,” trans. Couze Venn *Ideology and Consciousness* 1 (May 1977): 53.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

penis collapse into each other for Lacan: psychoanalysis and science are beholden to and reinforce a rationality founded on the mechanics of solids because language itself—the entire Western project of representation—stems from a model of desire in which there is only one value, the penis, promising access to the phallus. The various metrics of that value—extension, visibility, solidity, oneness—become the markers of the legitimate subject and authoritative locus of enunciation.

On this idea, both that the Western project is founded on a binary of value and lack and that the mechanics of fluids disrupts the underlying metaphysics of this rational consensus, I believe Glissant and Irigaray are closely aligned. He looks to the chaos of the turbulent sea for how it destabilizes the political and scientific articulations of identity that rely on insularity, impenetrability and purity. Creolization constructs a subject in which discrete quantities of racial identity are blurred through the creativity of cross-cultural poetics such that the history of human interaction is no longer centered on the model of the genealogical tree but in the chaos of the sea's many currents, swirling eddies, and spiraling gyres. Political identity, moreover, spatializes these supposedly pure identities through the trope of the bounded and homogenous island: the territorial nation-state is like the insular island protected from penetration, contamination, or relation. For Glissant, the fluid movement of the sea undermines the fantasy of isolation through the submarine unity (to paraphrase Edward Kamau Brathwaite) of archipelagic thought. The Caribbean Sea distinguishes (without rendering distinct) and connects the islands it envelops and, by extension, brings the whole world into relation as it opens onto the uncontainable flows of the global water cycle.

Thus, in terms of the philosophical, geographical, and scientific meaning of fluids, Glissant and Irigaray both highlight the way turbulent flow challenges the organizing principle of oppression on which they respectively focus. The preceding suggests that Glissant implicitly registers the power of sexual difference insofar as we take seriously Irigaray's theorization of fluidity. In this regard I break from the important work on Glissant's literary output that tends to compartmentalize his theoretical-philosophical corpus as "under the guise of gender-neutral universalism."³⁴⁶ At its most richly conceived, such as the preceding discussion of *la mer(e)*, Glissant's idea of creolization draws strength from precisely what it shares with Irigaray's feminine theory of fluids. That is not to say, of course, that Glissant should unproblematically be read as a feminist or collapsed into Irigaray's project. While they both register the challenge of fluidity to formally similar philosophical conventions such as nature/culture, body/environment, or subject/object, they have different political horizons: for Irigaray,

³⁴⁶ Valérie Loichot, *Orphan Narratives: The Postplantation Literature of Faulkner, Glissant, Morrison, and Saint-John Perse* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2007) 38; also see Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, *Thieving Sugar: Eroticism Between Women in Caribbean Literature* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2010), 24. While these two important studies are vital to a larger project on decolonization and sexual difference, their specific focus on Caribbean literature remains beyond the scope of this project. In particular, Loichot's reading of Glissant's novels ground his relationship to feminism in terms of the agency of female characters and the similarities between his narrative form and the "écriture féminine" of Hélène Cixous. These are important but ultimately separate questions from the ontological register of sexual difference in his theoretical essays, although I would not deny absolutely a connection to his literary output. Indeed, I think there is something to be said for tracing the force of feminism in Glissant (and Wynter's) theoretical accounts, not to insist on a division between literature and philosophy, but to question the stakes of the feminist readings of Glissant that look only to recognizably female characters in his work. The same instinct takes over many readings of Wynter where her literature and plays, which necessarily dramatize recognizably female characters, are seen as the antidote to her anti-feminist theoretical engagements. If my argument is to hold, however, that feminism speaks to the cross-genre force of geographies of sexual difference in Glissant and Wynter's conceptual edifice and that, in turn, sexual difference is unknowable outside of the Western ontologism of race, it has to obtain in precisely those places that seem cut off from a feminist reading and not just in the representationally evident "women" of literature.

the mechanics of fluids disrupt a phallogentric economy of desire founded on lack; for Glissant, turbulent confluence undermines the “totalitarian root” of pure racio-cultural identity and its spatialization in the nation-state. In the next section, I want to further examine these different horizons to see whether Irigaray’s critique can map onto Glissant’s and, in turn, to consider how the discourse of creolization is sometimes rendered complicit in the silencing and invisibilization of the maternal body.

c. A Sexual Difference Theory of Creolization: The Maternal Body and Nature’s At-Least-Two

While Glissant’s creolization proves very similar to Irigaray’s initial diagnosis of the science of solids, there is a second part of her argument—the reason why a psychic economy organized around the phallus might rely on solids—that reveals a problematic tension in his privileging of fluidity. In short, the containing of fluidity in the form of a solid is a prerequisite for a patriarchal economy of exchange. As Irigaray bluntly and effectively puts it, “The society we know, our own culture, is based upon the exchange of women. Without the exchange of women, we are told, we would fall back into anarchy (?) of the natural world, the randomness (?) of the animal kingdom.”³⁴⁷

For women to be exchangeable requires the ossification of feminine desire into equivalent, discrete and so substitutable units. In “Mechanics of Fluids,” she highlights feces as the paradigmatic case of the *objet a* for this reason, because Lacan locates the child’s giving of the feces as an originary gift marking entry into the exchange economy. Lacan writes, “The anal level is the locus of metaphor—one object for another, give faeces in place of the phallus ... Where one is caught short, where one cannot, as a result

³⁴⁷ Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, 170.

of the lack, give what is to be given, one can always give something else.”³⁴⁸ In other words, relating to the articulation of the partial object in the previous section, the lack at the heart of the phallic economy requires substitutability to work because, having entered through the symbolic only through the severing power of constitutive lack, the subject can never fully give back to the phallus. Hence the *objet a*, a partial object that simultaneously compensates for that lack and indexes its ongoing force, must be bounded and externalizable. So the subsumption of fluids by solids, and with it the at-least-two of sexual difference by the One of the phallus, is crucial to the smooth functioning of a system of exchange ruled by men.

In “Women on the Market,” from which the earlier quote about the exchange of women is taken, she considers that insight from Claude Lévi-Strauss but pushes it further to examine how he naturalizes such an operation. Lévi-Strauss asserts the biological “scarcity” of desirable women produced by the innate tendency of man to polygamy explains women’s status as units of exchange; Irigaray instead tries to highlight the social production of the woman’s body as always reducible to “men’s business,” tracing out this “unknown infrastructure of the elaboration of that social life and culture.”³⁴⁹

So the production and discipline of the desirable female body in the El Inca Garcilaso story, for example, would be read slightly differently by Lévi-Strauss and Irigaray, with profound implications. For Lévi-Strauss, as for Garcilaso, the organized and collective exchange of women marks the move from nature to culture. Together they might say the Incas count as a redeemable civilization because of their strictures on the female form. Irigaray would agree with this idea, but simply add “under patriarchy” to

³⁴⁸ Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 112.

³⁴⁹ Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, 171.

their argument, suggesting that there is a socio-cultural *process* here based on asymmetrical power distribution and its mode of reproduction. While Lévi-Strauss, and Irigaray after him, is primarily working within a single society's horizon, the exchange of women also mediates cultural mixing. Even in a cross-cultural encounter, a third term is necessary (the woman's body), through which men establish their relationship. The Incan ruler Manco Capac and the other indigenous people of Peru forge their bonds first through the disciplining of daughters and, once brought to the level of the civilized, their exchange through marriage sanctioned by the name of the father.

According to Irigaray, there are essentially three social roles for women in this patriarchal economy: mother, virgin and prostitute. In the example above of Manco Capac, the virgin as the site of "pure exchange" is at work: the daughters of one culture, presumed to be virgins, become decorporealized as they represent only the "sign of relations among men."³⁵⁰ Indeed, imagine if the indigenous communities encountered first by Inca kings had no daughters: there would be no cross-cultural exchange to speak of and the less powerful tribe of men would simply be slaughtered. The possibility of men's relation hinges on the virgin as the site of their hom(m)osexual consummation.

It is through the penetration of the hymen and the deflowering of the virgin that woman becomes mother. As mother, she no longer has exchange value but instead must be isolated in the home as private property. "As both natural value and use value, mothers cannot circulate in the form of commodities without threatening the very existence of the social order."³⁵¹ That is, the power of the father's name dissipates if the mother's body is not spatially contained and possessed, monopolized by one patriarchal

³⁵⁰ Ibid, 186.

³⁵¹ Ibid, 185.

lineage. So-called cultural “hybridity” only becomes intelligible, such as the historical persistence of El Inca Garcilaso’s text, if it is put into circulation by the name of the father. In other words, despite the similar models of fluidity proposed by Irigaray and Glissant, there is a risk Glissant’s cultural turbulence still depends on the solidification and reduction of feminine desire when he fails to address sexual difference.³⁵²

While she is elliptical in her criticism, I believe the Guadeloupean writer Maryse Condé’s engagement with Glissant produces a similar argument. She proclaims: “‘Myth,’ writes Édouard Glissant in *Caribbean Discourse* (1989/1997), ‘is the first state of a still-naive historical consciousness, and the raw material for the project of a literature.’ No, retort the women writers in their own individual way. We have to rid ourselves of myths. They are binding, confining, and paralyzing.”³⁵³ There are two aspects of this argument worth exploring. First, she refuses the idea of a self-styled Francophone Caribbean consciousness grounded in the imaginary of epic myths as a notably masculine project. Her language choice—binding, confining, paralyzing—points to the issue of embodiment, namely how women writers articulate the burden of bearing a national consciousness differently from the men who abstractly proclaim the birth of a new people. Second, and less explicitly, I think she is uncomfortable with how myth is projected as a higher-order of self-understanding that smuggles back in a subtle version

³⁵² See Tinsley, *Thieving Sugar*, 177-178 for a specific discussion of female desire in *Le discours antillais*, particularly the section “Plaisir et jouissance: le vécu martiniquais.” While she does not directly link Glissant’s discussion of sexuality to the question of creolization, she helpfully points to the heterosexism and masculinism that undergirds his assessment of Martinican women’s “sexual indifference,” a problem that persists even as he critiques the reductionism of Oedipal theories. Also see Alexandre Leupin, “The Slave’s Jouissance,” *Callaloo* 36.4 (2013): 891-901. Taken together, Tinsley and Leupin point to the need for a more sustained engagement with the psychoanalytic implications of Glissant’s work, particularly as a way to deepen the understanding of his relationship to Fanon.

³⁵³ Maryse Condé, “The Stealers of Fire: The French-Speaking Writers of the Caribbean and Their Strategies of Liberation,” *Journal of Black Studies* 35.2 (November 2004): 163.

of the nature/culture divide, which has historically (as Irigaray's engagement with Lévi-Strauss shows, along with the story of El Inca) mapped onto women.

On the first point, it concerns Glissant's metaphorization of birth in his description of the Caribbean's historical predicament. He describes the middle passage as a constitutive abyss transforming fragmented African groups into the people of the Caribbean. In this founding act of violence, this forced diaspora, exist the generative resources for new modes of living together. Thus, he describes the slave ship in the following passage directly addressed to the original bearers of the legacy of slavery:

[I]n your poetic vision, a boat has no belly; a boat does not swallow up, does not devour... Yet, the belly of this boat dissolves you, precipitates you into a nonworld from which you cry out. *This boat is a womb, a womb abyss.* It generates the clamor of your protests; it also produces all the coming unanimity. Although you are alone in this suffering, you share in the unknown with others whom you have yet to know. This boat is your womb, a matrix, and yet it expels you. This boat: pregnant with as many dead as living under sentence of death.³⁵⁴

In this striking image, Glissant tries to hold onto the centuries of death and oppression inflicted on black bodies without becoming what Fanon calls "a slave to Slavery," that is to ground Caribbean identity solely in a traumatic past.³⁵⁵ And so with death and suffering there is the language of pregnancy and generation. Victims of the slave trade are not only "dissolved" into the hold of the ship, but precipitated in a yet-unknown form; the ship "generates the clamor of [their] protests," producing, in other words, new modes of resistance and political grammars; initially solitary, new relationships and communities form in the crucible of shared suffering.

While beautifully compelling, one might ask in light of Irigaray's critique in "Women on the Market" where the actual female body resides. The trace of sexual

³⁵⁴ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 6, emphasis added.

³⁵⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 205.

difference is marked in two absences. First, the slavery economy's constitutive need to control female bodies is never discussed. Historical studies of nineteenth-century transatlantic slavery make clear that the valuation of female slaves based on their reproductive potential became the crucial engine of the plantation economy.³⁵⁶ As countries increasingly banned the continuing importation of slaves in the early 1800's, slave owners poured resources into studying the female body and maximizing fertility to ensure the reproduction of their work force. Marie Jenkins Schwartz writes, "Women's childbearing capacity became a commodity that could be traded in the market for profit. During the antebellum era the expectation increased among members of the owning class that enslaved women would contribute to the economic success of the plantation not only through productive labor but also through procreation."³⁵⁷ The institutionalization of slavery and the racialization of society it precipitated came to rely on control over the female body and its reproductive capacity. While Glissant uses the metaphor of the womb abyss, Schwartz shows that the initial importance of the Middle Passage only led to a diasporic people insofar as literal wombs could be alienated and coerced into carrying future slaves. In other words, the poetic rendering of the ship as the womb matrix of slavery obscures sexual difference by decorporealizing birth, suggesting all enslaved peoples equally experience the trauma of coerced reproduction.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ See Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990).

³⁵⁷ Schwartz, *Birthing a Slave*, 10.

³⁵⁸ Glissant does address specifically *sexual* violence in *Le discours antillais*—"la femme africaine subit la plus totale des agressions, qui es le viol quotidien et répété"—concluding from this that, "la femme a sur l'homme un inappréciable avantage: elle connaît déjà le maître" (510). Focusing on the particulars of sexual activity and the individualized psychological results for

This leads to the second point, that Glissant's new poetics remains "masculinized" insofar as he relies on a heroic vision of the cultural producer to manifest rhizomatic creativity against the idea of a neutral and inert nature. I realize this argument will seem implausible to many supporters of Glissant who rightly appreciate the ways he puts bodies and their landscapes into a reciprocally affective constellation. I do not want to diminish those parts of his text, but it is important to highlight how an omission of the ontological importance of sexual difference creates a fissure in his work such that the force of this body-landscape connection becomes the limited domain of a masculine poet.³⁵⁹ His definition of creolization is based on a distinction from mere *métissage*:

Parce que la créolisation est imprévisible alors que l'on pourrait calculer les effets d'un métissage. On peut calculer les effets d'un métissage de plantes par boutures ou d'animaux par croisements...[m]ais la créolisation, c'est le métissage avec une valeur ajoutée qui est l'imprévisibilité.

Creolization is unpredictable whereas one could calculate the effects of metissage. One can calculate the effects of metissage between plants by botanists or between animals by breeders...but creolization, it is metissage with the added force of unpredictability. [My translation].³⁶⁰

These lines are striking for how severely they diminish the creative power of sexual difference in nature, contending as he does that the genetic mixing of animals or plants is entirely predictable, calculable, and without political possibility.³⁶¹ It only takes

women however, Glissant still fails to consider a more fundamental importance for sexual difference. As Irigaray makes clear, the issue is not just omission at the level of representation as much as obliteration through metaphorization. See Édouard Glissant, *Le discours antillais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 503-519.

³⁵⁹ The next chapter takes up Glissant's theory of landscape, moreover, and argues that it is a powerful resource for challenging specific geographies of Overrepresentation.

³⁶⁰ Glissant, *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*, 18-19.

³⁶¹ In his defense, Glissant does not always oppose *métissage* and creolization so neatly. In *Poetics of Relation*, for instance, following another discussion of "mere" *métissage*, he writes: "creolization seems to be a limitless *métissage*" (34). Perhaps future research, particularly

on radical possibility, he says, when the added value of unpredictability is imposed on a neutral and mechanistic nature. What makes this celebration of a second-order poetics disconcerting is how it links up with the already mentioned problem that Glissant omits how the policing and suppression of sexual difference (that is, ensuring fluid feminine desire is teleologically reabsorbed into bounded and rigid units of a phallic economy) is the mechanism by which patriarchal cultures come to interact and intermix. Together, these two points suggest what his privileging of a cross-cultural encounter over nature's suppressed sexual difference looks like in practical terms: the male gatekeepers of society entering into a relationship of cultural exchange that relies implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, on the degradation of the female body. Thus, he recapitulates the Lévi-Straussian view of a founding nature/culture divide mediated by, at the very least, the invisibilization of the female body.³⁶²

Is it possible to embrace a sexual difference theory of creolization that relies instead on Irigaray's observation, "The natural is at least two: male and female...nature is not one."³⁶³ When Irigaray says at least two, she certainly does mean the irreducible sexual difference that is the natural engine of life. But, at the same time, it is important to realize that, in the wake of her "Mechanics of Fluids," we must understand "at least two" beyond the economy of counting set up by the phallic economy. To say the natural is at least two, male and female, is not simply to add another discrete element to the quantifiable identities at play in the world: it is to begin from an entirely different

concerning Glissant on questions of political ecology, might investigate limitless and captured métissage as more interesting, non-oppositional modes of articulating creolization.

³⁶² I find this critique of Glissant's poetics more compelling than his Marxist critics who decry poetics as always already depoliticized by processes of exchange. As the next chapter argues, Glissant's poetics of landscape is a vital challenge to the overrepresentation of Man that speaks to Marxist categories in the broader sense of Sylvia Wynter's work.

³⁶³ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 35.

ontology of life that reconceptualizes the relationship between bodies, languages, and landscapes in terms of a *naturally* unpredictable and dynamic poetics.

For this reason, only a sexual difference theory of creolization can possibly realize Glissant's vision of an "aesthetics of turbulence." If theories of creolization only take place within the parameters of a phallic economy of counting—or more simply, if creolization is always articulated in a patriarchal grammar—it becomes the most banal form of multiculturalism celebrating the entry of a new group of men into the global elite. Cultural mixing can be exchanged on the global market by way of women's bodies as well. Through Irigaray, theorists of creolization have the conceptual resources to articulate feminine desire beyond constitutive lack, to reinsert the feminine into the narrative of the literal birth of a new people, and to fight the solidification of identity into a knowable and countable form. This theory of creolization reinvigorates the radical connections between landscapes, bodies and history by focusing on the ways sexual difference makes possible and mediates the affective force of Caribbean cultural identity. Maryse Condé reminds us, "In a Bambara myth of origin, after the creation of the earth and organization of everything on its surface, disorder was introduced by a woman...In a word, disorder meant creativity."³⁶⁴ Thus, the *chaos-monde* emerges from the cross-genre power of sexual difference.

III. Genre Studies: Creolizing Sexual Difference

a. The Geographical Point of View

If the previous section articulated a sexual difference theory of creolization, or a critique of the suppressed feminine across different genres, one must further ask how

³⁶⁴ Maryse Condé, "Order, Disorder, Freedom, and the West Indian Writer, *Yale French Studies* 97 (2000): 160.

sexual difference itself—if it is to be more than the assertion of a universal essence—emerges through the political technologies of specific genres. A creolized theory of sexual difference is the necessary correlate, in other words, to a sexual difference theory of creolization if we are to construct a model of genre studies that can challenge the overrepresentation of Man.

As Wynter argues, Irigaray has a tendency to imagine sexual difference through a “purely Western assumption of a universal category, ‘woman,’ whose ‘silenced’ ground is the condition of what she defines as an equally universally applicable, ‘patriarchal discourse.’”³⁶⁵ This issue is perhaps best encapsulated by Irigaray’s controversial claim that “the problem of race is, in fact, a secondary problem—except from a geographical point of view”³⁶⁶ Historically speaking, as we have seen, this claim has a more complex tenor than just a hierarchical mode of ranking oppressions. Her point in this context means one cannot struggle against the Manichaeism of racial difference without simultaneously attending to sexual difference. It is not a question of prioritization for its own sake, but what she imagines as an ontological argument showing the way the suppression of sexual difference to an economy of the One is the “unknown infrastructure” upholding the violently demarcated boundaries of other socio-cultural differences. To fight against racial difference in a manner that replicates the patriarchal order’s suppression of feminine desire (in this case, the reduction of the female body to its reproductive capacity in the service of maintaining the plantation system) cannot create a radical new mode of collective life. This concern is at the heart of Condé’s declaration that West Indian women have had enough of myth: where Glissant is saying

³⁶⁵ Wynter, “Beyond Miranda’s Meaning,” 355.

³⁶⁶ Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity within History*, trans. Alison Martin (New York: Psychology Press, 1996), 47.

that the historical void left by the violent birth of the Caribbean people can only be filled by a new (masculine) poetics, Condé is reasserting the way women not only share in this historical erasure but also *were singularly coerced into producing and reproducing it corporeally*. So politically speaking, the suppression of sexual difference through the metaphorization of the womb allows Glissant to retrospectively assert a masculinized Caribbean identity that can birth itself in the contemporary moment. Following that qualified defense of Irigaray, however, I want to make precise Wynter's critique of Irigaray here by distinguishing my use of "cross-genre" from "universal": this section argues the "cross-genre" importance of sexual difference must be understood in terms of the different duration of bodies in specific landscapes where processes of human *ontologism* are ongoing.

I do not mean to imply, in other words, that Irigaray's relationship to race—and the historical institution of slavery in particular, omitted as it is in her discussions of the exchange of women—needs no investigation. My hope is that the affirmative reading strategy pursued in this chapter—reading the power of sexual difference as immanent to theories of creolization—makes possible a conceptual latticework built by Glissant and Irigaray together that moves beyond debates over prioritization and provides a creative solution to the challenge of philosophizing along colonial cartographies. In particular, two issues here demand caution to avoid the pitfalls of simply "correcting" Glissant with French feminism: the geopolitics of intellectual history and the danger of "woman" becoming a false universalism.

What the next chapter calls the "political economy of scholarly influence" in a discussion of Glissant's relationship to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari takes on an

even more fraught valence in the case of bringing European feminism to bear on a Caribbean theory of racialization. That is to say, persistent asymmetries in philosophical work on the Caribbean and global South, which relegate non-European thinkers to the status of either derivative or illustrative (for example, Glissant read as a second-order Deleuzo-Guattarian or as an applied “example” of their work), might compound perniciously with ideological deployments of feminism as justification for imperial violence and demarcations of “modern” subjects.³⁶⁷ As Glissant makes clear, however, establishing clean borders between properly European and authentically Caribbean thought merely reifies the power of colonial fantasy by obscuring the dense knots of intertwined history and conceptual exchange that hold together the poetics of Relation.

That is, of course, not to dissolve geographical specificity into an undifferentiated mass where interconnection means indeterminacy. To the contrary, Glissant insists on the “itinéraire géographique” of reason and a rigorous mapping of the landscapes through which creolization expresses itself.³⁶⁸ Hence, following Glissant—and Wynter as well who has worked through the spatialization of ontological statements—one might respond affirmatively to Irigaray's provocation about the secondary status of race “except from a geographical point of view”: just as creolization actualizes through sexual difference, the force of sexual difference (and a key axis of its suppression) is lived geographically in a world where the “color line” has determinate power over the politics of being. To articulate a politics of sexual difference, in other words, the geographical point of view is all we have when ontology is ineluctably expressed by “ontologism,” as Wynter puts it, the drive of particular statements about white, European man to colonize the generic

³⁶⁷ See Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

³⁶⁸ Glissant, *Le discours antillais*, 17.

category of the human on a global scale. Recognizing the historical impact of colonial cartographies suggests two avenues for creolizing sexual difference. First, it pushes back against either prioritization or category collapse by insisting on the cross-genre importance of sexual difference without reifying a particular experience of it. As Saidiya Hartman writes in the context of US American slavery,

Can we employ the term 'woman' and yet remain vigilant that 'all women do not have the same gender?'...How can we understand the racialized engenderment of the black female captive in terms other than deficiency or lack in relation to normative conditions and instead understand this production of gender in the context of very different economies of power, property, kinship, race and sexuality?³⁶⁹

Thus, insisting on the importance of sexual difference is not a final answer but actually an embrace of the condition of possibility of a future and a jump into a shifting field of power relations. It is a reclamation of the virtual capacities of the differently sexed bodies described by Groz, rather than the celebration of any one actualization. And second, it follows that the political drive to take up the force of sexual difference in the face of phallocentrism—to assert the power of the maternal body and the sexuate nature of life itself—requires attunement to precisely those bodies rendered liminal by racialization. Colonialism and slavery work to strip the ontological weight from those caught at the blurred edge of Western ontologism, leaving them with no “ontological resistance” in Fanon’s terms.³⁷⁰ Hence, Irigaray’s onto-political project must be made to speak precisely from a geographical point of view.

³⁶⁹ Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997): 99-100.

³⁷⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 90; cf. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being,” *Cultural Studies* 21.2/3 (2007): 240-270.

b. The Pieza Framework: Neoliberalism from Women on the Market to the Fungible Enslaved Body

My goal is to move past debates over the priority of race or gender, exemplified by specific readings of Wynter and Irigaray respectively, and to develop a dynamic spatio-temporal model of multiple differences under the heading of genre studies. Let me return now to Irigaray's argument in "Women on the Market," the description of the exchange of women as the infrastructure of the symbolic order, to expand upon the omission of slavery and colonialism there and gesture toward a creolized theory of sexual difference. What happens to her universal theory of women as unit of exchange if we take seriously Wynter's insistence on Western ontologism as defined by distinctions between Man and native and black, with "the traditional male and female distinctions now coming to play a secondary—if none the less powerful—reinforcing role within the system of symbolic representations"?³⁷¹ Beyond recourse to a depth model then, how to insist on the ontologizing force of slavery and colonialism and still insist on the cross-genre power of sexual difference and the suppressed feminine?

For Wynter, under the order of Man1 and Man2, the black woman is never thought of as woman in the first place. The fundamental argument for genre rather than gender is that until Man is challenged in a mutual praxis of being human, there will be no such *human* being as woman that is not thoroughly racialized. This rethinking of feminism from decolonization renders Irigaray's analysis of exchange in "Women on the Market" historically incomplete. Instead, following Wynter, the terms of exchange fundamentally shift with the institutionalization of slavery and the concomitant processes of autopoiesis that institutes the law of the father as always already the white colonizer.

³⁷¹ Wynter, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings," 358.

This shift speaks to what Wynter calls “the *seminal* importance of the Atlantic slave trade” in the construction of a “multilayered system of global domination characterized by a plurality of points or bases of resistance.”³⁷² The invocation of the “seminal” here speaks to this sense of generation, taken up in the next section, as the articulation of sexual difference as racialized under the genre of Man. Here, Wynter pushes us to interlink the gendered dynamics of the seminal—the father’s seed, the exclusively patrilineal account of the human that relies on the invisibilization of the maternal body in the name of the self-propagating Man—to the process of racialization through enslavement. Thus, this historical conjunction renders “mono-conceptual” frames inadequate to the descriptive task of accounting for overrepresentation and the ethical task of overcoming it. Instead, Wynter proposes the “pieza framework,” shifting the terms of Irigaray’s “Women on the Market” in a fundamental way.

Wynter writes,

The pieza was the name given by the Portuguese, during the slave trade, to the African who functioned as the standard measure. He was a man of twenty-five years, approximately, in good health, calculated to give a certain amount of physical labor. He served as the general equivalent of physical labor value against which all the others could be measured—with, for example, three teenagers equaling one pieza, and older men and women thrown in in a job lot as refuse.³⁷³

Irigaray’s deracinated analysis of the three archetypes of exchangeable women—the virgin, the mother, the prostitute—is not coherent in a world after slavery and colonization where the racialized body is the fungible unit of exchange. As Man1 becomes the reigning Western ontologism through autopoiesis, it rearticulates the terms of exchange between assigned categories of “male” and “female” according to the

³⁷² Wynter, “Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: the Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poiesis,” in *C. L. R. James’s Caribbean*. Ed. Henry and Paul Buhle (Durham: Duke UP, 1992):, 80; emphasis added.

³⁷³ Ibid, 81.

dominant life/death distinction of Man (as generic human) and his native/negro others. The pieza framework focuses on the third-term of value that, in its reduction to fungibility and subordination to all other categories of social meaning, comes to mediate all socio-economic exchanges under a specific genre. The black body as the zero-point of humanity is what enables the mode of domination, slavery and colonialism, which *in turn* animates the Marxist category of the mode of production: “The pieza framework required a repositioning of the mode of production in relation to the mode of domination. The former becomes a subset of the latter.”³⁷⁴ Interlocking Wynter’s extension of C.L.R. James’s critique of Marxism (the source of the Pieza framework) to Irigaray’s parallel critique has two key implications for thinking genre studies after intersectionality: a “pluri-conceptual theoretics” that moves away from independent axes as the spatial model of multiple registers of difference³⁷⁵; decolonial feminism defined as a commitment to an intergenerational ethics (taken up in the final section of the chapter).

First, the pieza framework further solidifies the complex play of sameness and difference established in the previous chapter on Foucault’s concept of sexuality, such that power operates in a fluid and mobile manner even as it turns along a specific hinge, the reigning descriptive statement of Man. That is to say, any single axis of oppression, indeed the very notion that we can imagine a “single axis” in isolation, looks much different through the world of the pieza framework inaugurated in the fifteenth-century. A single axis like race or class or gender only enters into relations of becoming through two steps. Step one, it is animated by the dominant code of symbolic life and death that makes it a meaningful distinction in the elaboration of a specific human kind. So if Man

³⁷⁴ Ibid, 81

³⁷⁵ Ibid, 84.

stands in as the generic referent of humanity, a category like race is mobilized vis-à-vis the regeneration of that descriptive statement rather than in the name of the category itself.³⁷⁶ Hence, the pieza framework established by Portuguese traders through economic-symbolic feedback loops and globalized through the Atlantic slave trade becomes the immediate field of emergence for other differences to register as coherent demarcations. One can imagine this historical scenario logically, in the sense that the post-1492 ontologism of Man described by Wynter renders all judgments of gender or class difference seeable and sayable through specific forms of racial difference—such as the preceding discussion of “black women” where one cannot imagine positioning them as women alone (vis-à-vis sexual difference) untouched by racialization in the context of Man1 or Man2.³⁷⁷

Step two, the animation of the socio-economic field by a specific ontologism also means a given differentiation only takes hold in the auto-institution of the human by way of *multiple sites of oppression*. If no one category has meaning outside of the dominant code of life and death, the corollary is that one category’s valence—in the literal sense of its power through combination—can only be traced through how it pervades the “material-semiotic” body by way of multiple sites of oppression. The subjectivizing power of race, in that sense, takes hold through its co-articulation with a category like gender such that what it means to embody the feminine symbolic order is simultaneously the auto-institution of whiteness. This point speaks to Wynter’s wariness of contemporary feminism for how it invisibilizes the constitution of woman-as-whiteness such that it ends

³⁷⁶ This is Fanon’s earlier point that the problem of “race itself” is actually subordinate to the terms of the “systematic oppression of a people.” Fanon, “Racism and Culture.”

³⁷⁷ This point is confirmed by countless studies of the development of “feminine” out of racial logics. Cf. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17.2 (1987): 64-81; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.

up thinking within the ideological coordinates of the overrepresentation of Man. To address ourselves to one *immobile* axis of differentiation, or even to imagine that one could neatly divide up axes of differentiation and freeze them in place until the moment of “intersection,” is precisely an *effect* of overrepresentation, a second-order ideological structure of the descriptive statement of Man taken as its truth. In this way, reading Glissant’s theory of creolization and Irigaray’s theory of sexual difference together (but not symmetrically) through the *pieza* framework establishes a mode of understanding the simultaneous persistence and dynamism of identity categories like race, class, and gender; their unceasing processes of becoming that still anchor the powerful hold of the reign of Man.

Notably, the *pieza* framework is a crucial moment of transformation in Wynter’s view when the terms of economic exchange became defined by an onto-politics of the human. The fungible third term of the *pieza*—the standard enslaved black—becomes the site of relation for global economic expansion that is both condition and result of modernity/coloniality.³⁷⁸ This taxonomy of the *pieza* as the standard unit by which differences across race, class, gender, and nationality can be understood installs gradations of value at the level of the human and an economy of scarcity and comparative advantage at the level of the body in a manner that outlives the specific accounting function of this or that standard unit. Insisting on the *pieza* framework, instead, is about understanding why the kind of deracialized exchange of women proposed by Irigaray or the desexualized and deracialized exchange of labor exploitation proposed by Marx fails

³⁷⁸ See Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality”; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept,” *Cultural Studies* 21.2/3 (2007): 240-270. I use it here to refer to the afterlives of enslavement and colonialization beyond formal legal regimes in the realm of onto-politics.

to adequately diagram the economy of life and death after 1492. Importantly, moreover, it also exposes the limits of a critical frame focused exclusively on a metaphysics of blackness because the pieza's fungibility is only mobilized in relation to multiple modes of identification and position (a sort of perverse check list akin to Audre Lorde's insistence on age, race, sex, class) and insofar as it moves through processes of exchange.³⁷⁹ With that in mind, the pieza framework is not simply passed down through the generations unchanged by historical contingency or untouched by political-economic feedback loops. It represents the starting point for a dynamic way of understanding the global economic spacing of racialization through multiple sites of difference. If the pieza is "the source of extractive value," akin to Irigaray's sense of "unknown infrastructure," then it recursively shifts along with the political-economic phase changes it engenders; to

³⁷⁹ See Patrice Douglass and Frank Wilderson, "The Violence of Presence: Metaphysics in a Blackened World," *The Black Scholar*. This self-described "afro-pessimist" work begins from a frame of "blackness-qua-violence," viewing anti-blackness as both the metaphysical impossibility of blackness and blackness as metaphysical violence. In other work, Wilderson uses the spatial metaphor of the "stage" for anti-black violence, as it is the structure on which the other dramas of historical violence play (see Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*). This argument invokes Wynter's concept of genre at the wrong scalar level, imagining it to mean "genres of subjectivity" such that race or sexuality or class represents a "genre" of being human. Wynter's argument as I have analyzed it suggests instead that genre means kind at the level of the human (i.e. Man1 or Man2), and so race and sex and class are "codes specific to each kind," that is to say performative subsets of genre properly understood (Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 34). The implications of this scalar confusion are taken up in the interlude following this chapter concerning the War on Terror. For Douglass and Wilderson, "blackness-qua-violence" means any discussion of violence that does not visibly anchor its argument in a prior metaphysics of anti-blackness works through an "anxious intent to sidestep blackness." (Douglass and Wilderson, 119). They direct this critique in particular at Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages* for its failure to locate the state's anti-terrorism in a prior foundation of the always already negated black body. The previous interlude on the story of Zeitoun evidences the way that genre regenerates through the pieza framework and suggests, pace Wilderson and Douglass, that anti-blackness as a specific political technology materializes through multiple points of domination and often diffracted through sites of subjectivization not reducible to race. So while the War on Terror is reciprocally engaged with the overrepresentation of Man2, it also recasts and rearticulates anti-black violence in new and specific ways that require detailed attention. Wynter demands a microphysics of racialization, in other words, not a metaphysics.

re-emphasize the sense of episteme from last chapter, however, that shift is not the clean process of substitution but instead the messy palimpsests of rearticulation.³⁸⁰

Hence, from the contemporary vantage point, Wynter identifies different phases of the development of colonial capitalism as a network of accumulation and the concomitant pieza category that enables exchange: circulation (the African slave), production (the Worker), consumption (the Consumer). She argues, “This international network...leads to...a differential ratio of distribution of goods and of rewards, which in turn provides additional legitimacy. The institutionalizing of this ratio results in its lawlike functioning to code differentiated identities.”³⁸¹ In this sense, the pieza framework lies at the heart of Wynter’s entire theory because it is the figure that engenders the overrepresentation of a single descriptive statement through its fungible capacity to exchange multiplicity within an economy of the one: the assignment of a pieza category as the condition of a certain political economic structure and its attendant distribution of material and discursive value auto-institutes a specific onto-political description of the human. This connective power of the pieza and the palimpsestic overlap between multiple positions has a dual effect that renders it both the site of a given descriptive statement’s regeneration and the possible demonic ground from which to imagine alternative intergenerational arrangements.

To concretize the first point, consider the figure Wynter briefly mentions as the pieza of neoliberal capital’s extractive value, which serves not only an economic function but also an onto-political function as the technology of overrepresentation’s corporeal inscription: the consumer. How does the development of the figure of the consumer as

³⁸⁰ Wynter, “Beyond the Categories,” 82.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

the measure of the human draw upon, rearticulate, and reanimate the extractive value of the enslaved body in a manner that strategically modulates the color line and reifies uneven geographies of life and death? How is consumption, in other words, *human praxis* under the overrepresentation of Man2 specifically in a manner contingent on the localizing effects of colonialism but still consistent with a global mode of ontologism? And what happens to a view of neoliberalism if we extend Wynter's argument that domination *precedes* accumulation in the formation of political economic circuitry? Answering this question requires a brief detour into the contemporary conditions of neoliberalism and the concomitant development of what Deleuze calls "control societies," before returning to the pieza framework as the crucial explanatory framework for understanding the racializing effects of this economic reorganization.

A good starting point is the previously cited lectures by Foucault on *The Birth of Biopolitics*, where he describes the movement from classical liberal economics to neoliberal economics in post-War Europe and the shift to a US led consensus. The development of homo-economicus re-calibrates the population biopolitics of the nineteenth and early twentieth century around the individual as economic actor who defines (evolutionary) success in terms of efficient optimization and material accumulation. The new political rationality Foucault describes goes beyond a set of economic reforms and instantiates a new triangulation of the economy, the state, and its citizens. As Wendy Brown summarizes the mutation, "neoliberalism does not conceive of either the market itself or rational economic behavior as purely natural. Both are constructed—organized by law and political institutions, and requiring political

intervention and orchestration.”³⁸² The free subject of classical economics demands only the negative freedom of non-intervention to successfully pursue their naturally occurring greed; the aggregate of individuals left alone in such a way achieve the optimal conditions of the invisible hand of the market. Neoliberal politics traffics in much of the same language of classical economics but sees a properly entrepreneurial citizen-subject as something to be fostered across all spheres of human activity, such that traditional divisions between economic and non-economic aspects of life dissolve. Homo economicus, the neoliberal subject par excellence, brings economic optimization to bear on everything from sex and kinship to recreation and exercise through tactics of marginal efficiency gain consistently inscribed across discursive formations of subjectivization including the family, psychology, criminal justice, the class room and the university along with new developments in digital technology and social media. These tactics all intertwine through strategic material accumulation above all else.

The 2012 presidential election in the United States dramatized the efficiency of political subjectivity and revealed the moralizing effect of economizing symbolic codes of the good life. A private fundraising dinner for the Republican nominee, Mitt Romney, was secretly taped and subsequently released. The transcript of his comments, shared between a politician and his richest constituents, reveal how self-styled neoliberal success stories articulate the parameters of entrepreneurial subjectivity including its moral implications. Asked how he will convince voters to finally “take care of themselves,” Romney responded:

There are 47 percent of the people who will vote for the president no matter what. All right, there are 47 percent who are with him, who are dependent upon

³⁸² Wendy Brown, “Neo-Liberalism and the End of American Democracy,” *Theory and Event* 7.1 (2003): 85.

government, who believe that they are victims, who believe that government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you name it. That that's an entitlement. And the government should give it to them. And they will vote for this president no matter what. And I mean, the president starts off with 48, 49, 48—he starts off with a huge number. These are people who pay no income tax. Forty-seven percent of Americans pay no income tax. So our message of low taxes doesn't connect. And he'll be out there talking about tax cuts for the rich. I mean that's what they sell every four years. And so my job is not to worry about those people—I'll never convince them that they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives.³⁸³

Amongst his peers in the economic elite, under the assumption of being able to speak honestly rather than in a popular mode for wooing votes, Romney illustrates perhaps better than most critical theorists the core tenets of a neoliberal mode of governance and its implications for contemporary biopolitics. First, the role of governance shifts from its oppositional modality in classical liberalism to a subordinate modality, yet one more term brought under the sign of the economic. As Romney sneers that his “job” does not include worrying about American citizens who fail to contribute positively to micro- and macro-economic indicators, he correctly describes the recast relationship between autonomy and government around active self-regulation amongst enterprising subjects. Indeed, the very terms of citizenship turn on an economic analysis as revealed by an earlier discussion in the same speech of high-skilled immigrants where Romney states his desired wish to give legal citizenship to any and all technologically savvy and well-educated elite.³⁸⁴ Neoliberalism’s “generalization of the economic form...as a principle

³⁸³ Mother Jones News Team, “Full Transcript of the Mitt Romney Secret Video,” 19 September 2012. Accessed 1 April 2015. < <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/09/full-transcript-mitt-romney-secret-video> >

³⁸⁴ “I’d love to bring in more legal immigrants that have skill and [unintelligible]. I’d like to staple a green card to every Ph.D. in the world and say, “Come to America, we want you here.” Instead, we make it hard for people who get educated here or elsewhere to make this their home. Unless, of course, you have no skill or experience, in which case you’re welcome to cross the border and stay here for the rest of your life. [Audience laughs.] It’s very strange. It’s run by people who don’t understand the words “global competition of ideas,” and our idea has to win, but only if America

of intelligibility and a principle of decipherment of social relationships and individual behavior” recalculates political categories like citizenship across a series of balance sheets rendering Romney’s “those people” irrelevant to the weight of the body-politic.³⁸⁵ This rebalancing of political value has become legally sanctioned as well, with the Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* which openly equated money with political speech.³⁸⁶

Second, moral questions of the good life become measurable exclusively by material wealth. A tautology lies at the heart of Romney and his questioner’s exhortations to the biopolitical cant of personal responsibility. Material accumulation like that achieved by Romney serves as evidence of his rectitude; his rectitude is assumed because, well, he is rich. We know the 47% of citizens he refers to are morally fallen, beyond the conversionary power of the word of the prosperity gospel, because they are poor in material accumulation; their poverty, on the other hand, is proof that they are, simply, bad people. This circular logic has a powerfully dehistoricizing effect on explanations for systemic socio-economic inequality. Romney’s father George, for instance, served as CEO for an automobile company and then as the governor of Michigan before passing on great wealth and status to his children and grandchildren. Somehow the younger Romney forgets in his morality tale of American capitalism that the older Romney (a Mormon refugee from Mexico in the early 20th century) lived off of

reigns strong.” Whether one follows Bergson or Freud, the moments of laughter throughout the transcript deserve their own analysis as his audience takes great joy in lamentations about the state of America.

³⁸⁵ Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 243.

³⁸⁶ *Citizens United, Appellant v. Federal Election Commission*, 558 U.S. 310 (2010).

government assistance for much of his early life.³⁸⁷ I will return to this ambivalent sense of generation and intergenerationality brought into relief by these comments, but for now just want to emphasize the new relationship between autonomy and governance as described by Foucault: the state serves as but one more economic actor leaving self-regulation as fostered by different spheres of neoliberal subjectivization to citizen rendered as *entrepreneurs of consumption*. That is, they accumulate wealth in the register of tactical consumption that further optimizes their good moral standing as economic successes.³⁸⁸ In Wynter's terms, material accumulation becomes the crucial measure of one's humanity under the conditions of Man2.³⁸⁹

One way of describing this interface of accumulation and measurement is what Deleuze calls the development of the "control society," in which the individual of classical liberalism is disaggregated and recomposed as a "dividual."³⁹⁰ The dividual emerges from manifold statistical tools for capturing the body's capacities and predictively shaping the translation of the virtual into the actual. One cannot formally describe the dividual in the abstract because it is a precise data point across all its measurable connections to demographic ranges, with specific intersections of data

³⁸⁷ Frank James, "Welfare Wasn't Always a Dirty Word in the Romney Family," *NPR*. 19 September 2012. Accessed 1 April 2015.
<<http://www.npr.org/blogs/itsallpolitics/2012/09/19/161409916/welfare-wasnt-always-a-dirty-word-in-the-romney-family>>

³⁸⁸ Tactical here refers to the explanation of power given in chapter two, meaning it is not simple intentionality but an embodied pathway of the autopoiesis of Man2.

³⁸⁹ I focus on Romney here due to his particularly pithy summation of neoliberal politics, but I cannot emphasize enough that the overall sense of morality, economics, and technocracy he describes is the baseline for all American electoral politics whether Democrat or Republican. As Lisa Duggan compellingly argues, in line with my earlier invocation of the Baudrillardian notion of metastasis, the perception of differentiation between "left" and "right" in Western politics manufactured around cultural issues divorced from economic and racial justice is one of the primary political technologies of neoliberalism. (Duggan, *Twilight of Equality*)

³⁹⁰ Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," in *Negotiations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995): 180.

streams given political meaning at different moments. One can certainly imagine, however, a dividualized subject composition emerging from various measurements: spatial mobilities, monetary transactions, medical risk profiles, education background, earning potential, quantitative ideological beliefs, security challenges—the list could go on indefinitely, and indeed, the dream of control society is exactly to make such a list endlessly flexible and totalizing such that no aspect of life (actual or virtual) escapes capture. This phase of capitalism is “no longer directed toward production but toward products, that is, toward sales or markets.”³⁹¹ Again, the evidence of this shift outstrips neat summary as it marks basically every sphere of society today. The previous discussion of elections, for instance, illustrates the centrality of “big data” to political outcomes not based on ideological distinctions but on competitive marketing teams. The permanent *campaign* has rendered democratic agonism an epiphenomenon of fundraising battles waged through digital infrastructure.³⁹²

To return to the section’s focus, however, what I want to suggest is that the historical development Deleuze describes is best understood in relationship to Wynter’s parallel elaboration of the pieza framework and its refiguration from the enslaved body to the laboring body to the consuming body. The control society’s simultaneous creation and targeting of the dividual, based on a shift from production to products, is most intimately associated with the creation of market profiles based on the quantification of every aspect of life and its monetization (that is, identifying virtual sources of profit and

³⁹¹ Ibid, 181.

³⁹² Sasha Issenberg, “How President Obama’s Campaign Used Big Data to Rally Individual Voters,” *MIT Technology Review*. 19 December 2012. <<http://www.technologyreview.com/featuredstory/509026/how-obamas-team-used-big-data-to-rally-voters/>>; Alex Howard, “Why data-driven campaigning matters in the 2014 US elections and beyond,” *TechRepublic*. 26 September 2014. <<http://www.techrepublic.com/article/why-data-driven-campaigning-matters-in-the-2014-us-elections-and-beyond/>>

inventing concepts and technologies that actualize the movement of capital). It is, in other words, a subjectivization primarily through consumption, recasting other functions of sovereign governance like social welfare or security and policing through the metrics of privatization and optimal choice. Hence, Deleuze acknowledges but leaves tellingly unanalyzed the uneven geographies of control, cautioning against an overgeneralization of the dividual as a mode of subjectivization or a clean narrative of progression from sovereign power and biopower: “One thing, it's true, hasn't changed—capitalism still keeps three quarters of humanity in extreme poverty, too poor to have debts and too numerous to be confined: control will have to deal not only with vanishing frontiers, but with mushrooming shantytowns and ghettos.”³⁹³ To route this challenge through Wynter's work, the question is how to link the emergence of control societies as a specific technology of Man2 (reifying and targeting populations considered human under neoliberal regimes of accumulation) to the great majority of the world systematically negated by their lack of a relevant market profile. As Doreen Massey puts it, in her study of refugees, the working class, and urban slums, “at one level they have been tremendous contributors to what we call time-space compression; and at another level they are imprisoned by it.”³⁹⁴ Deploying Wynter's pieza framework here recasts the consumer, what I have argued is structurally parallel to the figure of the dividual, as the source of extractive value under neoliberal capitalism in a manner contingent on the earlier

³⁹³ Deleuze, “Postscript”, 182.

³⁹⁴ Doreen Massey, “Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place,” in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*. Eds. Jon Bird et al (New York: Routledge, 1993): 62; Massey's argument hedges against straightforward celebrations of cosmopolitanism, such as Gilroy's in the introduction, as an antidote to uneven vulnerability under globalization. Nigel Thrift, for instance, defends a “positive cosmopolitanism” through the staging of the world's interconnectedness in his study of control societies (Thrift, *Spatial Formations*, 293). This answer begs the question of initiation, however: who has the power to forge connections, to initiate movement, and to alter flows? It defers the political question of the political-economic, in other words.

production of the enslaved body and so always already racialized in the global sense of Man2, but not reducible to race alone.

To reiterate the argument so far, I am contending that the pieza figure is at the heart of genre studies in two ways: both as the site of regeneration for specific descriptive statements of the human and simultaneously as the site for generating alternative futures and intergenerational arrangements. The previous paragraphs analyzing neoliberalism describe the current iteration of Man2 and its primary source of extractive value, the consumer. Political economic analysis from the structuring position of the pieza as a historical and conceptual body cleaves exchange to processes of racialization such that the fungibility of bodies conceived in neoliberal terms emerges out of a deep history of enslavement and subsequent transformations of the slave trade, rendering the pieza category a “pluri-conceptual” site useful for strategically directing multiplicity toward the reification of a single descriptive statement. Thus, genre studies routed through pieza requires an account of multiple sites of regeneration—race, class, sex, sexuality—but does not simply flatten out difference because it still identifies the key source of extractive value in a given episteme of Man. This move furthers the conversation around biopolitics proposed in chapter two helpfully triangulates that analytic with both the sense of coloniality proposed there and the shift to control societies detailed here.

First, the pieza framework posits that regimes of domination precede networks of accumulation such that the originary ontologism enabling exchange haunts political economy even when the formal regime of domination collapses or shifts.³⁹⁵ The

³⁹⁵ “Second, the pieza framework required a repositioning of the mode of production in relation to the mode of domination. The former becomes a subset of the latter.” Wynter, “Beyond the Categories,” 81. My articulation of the pieza framework through a study of neoliberalism responds to Paget Henry’s critique of Wynter as “underrepresenting” the economic in her

consumer of neoliberalism as the new symbolic code of life and death is thus intimately tied to the history of enslavement and colonialism. This reordering of domination and accumulation, moreover, means that no demarcation of difference remains untouched by processes of racialization after the historical events of 1492 and the reimagining of human kinds in the sixteenth century. And so Irigaray's analysis of "Women on the Market" in the exclusive terms of sexual difference cannot help us understand the specific modalities of coloniality, biopolitics, or control societies which all emerge out of regimes of racial domination at multiple sites of difference.

Hence, the second point that in a pieza framework any one axis of difference requires co-articulation to become exchangeable. The pieza of the consumer under neoliberal control societies ties together race and sexuality through the optimal navigation of market conditions. Take, for instance, the work of Dorothy Roberts on contemporary processes of racialization through the privatization of genetic futures. She examines the simultaneous foldings of racial and sexual difference through reproductive politics and reprogenetics. As she argues, "The recent expansion of both reproductive genetic screening and race based biomedicine...signals a dramatic change in the racial politics of reproductive technologies."³⁹⁶ Whereas her earlier work examined how racial domination rendered reproductive justice a Manichaeian world of white and black, new developments in genetic technology articulated through neoliberal notions of personal

thought. She does not just replace the economic with the symbolic, nor does she render the economic simply an epiphenomenon of the symbolic, as Henry suggest. The "network of accumulation" she describes is essential to the process of overrepresentation, even if it is initially put in place through a regime of domination. Thus, Wynter can account for the material inertia of institutional structures demanded by a Marxist analysis even as she focuses on the many haunting afterlives of different modes of production, such as the "pieza" framework engendered by a slavery economy but still powerfully in force today. (See Henry, *Caliban's Reason*, 139-143).

³⁹⁶ Dorothy Roberts, "Race, Gender, and Genetic Technologies: A New Reproductive Dystopia?" *Signs* 34.4 (2009): 786.

responsibility even at the molecular scale promise a new mode of incorporation for racially marked bodies. Through new marketing schemes, the development of race based medicine, and parallel “discoveries” of racial genomics, “Women of color are now part of the market and cultural imaginary of the new reprogenetics...with the expectation that women will use these technologies to manage genetic risk.”³⁹⁷ In this example, the pieza framework of the consumer redeploys sexual difference as a specific technology of racialization that furthers the entrepreneurial self at the heart of neoliberalism all the way down to the most minute biological scale.³⁹⁸

In this way the pieza framework cuts diagonally through the seemingly opposed discourses of biopolitics and necropolitics or linear narratives from sovereignty to control. It expands the terms of exchange described by Irigaray in “Women on the Market” such that the narrow frame of sexual reproduction is revealed to be one thread in a broader story of regeneration. As Jasbir Puar argues, “[W]hat is at stake in terms of biopolitical capacity is therefore not the ability to reproduce, but the capacity to *regenerate*....in a spectrum of statistical chances that suggest health, vitality, capacity, fertility, ‘market virility’ and so on.”³⁹⁹ So returning to my critique of the metaphorization of birth in Glissant’s theory of creolization, it is necessary to add that accounting for regeneration means understanding the maintenance of enslaved women’s bodies and the haunting afterlives of such racialized (un)gendering beyond the narrow frame of reproduction. If domination precedes accumulation, then the racializing effects of the overrepresentation of Man make possible differential political economic calculation of women’s

³⁹⁷ Ibid, 786.

³⁹⁸ See Clough, “The Affective Turn”; Nikolas Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

³⁹⁹ Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 211. Emphasis added.

reproductive capacity at different moments. There were times when “it was considered more expeditious to reproduce ‘natives’ through replacements of live Africans for dead ones [than] to foster conditions of life in the New World that would enable sexual reproduction.”⁴⁰⁰ Once various governments banned the legal importation of slaves, the economic calculation rebalanced toward forced reproduction and a specific valuation of fungible wombs. Here, reproduction and sexual difference co-articulate through figurations like the enslaved body and the consumer to regenerate the descriptive statement of ratiocentric Man1 or the current neoliberal iteration of biocentric Man2. This analysis evidences how the pieza framework is a crucial descriptive tool for tracing the entangled but differential force of multiple registers of identification and subjectification.

Up to this point, I have outlined the regenerative sense of genre, or how a specific human kind manifests a political economic system that ties together multiplicity in the strategic unity of a single ontologism. As in the discussion of autopoiesis in chapter one, there is a danger in ascribing too much stability to this process of regeneration such that the second sense of genre to which I have pointed, intergeneration, seems hopelessly lost. Clough suggests that the racialization of the “biomediated body” through neoliberal technologies of quantification and dividualization, however, seen now as a process of regeneration, requires ongoing deployment and redeployment “every time a differentiation is made among and in populations, constituting additional bodies of data.”⁴⁰¹ The same way that Clough’s critique of autopoiesis served as a point of departure for mapping the liminal subject as the tracing of an outside to the overrepresentation of Man, her argument here points again to the second meaning of

⁴⁰⁰ Jonathan Goldberg, *Tempest in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004): 67.

⁴⁰¹ Clough, “The Affective Turn,” 224.

genre as the *generative* openness of the human body caught in processes of regeneration. “[A]s capital shifts to accumulate in the domain of affect and deploys racism to produce an economy to realize this accumulation it is important to remember the virtual at the threshold. Beyond it, there is always a chance for something else, unexpected, new.”⁴⁰² In the following section, I locate one particular chance for the “new” borne of Afro-Caribbean thought and Afro-Caribbean feminism in particular, namely the intergenerational.

IV. The Intergenerational Body of Genre Studies

Recall here Wynter’s contention about the effect of feminist inquiry on the conceptual development of her humanism: “Gender functioned as an emancipatory opening for me. Because for a long while the debate had become sterile. It was either race first or class first. We were stuck. There was no opening.”⁴⁰³ I have argued that feminist theory read through Wynter’s work is necessary to grasp this opening in the face of the dehistoricizing effects of neoliberal capital, particularly the becoming-fungible of the pieza framework. I did so first by placing the body back in time through a reading of Fanon and Bergson, reclaiming the temporality of the virtual against the closed loop of narrative condemnation. In this chapter, I have gestured toward a second temporalizing gesture, that is placing the body not only as a site of becoming but also as a site of *intergenerational* connection demanded by my creolized account of sexual difference theory.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Wynter, “Re-Enchantment of Humanism,” 183.

While keeping in mind Hartman's caution about the uncritical deployment of the category "women," I follow Irigaray's contention that the maternal body embodies a point of departure for thinking the intergenerational specifically; that is, for opening ourselves to a world of precarious interdependency that gives the lie to the biocentric description of Man2 as an individualized agent of natural selection. For instance, Irigaray argues, in terms similar to Wynter, that we imagine subjectivization according to two behavior models of the nature-culture interface, appropriated from Darwin and Pavlov:

- 1) As far as *life* is concerned, we are said to be always struggling against the external environment....and with other living beings. Only by being stronger than these two adversaries are we able to stay alive.
- 2) At the level of *culture*, it seems we are brought up...to be trained in repetition, to adapt to a society's systems...to be *like*, without any decisive innovations or discoveries of our own.

Irigaray sees the economy of the One that defines patriarchy as delimited by combat and repetition, nature and culture scaffolding one another through symbolic codes of natural selection that affirm exclusively male genealogies. The naturalistic fallacy, the slippage between is and ought, elevated to a master code of life and death. In language almost identical to Wynter's, Irigaray suggests that the maternal body, specifically the biology of the placental relation, "represents one of these openings with regard to determinism, to vital or cultural closure, an opening which stems from female corporeal identity."⁴⁰⁴ The mediating role of the placenta as a specific border between mother and fetus manages exchange between self and other in a way that is simultaneously enduring and transformative, restorative and germinal.⁴⁰⁵ Recasting ethics from the economy of mutual

⁴⁰⁴ Luce Irigaray, interview of Helen Rouch, "On the Maternal Order," in *Je, Te, Nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*, trans. Alison Martin (London: Routledge, 1993): 38.

⁴⁰⁵ Irigaray establishes this interplay between ethics and science through an interview with the biologist Helene Rouch. I do not want to limit my argument to the nature of the placental relation,

exchange initiated by the placenta is another shifting of a boundary project in terms of its directionality and orientation. It enables a spatio-temporal crossing that shapes and marks the body and its becomings with a generative relationship to the past.

As a single genre of the human—Man—overtook all other descriptive statements then, it inevitably addressed itself to the cross-genre effect of sexual difference. This is where Irigaray's narrow focus on the female body, even as it spurs us to take on the neglect of feminine genealogies, requires a historical accounting for the emergence of coloniality and slavery. As Anne McClintock argues, the symbolic rituals of colonialism attempted to resolve the anxiety of origins to which no man, even Man, could have access. Just as Irigaray reveals the law of the Father as a compensatory gesture, both the power and weakness of patriarchy, so colonial fathers must engage in elaborate acts of naming: "The imperial act of discovery is a surrogate birthing ritual: the lands are already peopled as the child is already born. Discovery for this reason is a retrospective act."⁴⁰⁶

Thus, coloniality as discussed in the previous chapter is a fundamental transformation of

but merely offer this example as a point of departure for how corporeality, the sense of what a body can do, must be a vital part of any ethics. Of course, in this particular moment where reproductive rights are threatened at a fundamental level, founding an ethical system on a mother-fetus relationship requires extreme caution. So while I think Irigaray's point is profoundly important for keeping a sort of originary interdependence in focus, I am also inclined to de-emphasize her interlocutor's (Rouch's) continual separation of the mother and fetus, per Drucilla Cornell's defense of reproductive justice in *The Imaginary Domain* where she argues that the mother's "bodily integrity" is fundamentally negated when her womb is symbolically or materially separated. While Irigaray's rendering is careful, Rouch too often positions the mother and fetus through the language of self and other (such as, "space between mother and fetus"; "relationship between mother and fetus"; or most problematically, "that pregnancy constitutes a successful transplant." Thus, Rouch falls into the trap of dismembering women, as Cornell puts it: "Wombs do not wander except in the wild imagination of some men who have come up with very colorful stories of what a womb 'is'. To separate the woman from her womb or to reduce her to it is to deny her the conditions of selfhood that depend on bodily integrity." ("Dismembered Selves," 347). Cornell's argument is not to collapse the space between woman and fetus entirely either, but to argue that it is a singular relationship that defies analogy or reducibility. As I go on to argue, this issue becomes particularly fraught in the context of slavery and colonialism.

⁴⁰⁶ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 29.

the code of gender—read here as ambivalently both the site of regeneration and intergeneration—reanimating it according to the more fundamental code of genre, or the overrepresentation of Man. McClintock again: “White male patrimony is violently assured as the sexual and military insemination of an interior void...the disavowed agency of women and the colonized.”⁴⁰⁷ Hence, the intimate connection between the transition to a ratiocentric order, the new instantiation of the public and private mapped onto the bodies of women, and the global mapping of that order onto native others through colonization.⁴⁰⁸

Maria Lugones argues, moreover, colonialism does not simply encounter already existing “women” or an indigenous sexual dimorphism, but necessarily produces and imposes a “colonial/modern gender system” as part of the scaffolding of coloniality. Lugones compellingly details the mutual constitution of racialization and processes of (un)gendering in the global colonial system, bringing into relief how the ideological invention of biological dimorphism (i.e. the two-sex system analyzed by Laqueur) and deployment of sexuality takes shape through the spread of “Eurocentered global capitalism” at the same time as they directed the mapping of indigenous bodies.⁴⁰⁹ Thus, she argues that the coloniality model envisioned by Anibal Quijano, while profoundly

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, 30.

⁴⁰⁸ For more on that constellation of events see as well Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁴⁰⁹ Maria Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender,” *Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise* (Spring 2008): 12-13. “Women racialized as inferior were turned from animals into various modified versions of ‘women’ as it fit the processes of Eurocentered global capitalism. Thus heterosexual rape...coexisted with concubinage, as well as with the imposition of the heterosexual understanding of gender relations among the colonized—when and as it suited Eurocentered, global capitalism, and heterosexual domination of white women. But it is clear from the work of Oyewumi and Allen that there was no extension of the status of white women to colonized women even when they were turned into similes of bourgeois white women. Colonized females got the inferior status of gendering as women, without any of the privileges accompanying that status for white bourgeois women.”

important for describing contemporary conditions of colonial capitalism, errs when it assumes that pre-colonial societies (indeed, any given society) features gender concerns organized around heterosexuality and the reproductive structures of male and female. The assumption of that narrow structure and its seeming universalizability, she reminds us, is not just the neutral backdrop to colonization, but a core political technology that is consistently co-constitutive with coloniality.⁴¹⁰

Consider also how slavery in the drive to create fungible subjects of extractive value—the pieza framework—must address the maternal body as a site of originary attachment. I have already made this case earlier, in relation to the economic ups and downs of enslaved women’s reproductive capacity, reciprocally affecting the value of abjecting the feminine to the global economy. In her landmark essay, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” Hortense Spillers calls this a “vestibular cultural formation where ‘kinship’ loses meaning *since it can be invaded at any given and arbitrary moment by the property relations.*”⁴¹¹ A fungible body cannot have a singular relationship like that of the body marked by the maternal, even the multiple sense of the maternal invoked by Glissant. Spillers powerfully suggests that enslavement and its tortuous implementation as a material and symbolic system at the level of captive flesh is a process of ungendering, rending and flaying the sinews that demand an intergenerational account of birth and death, of ancestors and futures. One cannot simply “return” to a body healed of such a wound; thus, for Spillers, addressing herself to the ongoing cultural hypotheses about black cultural pathology⁴¹², that means the answer is

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, 5.

⁴¹¹ Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 74.

⁴¹² This point refers most famously to the Moynihan report. Today, the cultural takes are no less strong as the structural inequality of neoliberalism and the violence of racialized policing

not simply “joining the ranks of gendered femaleness.” Put in Wynter’s terms, that would mean claiming access for women as recognizable bodies within the ranks of the Human under the episteme of Man². Instead Spillers asks how to “gain the insurgent ground as female social subject.” If enslavement must rend and render fungible flesh, slave masters and slave codes must ungender the flesh, particularly at its most singularly marked point of natal identification.

Thus, the ambivalent sense of generation in genre studies considers how the “materialized scene of...female flesh ungendered offers a praxis and a theory, a text for living and for dying.”⁴¹³ Reclaiming the double sense of generation as both the regeneration of the descriptive statement of Man and the intergenerational movement between, across, and beyond genres of the human is one sense of how feminism-as-genre-studies takes up Spillers theory and praxis: by doing justice to Irigaray’s sense of the maternal body as the condition of generational difference, but also expanding her narrow expression of life between the sexes to the very symbolic codes of life and death engendered by slavery and colonialism, the permanent scarification of captive flesh still not free.

V. Geographies of the Intergenerational

I am arguing that the intergenerational power of decolonial feminism is an immanent force propelling Wynter’s insurrection at the level of the human. This gesture places the body back in time, opening it up to its virtual capacities denied by captivity in

continues to immiserate black neighborhoods and target black kinship structures. Orlando Patterson has taken up the mantle in his new co-edited anthology, *The Cultural Matrix: Understanding Black Youth*. See as well a review by Kalefa Sanneh, “Don’t Be Like That: Does Black Culture Need to be Reformed?” 9 February 2015. *New Yorker*.

⁴¹³ Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 68.

and of the flesh while insisting on an original interdependence as the locus of engenderment. Intergenerational feminism is not merely a celebration of life overcoming death or the triumph of natality over mortality. Genre studies as it emerges out of my reading of Afro-Caribbean and feminist philosophy recasts generational difference outside of such a diametric opposition, a binary polarization that cannot account for the landscapes of domination and violence in which and from which birth proceeds, such as the slave ship as womb abyss that generates Glissant's clamor centuries later. Fanon as well ultimately centers the question of the generational in his reflections on national culture, reminding the psychic community of revolutionaries to avoid reverting to lamentations of past failure while also asking the older generation to have the wisdom and respect to step aside.⁴¹⁴ Thus, the question outstrips even the limited frame of immediate kinship and generational intimacy as the body's temporalization stretches backwards and forwards. As Cornell puts it, "By intergenerational, I do not simply mean relationship between living women."⁴¹⁵ And M. Jacqui Alexander adds, "The dead do not like to be forgotten."⁴¹⁶

The next chapter threads together these two insights about the haunted futures of human genre by asking how the body-in-time, the site of regeneration and intergeneration, spaces itself in the world. Audre Lorde writes, "My body, a living representation of other life older longer wiser. The mountains and valleys, trees, rocks.

⁴¹⁴ He writes, "'Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity... We must shed the habit of decrying the efforts of our forefathers... They fought as best they could... More than one colonized subject had to say, 'We've had enough,' more than one tribe had to rebel, more than one peasant revolt had to be quelled, more than one demonstration to be repressed, for us today to stand firm, certain of our victory.'" Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 145-146.

⁴¹⁵ Cornell, *Between Women and Generations: Legacies of Dignity*, xviii.

⁴¹⁶ M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 290.

Sand and flowers and water and stone, Made in earth.”⁴¹⁷ I turn now to the work of Glissant on the interpenetration of memory and landscape to take up Lorde’s challenge, arguing that Glissant and his interlocutors, Deleuze and Guattari, work through geographies of becoming that fight the dehistoricizing effects of neoliberal pieza frameworks through a materialist mobilization of embodied memory. The turn to Glissant is in part an acknowledgement of reaching a certain limit in Wynter’s thought. That is to say, while she provides crucial conceptual resources for sociogenetically diagnosing overrepresentation, her work rarely considers the specific spacing and political ecology of the body in the focus on autopoiesis as narrative event. Glissant, in the same vein as Lorde, certainly takes the worlding effects of narrativization seriously but insists that, “I build my language with rocks.”⁴¹⁸ So the final chapter picks up there, at the point of where genre expresses through landscape. Staging this argument on the seemingly comparative terrain, moreover, of Glissant’s relationship to Deleuze and Guattari raises the final question of how the many modes of “translation” explored so far—between ontology and politics, theory and praxis, race and gender—reveal both the challenge and promise of defending genre studies as a specifically Caribbean project.

⁴¹⁷ Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of my Name* (New York: Persephone Press, 1982): 7.

⁴¹⁸ Glissant, *L’Intention Poétique*, 50.

Chapter 4

Glissant's Haunted Materialism: The Political Ecology of Genre Studies and the Political Economy of Scholarly Influence

What cartographic tools do we need to map the different genres of the human as they materialize in relationship to political ecological landscapes? And how might we describe the relationship between the tools of cartography themselves and the way they translate territories into maps, to paraphrase Wynter? This chapter tries to answer those questions through the philosophical encounter of Glissant and Deleuze and Guattari. Section I examines the ecological aspect of Wynter's thought, both its political urgency in her work and its limited role in her conception of humanism, and so justifies the need for a turn to Glissant. That is to say, Wynter crucially lays down the challenge for a humanism made to the measure of *this world*, but sometimes reifies hierarchical distinctions between humans and non-human others and environments in a manner that actually undermines her own stated dedication to planetary life. Section 2 follows Wynter's own reading of Glissant at the limit of her oeuvre as filtered through the key concept of the rhizome, arguing that rhizomatic thought becomes a haunted materialism for Glissant that can grapple with Wynter's focus on *narrative* condemnation on the specific terrain of landscapes of memory and violence. Section 3 is a reflexive mapping exercise, asking after the stakes of such an encounter between Glissant and Deleuze and Guattari in the context of genre studies intended to challenge the overrepresentation of Man. Turning to internal divisions with Glissant's work, I consider how the periodization of his work as initially "political" and later "philosophical" brings into

relief the genre of Man as a structure of knowledge. Is it possible to carry concepts across colonial cartographies in the name of ontological insurrection? Contextualizing this question through Glissant's understanding and practice of translation suggests not just the possibility, but also the necessity of a strongly defended *Caribbean* discourse for an account of Relation.

I. Humanism, Non-Humans, Environments

Wynter insists over and over again on the inextricable force of the overrepresentation of Man and ecosystemic catastrophe. This concern, clearly articulated for decades, has culminated in a clarion call that now, more than ever, we must find a way to experience ourselves as humans in cross-genre affinity or face the consequences of accelerating environmental destruction. She generally draws this point out by way of parallel, for instance in the open letter on Rodney King where she frames anti-black violence in the following terms: "As is the case with the hithertho discaradable environment, its ongoing pollution, and ozone layer depletion..."⁴¹⁹ Or, as she writes about the how actions undertaken for the benefit of Man² are institutionally received as beneficial for all of humanity, exposes the lie in terms of a similar parellel: "This belief, in the face of the mounting evidence of its costs to the planetary environment (physical and organic), as well as to the world-systemic sociohuman one..."⁴²⁰ Prima facie, then, she makes clear a necessary connection between humanism beyond the word of Man and a fundamental rethinking of political ecology, both in terms of how humans relate to non-

⁴¹⁹ Wynter, "No Humans Involved," 10.

⁴²⁰ Wynter, "1492: a New World View," *Race, Discourse and the Origin of the Americas*. Eds. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995): 43-44.

humans and the environment and how the outside to the current episteme is geographically expressed. Even as she elucidates this twinned effect of the overrepresentation of Man, however, the “environmental” and “socio-human” impacts, it is not always clear how those parallel series ever touch much less become co-constitutive. Put more strongly, Wynter’s privileging of narrativization and linguistic representation as the primary if not exclusive mode of domination sometimes serves to starkly separate these two series and smuggle in a hierarchy of the socio-human over the environmental that betrays her own aims. Thus, in some sense reading Wynter’s political injunction against her ontological foundations, I want to suggest that a more capacious and vibrant account of the political ecology of humanism is necessary to struggle against the geographically embodied force of the overrepresentation of Man².

Consider the oppositional figure Wynter uses to bring into relief human difference and make stark the unique power of representation.

So here you have the idea that with being human everything is praxis. For we are not purely biological beings! As far as the eusocial insects like bees are concerned, their roles are genetically prescribed for them. Ours are not, even though the biocentric meritocratic IQ bourgeois ideologues, such as the authors of the Bell Curve, try to tell us that they/we are.⁴²¹

Let me be clear here that my argument supports the primary point of this paragraph, humans are not purely biological beings. As Wynter stakes out, moreover, we must be incredibly mindful of drawing contour lines between the human and non-human world in the context of racialization as it is currently derived from a neo-Darwinian iteration of capitalist inequality. Hence, the suspicion of any declarations of “post-humanism” or a flat ontology drawing humans onto a level with non-humans without first addressing

⁴²¹ Wynter, “Unparalleled Catastrophe,” 33-34.

intra-human hierarchy.⁴²² Without resorting to a facile and dangerous biocentrism, then, I want to tarry with this stark demarcation between humans as praxis and bees (and different kinds of animals more broadly) as genetically preprescribed to examine what generative directions for sociogenetic analysis it might close off.

In chapter one, I nodded to critiques of autopoiesis that problematized the excessive stability of a self-generating and closed system. Accounting for *liminal subjects* opens up such seemingly closed systems and introduces an element of chaos that might precipitate a phase-change, I argued, considering Fanon and Kanye as two theorists of the constitutive outside. In that sense, while Wynter suggestively uses the language of autopoiesis, she actually stretches it well beyond its initial meaning as self-building or self-maintaining. Indeed, no system is perfectly self-generating and the very fantasy of self-birth and self-same reproduction and regeneration is part and parcel of the overrepresentation of Man.

I want to suggest that the bright line drawn by Wynter between humans and non-humans replicates a problematically closed view of autopoiesis as solely human, instantiating an unnecessary yet powerful hierarchy between the socio-human and the environmental. Or, put simply, autopoiesis is always already a *multi-species* affair. Donna Haraway convincingly argues, “Individuals and kinds at whatever scale of time and space are not autopoietic wholes; they are sticky dynamic openings and closures in finite, mortal, world-making, ontological play.”⁴²³ So the human-animal boundary

⁴²² See Jackson, “Animal” and Hantel, “Posthumanism, Landscapes of Memory, and the Materiality of AIDS in South Africa,” *WSQ* 40.1/2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 251-256.

⁴²³ Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008): 88. Haraway is actually critiquing autopoiesis writ large here. While I am sympathetic to the broad dismissal, I think Wynter’s much more capacious and dynamic sense of autopoiesis, when supplemented by this multi-species intervention, sufficiently answers Haraway’s critique. For

project, far from a naturally occurring bright line, must itself be politically produced at certain moments in time. As an opening and a closing, it means there is nothing self-evidently emancipatory about alliances with the natural world, merely that the way we imagine singularly *human* autopoiesis takes place through, with, and against non-human forces and entities that precede and exceed us. Again, autopoiesis is always already multi-species.⁴²⁴

Take bees, for instance, the “not us” Wynter uses to dislodge a biocentric descriptive statement of the human. How do bees enter different systems of opening and closing? How do they reciprocally affect different autopoietic processes that regenerate the overrepresentation of Man; or, on the other hand, do they sometimes enable and inhabit worlds becoming otherwise? Allow me a long detour into the life and death of bees. I have described New Orleans during and after Katrina as a site of racialized terror through the racializing effects of the War on Terror and as a site of liminal imaginaries of survival pointing the way to the human beyond Man. Bees take part profoundly in the provisional assemblage of various iterations of those ambivalent senses of urban space.

now, I merely take this concern as a point of departure to conceive Wynter’s humanism as a rethinking of political ecology. I will return to the specific stakes of Haraway’s sense of ontological play when I consider Glissant through Deleuze and Guattari. As chapter 1 argues, overrepresentation works precisely at the point of closure Haraway describes, such that “ontological play” is a perhaps too rosy description of how Man captures *ludens*. Wynter’s discussion of sport and play in note xxx is indicative of this tension.

⁴²⁴ I propose this extended discussion of multi-species autopoiesis to counteract the odd silence in readings of Wynter around the specific scientific concepts she chooses. When she proposes a “new science of the word,” she has a very specific sense of which aspects from experimental biology and physics to which we ought to marry poetic thought. Hence, I believe future work from within feminist science studies, which has debated autopoiesis for decades (amongst other models such as endosymbiosis) and is now embroiled in debates around quantum entanglement and diffraction, could contribute to extending Wynter’s humanist project. As it stands, however, studies of Wynter continually sideline her specific commitments in neurobiology and physics as secondary to the overall political thrust of her work, despite her clear stakes that, “if the biocentrists are right, then everything I’m saying is wrong.” (Wynter, “Unparalleled Catastrophe,” 17).

Food security represented one of the primary challenges caused by the neoliberal immiseration of New Orleans even before Katrina. Post-Katrina, the problem of “food deserts” became even more widespread, with whole swaths of the city lacking access to adequate nourishment. Various approaches to urban agriculture represent not only the creative response to this particular historical moment of inequality but also a reanimation of a long tradition of alternative food networks in New Orleans. Beekeeping serves a primary function in urban agriculture as both a natural pollinating mechanism and a source of revenue through packaging honey. The struggle for food justice invariably includes honeybees as necessary allies for the production and reproduction of successful crops in the largely abandoned areas that now serve as food sources for local communities, such as the Lower Ninth Ward. As David Young, the head of a string of local farms and orchards that work alongside residents in the Lower Ninth, put it, “People don’t always think that the flooding from Katrina also affected the birds and bees.”⁴²⁵

The backdrop to this specific triangulated relationship between bees as pollinators, humans, and agriculture is the global decline of bee populations grouped under the abstract label of colony collapse disorder (CCD). And while CCD has effected hives kept by beekeepers in unbelievable numbers—as many as a third of colonies disappeared in the last decade—wild bee populations are being pushed to extinction, most likely by devastating pesticides to which they have not adjusted as well as domesticated bees.⁴²⁶ The destruction of “native bees” is considered one particularly

⁴²⁵ Young quoted by Percanella in “Developing Food Security,” *The Guardian*. 4 March 2015. Accessed 1 April 2015. <<http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/mar/04/food-security-post-hurricane-katrina-new-orleans>>

⁴²⁶ Bryan Walsh, “Beepocalypse Redux,” *Time*. 7 May 2013. <<http://science.time.com/2013/05/07/beepocalypse-redux-honey-bees-are-still-dying-and-we>>

dangerous ecosystemic crisis, as Wynter might say, both for its effects on human food supplies and its overall potential for ruination of global plant growth.

Managed honey bee colonies supplement the work of natural wild pollinators, not the other way around. In a study of 41 different crop systems worldwide, honeybees only increased yield in 14 percent of the crops. Who did all the pollination? Native bees and other insects. A whole host of little blueberry bees, squash bees, and orchard bees co-evolved with many of our fruits and vegetables. It makes sense they would be good at pollination.⁴²⁷

Thus, it seems that imagining food justice in the midst of global environmental degradation requires a rather specific and local commitment to bee populations, not just instrumentally in the sense of producing and selling honey but actually reimagining a less economic relationship to other lives (human and otherwise). These kinds of fundamental interdependencies suggest radical alternatives to the pieza framework, for instance, as founding all self-other interactions on questions of extractive value. More concretely, it is a point of departure for reckoning with the ethics of agriculture and eating, a way of attuning the always already multiple self to the materially modes of incorporation that enable and partake in any “auto-institution” of humans becoming-otherwise.

Of course, the story does not end there with a utopian reminder of a generous nature as a site of originary ethics. To the contrary, this shifting to the “local” becomes itself a site of extractive value. As post-Katrina New Orleans tries to recover through the primary circuit of attracting (white) capital, the emphasis on food security becomes less about food *justice* and more about food trends. Consumer identities built around food,

still-dont-know-why/> 2013; Gwen Pearson, “You’re Worrying About the Wrong Bees,” *Wired*. 29 April 2015. <<http://www.wired.com/2015/04/youre-worrying-wrong-bees/>>

⁴²⁷ Pearson, “Wrong Bees,” Online.

such as “locavores,” offer “exclusive products and exclusive customers.”⁴²⁸ As food prices rise, not least of all in relation to the destruction of pollinators like bees, the exclusivity of eating practices recast as a kind of social capital connects perniciously to current socio-economic and racial stratification of nourishment.⁴²⁹

And what of the bees themselves? They have not remained unchanged throughout the centuries of intimate relationships with different human kinds. The multi-species ethnographer, Jake Kosek, argues that bees have been materially transformed in relation to humans needs, fears, and desires. This process has accelerated in the twentieth-century as bees become part of the apparatus of the military industrial complex, used in myriad ways to contribute directly or indirectly to the growth of the security state and its political technologies of surveillance, capture, and targeted killing.⁴³⁰ The logic of the War on Terror has drafted non-human participants into the very human paranoid structure

⁴²⁸ C. Clare Hinrichs, "Embeddedness and Local Food Systems: Notes on Two Types of Direct Agricultural Markets," *Journal of Rural Studies* 16 (2000):301; on gentrification in New Orleans in relation to these trends, see Campanella, "Gentrification and its Discontents: Notes from New Orleans," *New Geography*. 1 March 2013. Accessed 1 April 2015.
<<http://www.newgeography.com/content/003526-gentrification-and-its-discontents-notes-new-orleans>>

⁴²⁹ See Grossman, "Declining Bee Populations Pose: A Threat to Global Agriculture," *Environment* 360. 30 April 2013. Accessed 1 May 2015.
<http://e360.yale.edu/feature/declining_bee_populations_pose_a_threat_to_global_agriculture/2645/>

⁴³⁰ Jake Kosek, "Ecologies of Empire: On the New Uses of the Honeybee," *Cultural Anthropology* 25.4 (2010): 650-678. "Rather than being used simply as weapons of war, bees have become involved in the search for what is beyond the reach of human senses. The behavior and physiology of bees have become instrumental in extending the capacity of the human senses. Bees have become zoosensors (cf. Connor 2005). The deployment of bees, or what military scientists call "six-legged soldiers" (Lockwood 2008), has resulted in new and intimate relationships. Experts have inscribed economic and military designs into the honeybee's nervous system, migration patterns, and community relations. There is a new bee managerialism. The capacities of bees for detection and intelligence gathering have been harnessed. As Homeland Security states, they are "deploying bees as efficient and effective homeland security detective devices." (656)

indexed by the post-Katrina obsession with terrorism and even bio-warfare, where first responders sent anthrax kits instead of first aid.

Even more, the very cybernetics theories that Wynter relies on emerged in deep relation to the close study of bees along with other eusocial insects. Gregory Bateson, for instance, the originator of the concept of “descriptive statement” that is central to Wynter’s argument on auto-institution of genre, was a key member of the Macy Conferences in cybernetics between 1946-1953. “The conferences synthesized much of the interest in research into animal worlds, affects, and technological systems.”⁴³¹ Parikka points out that cybernetics, while often discussed in terms of a human-machine interface, emerges in this moment through a discourse of experimental biology particularly centered on eusocial insects like ants and bees as creative, natural technics to solve social problems.⁴³² Bateson sought out the kind of holistic theory of patterns that Wynter takes up in response to the inextricable intertwining of the world that I am here calling multi-species autopoiesis. He famously asked, “What is the pattern that connects? What pattern connects the crab to the lobster and the orchid to the primrose and all four of them to me? And me to you? What is the pattern that connects all living creatures?”⁴³³ Thus, descriptive statements of the human are always inextricably intertwined with non-humans. Any human genre, and by extension genre studies, is not just a political question but a challenge of political ecology.

To be clear, my argument is not simply causal in the sense that bees are the source of human autopoiesis or somehow sufficient. Rather, it recasts how we translate between

⁴³¹ Jussi Parikka, *Insect Media: An Archaeology of Animals and Technology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010): 121.

⁴³² See especially chapter 5, “Animal Ensembles, Robotic Affects: Bees, Milieus, and Individuation.”

⁴³³ Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, 6-8.

projects of ontological description and ethico-political commitments. Just as I told the stories of bees, flying in and out of and above and below the closings and openings of human narrativization, one could tell the story of New Orleans through the more-than-human travels of oysters⁴³⁴ or the epidemiology of differential immunity and mosquitos⁴³⁵ or even more holistically as a contingent story of stellar nucleogenesis,⁴³⁶ or as I do below, a story of fluvial dynamics. Grounding these narrative processes in a specific landscape full of non-human others where embodiment remains visceral forgoes the seeming self-evidence of redescription as emancipatory and forces us to take account the frames and boundary projects we inevitably take up. It renders “ontologism” more precise than as the processual movement between ontology and ethico-politics. Perhaps most importantly, it reveals how the overrepresentation of Man is itself a multi-species and ontologically open political technology—whether neoliberalism’s uptake of efficiency models from the world of cybernetics, bioprospecting and biotechnology in the reorganization of race and indigeneity, or the bees of the War on Terror—and so mapping the terrain of human and non-human relations is ultimately a tactical question as well,

⁴³⁴ Nancy Tuana, “Viscous Porosity; Witnessing Katrina,” in *Material Feminisms*, eds. Hekman and Alaimo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007): 188-213.

⁴³⁵ John McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). McNeill’s profound environmental history of the colonization of the Greater Caribbean is a beautiful rendering of my concern. He argues that the colonization of the Americas, particularly as it moved between Spanish and English control, along with the success or non-success of revolutionary wars like that in Haiti, comes down in large part to “differential immunity” to yellow fever and malaria. The lasting importance of the Las Casas debate, for instance, as a specific ontologism of Spanish empire has this ultimately material substrate then: “after the middle of the 17th century, it was almost impossible for large-scale European settlement schemes to succeed. It was virtually impossible for military expeditions to succeed if they didn’t complete their business within about four weeks. I’m arguing in this book that yellow fever and, to a lesser extent, malaria helped keep the Spanish Empire Spanish because [other European powers] who attempted military conquest of Spanish territory fell afoul of yellow fever particularly and, to a lesser degree, malaria.” The Haitian case is particularly salient where as many as 40,000 troops died due to yellow fever. (<http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/6.3/mcneill.html>)

⁴³⁶ Protevi, “Katrina.”

one we ought not cede to the military-industrial complex or global corporate agriculture.⁴³⁷

How might one reconcile this insistence on multi-species autopoiesis with Wynter's rejection of biocentrism, encapsulated by Fanon's clear declaration: "I grasp my narcissism with both hands and I turn my back on the degradation of those who would make man a mere mechanism,"⁴³⁸ which Wynter paraphrases as, "the human is not a mere [biological] mechanism."⁴³⁹ This statement is not a rejection of all biological continuity between humans and non-human animals or environments, but instead an insistence on simultaneous continuity and discontinuity not reducible to physicalism (or really any determinism). Multi-species autopoiesis as I have described it insists on an ontologically indeterminate embodiment of the virtual neither predictable in advance nor circumscribed by human fantasies of sovereign control. The latter is particularly important to note because the biocentric description is not just a neutral scientific edifice, but the cleaving of Darwin with Malthus, the naturalization of the ontologism of homo economicus. And so, the argument against biocentrism phrased in terms of narcissism need not be an argument for hierarchy, but can be an argument for the irreducibility of the human to putatively "natural" mechanism. Multi-species arrangements do not erase the borders between different genres of the human much less different species. Instead, it

⁴³⁷ I would add that working in this vein also carries the risk of one's descriptive projects being translated into political technologies of domination. Eyal Weizman's now famous work on the Israeli Defense Force's use of Deleuze and Guattari comes to mind. "Walking Through Walls." <<http://eipcp.net/transversal/0507/weizman/en>>

⁴³⁸ Fanon, *BSWM*, 23.

⁴³⁹ Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 23; as it reads in the original, "A tout prendre, je saisis mon narcissisme a pleines mains et je repousse l'abjection de ceux qui veluent faire de l'homme une mecanique."

defends abyssal difference as the beginning of ethical engagement, an acknowledgement of both co-constitution and undeniable opacity.

Fanon's narcissism is about grasping an "I" as an open, relational totality at multi-scalar level of the body. That is, rejecting that his only destiny is "the white." It is not the narcissism of anthropocentrism or instrumentalization of the nonhuman world, two integral dictates of the overrepresentation of Man². Perhaps unexpectedly, then, to fulfill Fanon's mission we must make sociogenesis a more capacious category where narrative language, or *mythoi* for Wynter, is a crucial aspect of human autopoiesis but does not exhaust its potential mechanisms.

Take, for instance, this scene from the Central African Republic, where forest elephants have been slaughtered by the hundreds and harvested, even while still alive, for their ivory:

Turkalo had been wondering how elephants, with their highly developed emotional intelligence, coped with the poaching. One day, she told me, an emaciated calf collapsed and died in the bai. In a kind of funeral procession, a hundred elephants trooped by her body, many of them touching her with their trunks. One of them...put the calf's leg in her mouth and repeatedly tried to yank her up.⁴⁴⁰

If sociogenesis occurs at the level of master codes of life and death, it should be clear here that the elephants are experiencing, perceiving, and thinking through the thresholds of what they consider life in their community, responding to changing conditions not through genetic preprescription but through cognitive processes we cannot fully apprehend. From the perspective of abyssal difference, we cannot claim to know what this *means* for the elephants, or claim to speak for them unproblematically; however, just as we find ways to articulate a cross-genre sense of being human, we must find ways to

⁴⁴⁰ Peter Canby, "Elephant Watch," *New Yorker*, 11 May 2015: 40-41.

do justice to these cross-species struggles through and against the overrepresentation of Man.

Barbara Noske argues that these scenes of mass violence can mark elephants intergenerationally, suggesting the transmission of not only trauma but modes of relation between elephants and human others.⁴⁴¹ She recalls a 1919 massacre of elephants in Addo, a park in South Africa, that unsuccessfully attempted to annihilate 140 members of a herd. Somewhere between sixteen and thirty of the elephants survived. The resulting herd, up to four generations removed from that event, exhibit profound fear of humans and uncommon aggression toward their presence, suggesting that they have “transmitted information about our species” between the generations.⁴⁴²

The argument is not to simply generalize sociogenesis as a model for all living creatures, flattening them out through degrees of cognition. Instead, it is to take account for how human sociogenesis, particularly as it produces the overrepresentation of Man through a caesura between the sociohuman and the environmental, claims to know in advance what counts as a consciousness holding ethical weight. Rendered formally, it becomes an ontologism that prefigures ontology to close off ethico-political possibility.

As Haraway elegantly puts it,

Ways of living and dying matter: Which historically situated practices of multispecies living and dying should flourish? There is no outside from which to answer that mandatory question; we must give the best answers we come to know how to articulate, and take action, without the god trick of self-certainty.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Thanks to Stephen Seely for bringing this work to my attention; he cites Noske in his unpublished work, “Differential Individuations: The Tehcno-Poetics of Racial and Sexual Difference.”

⁴⁴² Barbara Noske, *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals* (Vancouver: Blackrose Books, 1997): 111-112.

⁴⁴³ Harway, *When Species Meet*, 88.

It is to this challenge I now turn, arguing that one can only answer Haraway's question in terms of specific sites of violence and memory. While I have covered the relationship between humans and non-human animals above as central to effective sociogenetic analysis of autopoiesis, it is necessary to embed that discussion in a dynamic understanding of the geographical, or more specifically, the geological. This section opened with the question of how the seemingly parallel series in Wynter's work, the sociohuman and the environmental, might be found in intimate contact. Put differently, how does imagination and affect travel through and along bodies (organic and inorganic). As Wynter argues, "geography also becomes part of the study of our planet's overall self-organizing environmental-ecological system."⁴⁴⁴ To take Haraway and Wynter together on geographies of living and dying, I turn to Glissant now in his encounter with the work of Deleuze and Guattari as a geophilosophical practice of landscape. A humanism made to the measure of the world represents a line of flight to an outside beyond the overrepresentation of man, but such a humanism can only be conceived inside *this* world. How to measure it and ourselves? Rhizomatic thinking is one approach to a political ecology of liminal subjects.

II. Rhizome as Political Ecology: Moving through Landscapes of Memory

Because the rhizome has in many ways become Deleuzian kitsch—suffering from the overexposure of unrigorous deployment and left to stand in for any glib allusion to Deleuze and Guattari's work or any nod to decentralization, fragmentation, and flux—I address the concept laterally by focusing on its appearance in Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of "holey space" in the "Treatise on Nomadology." This juxtaposition of

⁴⁴⁴ Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 17.

Glissant and Deleuze and Guattari helpfully shifts the tenor of their respective works, emphasizing the materiality of Glissant's poetics and the incorporeality of Deleuze and Guattari's radical empiricism.

Glissant foregrounds the Deleuzo-Guattarian "rhizome" as the conceptual scaffolding of his *Poetics of Relation*. He writes, "Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other."⁴⁴⁵ And yet, at first glance, this image of the rhizome and rhizomatic thinking seems utterly distant from Deleuze and Guattari's introductory plateau. Glissant emphasizes the fact that a rhizome is still a root-system, using the vocabulary of "identity" and the "Other" that seems curiously un-Deleuzian.

To illustrate how Glissant's rhizome is actually a careful rendering of Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy, this section ties together disparate strands of Deleuze and Guattari's work (along with Foucault's) that do not always directly mention the rhizome. Beginning with holey space, this section then moves through the process of subjectivization articulated in Deleuze's book on Foucault, and finally considers the Foucaultian idea of "heterotopia" to lay the groundwork for a brief discussion of key themes in *Poetics of Relation*: errantry and opacity.

In brief, the central argument of this section is two-fold: first, the rhizome is most productively thought as "holey space," or the landscape created by an itinerant artisan who follows the movement of matter-flow to create concrete assemblages suffused with incorporeal affects; and second, figured as holey space, the rhizome grows unpredictably in the "non-place" between content and expression, a mode of subjectivization and agency complicated by the errant ship in Glissant's work.

⁴⁴⁵ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11.

Errantry and opacity chart one future for a specifically Caribbean genre studies which might avoid the disciplinary pitfalls that tend to naturalize ethnocentric and national forms of knowledge and domination. It is a diagonal but rooted movement that establishes an ethics of encounter and translation without a need for foundational crutches like self-contained subjectivity, sovereign agency, or control of nature's chaos. Thus, I try to substantiate Wynter's own geographical invocation of Glissant as challenging the overrepresentation of Man through a "reclaiming of the specificity of the history [and] landscape" of the Caribbean.⁴⁴⁶ This chapter pushes off by working along the seams of disciplinarity with an eye towards the possibility of a different world, like a ship caught between a monumentalized past, a subjugated present, and an uncertain future.

a. Holey Space

Holey space appears alongside "smooth" and "striated" space in the "Treatise on Nomadology," as Deleuze and Guattari's prescient warning about the tendency to read those two categories as self-evidently emancipatory or repressive. While the state apparatus perhaps worked initially primarily in the mode of striating space, the neoliberal war machine that reigns today has just as much interest in smooth space, in terms of swarming militarism, the global gaze of surveillance technology, and frictionless capital flows. Holey space, as a substance of content, compels theorists to consider the ways in which specific assemblages negotiate the *mixture* of smooth and striated space that characterizes any power formation. In light of that, the following discussion proliferates numerous, disparate examples of holey space at work to try to illustrate Deleuze and Guattari's abstract argument in concrete terms.

⁴⁴⁶ Wynter, "Beyond the Word of Man," 645.

Whereas smooth and striated space are substances of expression, holey space is rather literally about the intermediate and ambivalent subsoil in and through which apparatuses of capture struggle with nomadic assemblages. “Transpierce the mountains instead of scaling them, excavate the land instead of striating it, bore holes in space instead of keeping it smooth, turn the earth into swiss cheese.”⁴⁴⁷ That is not to say that holey space is an already existing place; it is created by “itinerant smiths” who tap into matter-flows to either frustrate the workings of oppressive power or, inversely, to recode deterritorialized elements. This last point is crucial, that holey space interacts with nomads, sedentary people, and the state without ever ossifying: “Holey space communicates with smooth space and striated space . . . It is always in connection with nomad space, whereas it conjugates with sedentary space.”⁴⁴⁸ The ambivalent nature of holey space turns on the distinction between connection and conjugation: connections imply an intensification of different deterritorializing flows that reciprocally accelerate; conjugation, on the other hand, “indicates their relative stoppage” because the flows are brought under the control of a single code, akin to Wynter’s concept of overrepresentation⁴⁴⁹

To contextualize how the rhizome fits in this model, then, it is necessary to unpack three key concepts from the cursory explanation given above: first, what is meant by matter-flow; secondly, how matter-flow is a substance of content; and finally, the function of the itinerant smith.

⁴⁴⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987): 413.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid, 415.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, 220.

Matter-flow, for Deleuze and Guattari, is a corporeal category defined by the coupling of *events-affects*. Events refer to the transformations and deformations that come when flows reach thresholds of phase transition and change states; affects refer to the intensive qualities that inhere in each state, defining the capacities and differential relations of a discursive-bio-chemical assemblage at a particular moment in space-time.⁴⁵⁰ This definition appears in their chapter on the war machine, so the most helpful examples come from a discussion of the nomad and weapons. Take the saber, for instance: it is built first through the actualization of material singularities such as “the melting of iron at high temperature...the successive decarbonations.”⁴⁵¹ For these singularities or “spatiotemporal haecceities” there correspond affective qualities of the saber such as “hardness, sharpness, and finish...[and] the undulations or designs traced by the crystallization.”⁴⁵² Any technology or material invention can be analyzed in this way, in terms of *events-affects*, that traces the literal movements of bio-chemical particles and molecules and with it the expressive qualities that are provisionally actualized.

The preceding paragraph rests on a difference in kind, however, between content and expression that also defines the distinction between holey space and smooth or striated space. While both content and expression here are introduced as aspects of matter-flow’s corporeality, the primary distinction between these two concepts is that expression is not reducible to corporeality even if it is an attribute of bodies. “If in a social field we distinguish the set of corporeal modifications and the set of incorporeal transformations, we are presented, despite the variety in each of the sets, with two

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid, 407; this definition of affect is consistent with the one given through Massumi in chapter 1. It situates the primarily temporal category of the virtual borrowed from Bergson, however, within material assemblages. Again, this move represents a complement to the earlier reading.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid, 406.

⁴⁵² Ibid, 406.

formalizations, one of *content*, the other of *expression*.”⁴⁵³ What is unique about matter-flow, then, for Deleuze and Guattari, is that it implies not only the constant flux of biochemical particles, but also the conveyance of traits of expression—and taken together, one can understand why matter-flow is “natural or artificial, and both simultaneously.”⁴⁵⁴

Given the concerns of the “Treatise on Nomadology,” examples from the military realm are often easiest to grasp in considering this interpenetration between a social field and the natural world. A contemporary example is the ongoing war in Afghanistan. The virtual properties of the Afghani terrain differentially actualize alongside the various military technologies of the American war machine such that we can point to the ways in which the Afghani landscape is imbricated with the evolution of US militarism. The landscape is not merely a series of mountains and villages, but simultaneously a virtual set of military targets and a challenge for military planners. To analyze that relationship requires the theorist to follow a diagonal line through two inextricably linked series, the social history of militarism in Afghanistan and the current topography of its nature, instead of simply overlaying one field on the other.⁴⁵⁵

We are still not quite at holey space, however, because it is not simply matter-flow. It is always “matter in movement”, conveying singularities and traits of expression, so “matter-flow can only be *followed*.”⁴⁵⁶ Artisans, like the sword-maker who would craft

⁴⁵³ Ibid, 85.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, 409.

⁴⁵⁵ Consider, for instance, the battle of Takur Ghar, a deadly rescue mission in 2002 still considered one of the most difficult and ultimately disastrous tactical moments in the early war in Afghanistan; recent research suggests that, along with communication problems caused by the mountains topography, American forces fell victim to plasma bubbles in the ionosphere that distort radio waves. (Shultz, “Space Bubbles,” <http://news.sciencemag.org/earth/2014/09/space-bubbles-may-have-led-deadly-battle-afghanistan>) The nature-culture interface becomes an active component of war-making and a target of war.

⁴⁵⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 409.

the saber in the earlier example by working its material make-up through different phase transitions, are the archetypal followers of these flows. Deleuze and Guattari call them *itinerants* for this mode of movement: “it is intuition in action.”⁴⁵⁷

The itinerant smith, the ambulant metallurgist. These figures introduce not only a mode of relation to the physical properties of the earth but also a complex mode of agency apparently distinct from the nomad or the sedentary. They form an assemblage with the machinic phylum of matter-flow to invent new affects—metallic-affects. They follow the contingent history of water, air, minerals and metals to bore holes through the earth and create dynamic possibilities of inhabitation and movement that existed virtually in the earth’s capacity. The assemblage of the itinerant smith and the machinic phylum is the substance of content that, in connecting with smooth space or conjugating with sedentary space, exhibits different forms of *expression*: the nomad war machine or the state apparatus of capture. The battles between drug cartels and the US American and Mexican governments over the shifting sands and subterranean tunnels along the border are one example of how the machinic phylum may produce differential assemblages.⁴⁵⁸

The state apparatus is propelled by the overcoded coordinates of a particular ordering—either the creation and maintenance of closed boundary projects or, more recently, the reterritorialization of matter-flow in the name of market logic. The essence of the nomad, on the other hand, is to “occupy and hold a smooth space,” the provisional and positive territorialization of an unstable multiplicity always on the threshold of following a line of flight to the outside. Smooth and striated space are both

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid, 409

⁴⁵⁸ Joseph Serna, “The Ins and Outs of U.S. Mexico Border Tunnels,” *LA Times*. 1 May 2015. Accessed 1 May 2015. <<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-border-tunnels-20150501-htmlstory.html>>; Keith Woodward and John Paul Jones, “On the Border with Deleuze and Guattari,” in *B/ordering Space*, eds. Van Houtum et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005): 235-248.

territorializations, then, but are distinguished by the nature of their boundaries: unstable lines of flight or overcoded sedimentations, respectively. The nomad works to smooth space, a war machine encountering striated forces at every turn and becoming-war when necessary.

Glissant problematizes this nomadism as lacking rhizomatic roots:

[Circular nomadism's] function is to ensure the survival of the group by means of circularity... Contrast this with invading nomadism, that of the Huns, for example, or the Conquistadors, whose goal was to conquer lands by exterminating their occupants... an arrow-like nomadism... Neither in arrowlike nomadism nor in circular nomadism are roots valid.⁴⁵⁹

In other words, the agency of the nomad risks becoming as univocal as the state apparatus in its pursuit of smooth space, which is precisely a non-movement. "The nomad is one who does not depart, does not want to depart, who clings to the smooth space left by the receding forest."⁴⁶⁰

For the purposes of enriching the conversation between Deleuze and Glissant, then, the itinerant smith is much more interesting because Glissant's oeuvre is so defined by a concern with the relationship between movement, memory, and traumatic but generative roots. He sums up this relation with the term *errantry*. The complex agency of the itinerant smith illuminates this possible connection, an agency encapsulated by Deleuze and Guattari's claim that they work "not by nature but by artistry and need."⁴⁶¹ The tense coupling of artistry and need introduces a mode of agency beyond, on the one hand, passivity in the face of contingent conditions or violence, and on the other hand, active (and often heroic) resistance or unimpeded self-styling. From the perspective of decolonial critics, a central concern then is to foreground the normative scenes of

⁴⁵⁹ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 12.

⁴⁶⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 381.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid*, 413.

violence experienced by people outside the global North (or those caught in the underside of the global North) while simultaneously bringing into relief creative survival tactics that precede systematization by theory.

Take, for example, slum dwellers caught in what Lauren Berlant calls, writing in a different context, the temporality of “crisis ordinariness”: they become bricoleurs, finding, assembling, reusing, recontextualizing, rebuilding constantly, in geometries still without vocabularies, with the cast aside waste and detritus of neoliberal capitalism. The slums grow and breathe—through the rogue taking of spaces or the recycling of materials to build livable space—according to the often violently creative balancing act between a population’s needs and the available resources in the area. From one day to the next, any number of additions might be added to a slum residence such that any centralized ‘structure’ becomes unrecognizable and the building or house at hand is different from day to day.⁴⁶² Beyond the academic forms of Deleuzean architecture that rarely result in

⁴⁶² Mike Davis, for instance, describes Cairo’s city of the dead where,

one million poor people use Mameluke tombs as prefabricated housing components. The huge graveyard, the burial site of generations of sultans and emirs, is a walled urban island surrounded by congested motorways...’The invaders,’ observes Jeffrey Nedoroscik...’have adapted the tombs in creative ways to meet the needs of the living. Cenotaphs and grave markers are used as desks, headboards, tables, and shelves. String is hung between gravestones to set laundry to dry. (Davis, *Planet of Slums*, 33).

Ahktar Chauhan outlines similar processes in a general survey of urban slums,

Often [slum-dwellers] use old and used...recycled materials...The minimum shelters of slum dwellers are not static houses. They grow as the needs of the resident increase with growth of the family, limited only the ability and resources...This is consistently reflected in the incremental growth of dwelling units, house-groups / rows and the slum community as a whole. (Chauhan, “Learning from Slums,” Online).

actual built-space, perhaps the slum architect can be thought as a practitioner of holey space, propelled by artistry and need.

To return to the grounding question of this section, the rhizome, what does it mean to say holey space becomes rhizomatic? In a case like slum architecture, for instance, a multiplicity relates to and redirects (without necessarily controlling) matter-flows in order to frustrate the state apparatus. In this case, Deleuze and Guattari argue that holey space is “a kind of rhizome with its gaps, detours, subterranean passages, stems, opening, traits, holes etc.”⁴⁶³

It is this particular rendering of the rhizome, holey space as rhizome, that interests me. Working in the tenor of creolization defined earlier, it is tempting to focus exclusively on the linguistic aspect of the rhizome as a form of expression with little attention to content as materiality.⁴⁶⁴ The holey space-rhizome expands this narrowing down of Glissant’s poetics to include flows of matter and energy as a vital part of the insistence on difference. Thus, it also pushes us past a narrow reading of Wynter’s concept of genre as solely narrative inscription. Taking seriously the two series that make up matter-flow—the conveyance of physical properties and traits of expression—

I do not propose this concept as an axiom for understanding all slums, regardless of time and place, but instead as a possible mode of engaging the built-space of certain slums. It is not an abstracted model, but a claim borne out by particular practices.

⁴⁶³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 415.

⁴⁶⁴ Sprouse, for instance, argues for a linguistic interpretation of Glissant’s rhizome: “Diversity is the realm of cross-cultural connection; the heterogenous and the rhizomatic; it is the acceptance of difference; and of orality” (Sprouse, “Chaos and Rhizome,” 83). And later he adds, in an odd formulation that reduces the rhizome to a flattened regime of signs, “The poetics of relating is a rhizomatic poetics, to the extent that it emphasizes connectivity and decentered identity, ... For in a rhizome, all connections are signifying and equally valued” (85); the next section’s discussion of Peter Hallward and Chris Bongie also points to theorists who find Glissant’s poetics inadequately materialist, in both a Marxist and general sense.

suggests a way of reading the rhizome as itinerant movement through holey space that *incorporates* the incorporeal aspects of Glissant's poetics into the materiality of place.

The rhizome as it is rendered here is precisely the movement in the space between these two series, then, and not reducible to either form of content or form of expression alone. Attentive readers of Deleuze will certainly note that these two series never converge, to be exact, but in fact actualize embodiment precisely in their intermediary disjuncture.

Between the visible and the articulable a gap or disjunction opens up, but this disjunction of forms is the place—or 'non-place,' as Foucault puts it—where the informal diagram is swallowed or becomes embodied instead in two different directions that are necessarily divergent and irriducible. The concrete assemblages are therefore opened up by a crack that determines how the abstract machine performs.⁴⁶⁵

The idea of non-place here is precisely the milieu of the rhizome, which is always *intermezzo* and so well represented by the idea of a contingent eruption in the crack between content and expression. In this way, I am arguing that Glissant's rendering of the rhizome helps us understand how the series of the sociohuman and the environmental, held in parallel by Wynter, can be found in intimate contact. The remainder of this section will examine the rhizome as it emerges in this "non-place"—and so turning to Foucault along with Deleuze—considering the figure of the slave ship in Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* as the point of embodiment where the folding of content and expression produce a decolonial subject.

b. The Errant Slave Ship

⁴⁶⁵ Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988): 38

Deleuze ends his book on Foucault with a striking image of the ship as a fold of the sea, “the boat as interior of the exterior.”⁴⁶⁶ The folded boat is Deleuze’s solution to two problems created by the parallel but untouching series of content and expression: first, the very possibility of their communication; second, the possibility of subjectivization within and between the cemented strata made up by these two series. Deleuze turns to the boat because it is a provisional shielding from the churning chaos of impersonal events outside it: “The informal outside is a battle, a turbulent, stormy zone where particular points and the relations of forces between these points are tossed about.”⁴⁶⁷ At the same time that it is a provisional closing off, however, the boat is also an open cartography of the fissure between different points or strata, allowing us to “immerse ourselves from stratum to stratum, from band to band; we follow the fissure in order to reach an interior of the world.”⁴⁶⁸ This movement between strata is always haunted by the unknown forces of the outside, the stormy chaos beyond that can only be weathered, never predicted or controlled.

The illusion is that an interiority fundamentally separate from the outside may protect us from such impersonal forces, if we could just find the *sui generis* kernel of subjectivity. A boat in a timeless and boundless vacuum. The idea that the boat is but a fold of the sea obviates this illusion because the point is that the inner-chamber of subjectivity is not an enclosed space after all—hence the fear it might turn out to be empty—but a temporary line drawn within the field of the outside that marks the virtual imprint of all substance in its unstable but bounded interior. “The most distant point becomes interior, by being converted into the nearest: life within the folds. This is the

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid, 122.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid, 121.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

central chamber, which one need no longer fear is empty since one fills it with oneself.”⁴⁶⁹ This is a moving but risky vision of subjectivization as a boat caught in an unexpected storm. The boat is a creative solution to the weather that details in its architecture the line between form and the chaos of the outside.

Deleuze’s idea of the boat as a folding that virtually embodies the most distant points in its open interiority indirectly invokes Foucault’s notion of heterotopia. Explicitly opposing his concept to that of utopia—an unreal or illusory place—Foucault looks to heterotopia, a real and lived space within actually existing society that is paradoxically also a non-place.

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places - places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society - which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality.⁴⁷⁰

Heteropias somehow touch every other space that constitutes a given society while “contesting” their coherence and their claim to originary status. They are representational and non-representational all at once, questioning the very possibility of representational practice as a mode of meaning making yet engaging such practices in an alienated manner. He famously adds: “The ship is the heterotopia par excellence.”⁴⁷¹ The ship is its own microcosmic space that exists temporarily in isolation, a society unto itself outside the direct moors of terrestrial life; at the same time, however, it indexes its point

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid, 123.

⁴⁷⁰ Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuite*. March 1967.
<<http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf>>: 4.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

of origin and its destination in its unconfined movement. The potential for ever more destinations, part of the “infinity of the sea,” makes the ship a crucial repository for imagining a life not our own, a world beyond ourselves. It is this tension that is most important for Foucault, where the ship reflects needs and wishes of the society that launched it while undermining in some way the continuity of that society’s narrative.

Foucault’s heterotopic ship romanticizes the sea narrative, even if he does briefly mention colonialism. Considering the ship as heterotopia in relation to Deleuze’s idea of the ship as fold of the sea, one is pushed to think about the actual ship itself. That is, the ship as its own site of subjectivization is abstracted for Foucault. Instead, the ship serves as a “reserve of the imagination” geographically dispersing the discursive formations of different civilizations.⁴⁷² The boat perhaps destabilizes the distant points it connects but itself remains uncritically examined. Deleuze confronts this heterotopia with the question of the singularly specific ship—that is, Foucault makes a mistake when he says “*the ship*” because there can only be *ships* that trace the infinite foldings of the outside and negotiate the fissures between strata. This point is essential in turning finally to Glissant. He asks not simply how the boat indexes its origin and destination or how it virtually maps the storm it weathers. He certainly asks these questions, but above all wonders about the politics of subjectivization in the wake of the *slave ship*.

Glissant opens *Poetics of Relation* with a moving call to his readers to imagine the horrors of the middle passage as three interconnected abysses: the slave ship, the ocean depths, and the alien land of the new world.

I return here to the first instantiation of the abyss discusses in chapter 3:

⁴⁷² Ibid.

[I]n your poetic vision, a boat has no belly a boat does not swallow up, does not devour; a boat is steered by open skies. Yet, the belly of this boat dissolves you, precipitates you into a *nonworld* from which you cry out. This boat is a womb, a womb abyss. It generates the clamor of your protests; it also produces all the coming unanimity. Although you are alone in this suffering, you share in the unknown with others whom you have yet to know. This boat is your womb, a matrix, and yet it expels you. This boat: pregnant with as many dead as living under sentence of death.⁴⁷³

Glissant's apt and paradoxical description of the slave ship as a womb abyss, pregnant with death, brings into relief many of the characteristics of the ship as heterotopia described by Foucault. Glissant calls them nonworlds, similar to Foucault's use of nonplaces, because these slave ships exist in the seams of Western civilization, outside of the carefully crafted narrative of Enlightenment rationality or humanist religion that supposedly girds the various trans-Atlantic empires, and yet constitutive of that narrative's condition of possibility.

Glissant also seems to invoke then problematize the open and veritably romantic vision of the ship to which Foucault attaches in his take on heterotopias. Foucault says, "the boat...has been...the greatest reserve of the imagination...In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up."⁴⁷⁴ Glissant concedes the figuring of the boat in the imagination as part of the larger adventure of the boundless sea and the infinite possibility of transformative travel, but insists that the slave ship inverts this potentiality in the darkness and claustrophobia of its hold. The imaginary figure of the ship makes all the more stark the terrifying reality of the middle passage.

With this death and suffering, however, there is the language of pregnancy and generation. Keeping in mind the preceding critique of birth metaphors for how they might

⁴⁷³ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 6. Emphasis Mine.

⁴⁷⁴ Foucault, "Of Other Places," 9. .

reify the masculine symbolic, I want to affirmatively read this entreaty in Spillers's terms as a claiming of an insurgent subject or Alexander's as a mode of remembering the ancestors. Victims of the slave trade are not only "dissolved" into the hold of the ship, but precipitated in a yet-unknown form; the ship "generates the clamor of [their] protests," producing, in other words, new modes of resistance and political grammars; initially solitary, new relationships and communities form in the crucible of shared suffering. Glissant walks a fine line here in his rendering of those subjected to slavery: he does not want to romanticize their suffering, on the one hand, but he also refuses a view of them as passive or inert victims waiting to die. His concept of the slave ship is in tension, then, with Foucault's notion of heterotopia, which sentimentalizes the ship's infinite possibility and so erases the complex forms of agency that arise for those subjected to the coercion of slavery and its haunted legacy.

Glissant proposes the term "errantry," briefly mentioned earlier, to think through these conditions of forced diaspora. From the French *errance*, errantry literally means roving movement. Glissant does not intend the term, however, to simply mean a free-floating movement through undefined space or a solipsistic peripateticism. And here we return to the rhizome. Glissant reminds his readers that the rhizome is still a root-system and so, while characterized by horizontal movement and decentered growth, it is still a generative network that anchors, perhaps only temporarily, a specific localization of matter and energy.

Errantry is rooted movement but still a "desire to go against *the* root," where "the root" refers to the imposition of a univocal (or monolingual) meaning on the self and the world. The history of the West is a history of fixing movement in terms of the static

model of the nation-state, a model adopted by decolonizing countries: “Most of the nations that gained freedom from colonization have tended to form around an idea of power—the totalitarian drive of the single, unique root.”⁴⁷⁵ Against this totalitarian root, Glissant proposes the root as multiplicity embodied in the relationship with the Other—not the drive to know the Other in a fully rational sense, but instead, in Deleuzo-Guattarian terms, an openness to affect and be affected by others. Like his tiptoeing act in the description of the slave ship, Glissant’s idea of errantry lies between a notion of fixed identity, rooted in an ancestral past (the movement back to Africa) and a purely fluid subjectivity that precludes communities of affinity and shared horizons of meaning.

So when Glissant refers to rhizomatic thinking as a relation in which “each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other,” it becomes clear that both the meaning of identity and the meaning of Other have shifted for him. First, identity is a particular demarcation in matter-flow, a provisional embodiment of extensive and intensive qualities. Glissant is concerned particularly with the latter category of incorporeal traits of expression that come from a legacy of forced diaspora; in other words, how subjects negotiate the haunting force of slavery and colonization as a memory formation that is not always present in the limited sense of visible.

As for the Other, Glissant aligns himself with Deleuze in the rejection of some central chamber of subjectivity that can be rationally known if only discovered. He uses the word “opacity” to describe the status of the Other in our confrontation with them. One has the choice to embrace the conditions of opacity as the basis for an ethical relationship, or to work tirelessly to overcome opacity through knowing the other,

⁴⁷⁵ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 14.

whether through violence or the accumulation of knowledge (or both).⁴⁷⁶ In setting out a research agenda for Caribbean philosophy that takes its cues from Glissant, the notion of opacity is instructive. Reworking Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts, Glissant provides a mode of engagement with past trauma that neither disavows totally the meaning of the historical fact of suffering nor identifies completely with the facticity of memory and an inability to move beyond the reality of that suffering. The rhizomatic embrace of errantry and opacity articulates new modes of subjectivization and collectivity both grounded and open, escaping the false choice between the totalitarian root and rootlessness.

In the penultimate paragraph of Deleuze and Guattari's introduction to the rhizome—a notably moving fragment marked by a sudden crescendo of political energy, the culmination of the plateau's philosophical detailing of the rhizome—Deleuze and Guattari write, “As they say about old man river:

He don't plant 'tatos
Don't plant cotton
Them that plans them is soon forgotten
But old man river he just keeps rollin' along.⁴⁷⁷

The lyrics come from the famous 1927 musical “Showboat” and its most recognizable song, “Ol' Man River,” made famous by Paul Robeson.

To say the rhizome parallels “old man river” in this song is to situate their concept in a specific time and place: the complex racial and class politics of post-bellum America as they were submerged in and floated upon the Mississippi river. Paul Robeson, the son of an escaped slave who became an international star until he was blacklisted for his

⁴⁷⁶ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 62.

⁴⁷⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 25.

radical politics, made the song famous with his soulful baritone voice that elicited the ethos of a Negro spiritual. The musical provoked a torrent of racialized debate, both between and within different racial communities who saw in the musical either a positive representation of black laborers or the rehashing of minstrel stereotypes. The very song that Deleuze and Guattari quote underwent a rewriting by Robeson, who vacillated on whether to sing “niggers work the Mississippi.”⁴⁷⁸ The song’s history alone conveys the fraught field into which Deleuze and Guattari ventured, perhaps inadvertently.

What happens to the image of the rhizome submerged or floated on a river?

The study of rivers is more generally called the study of fluvial processes. Fluvial dynamics work primarily through negative feedback loops which balance the energy of the stream’s movement with the sediment that fills it. “A stream is a sensitive dynamic system with the ability to adjust the form of its channel in a matter of hours in response to changes in inputs of energy and material. By scouring and filling, a stream adjusts the slope of its bed and the shape of its channel so that stream energy remains in balance with the work of sediment transport.”⁴⁷⁹ Scouring refers to the putting into motion of material in the stream bed, while filling is the coming-to-rest of those particles. In a rather Deleuzo-Guattarian fashion, then, rivers are assemblages of water and sediment connected by intensities of speed and slowness that tend towards an impossible equilibrium that finds itself constantly interrupted by contingent factors outside the fluvial system itself—whether the chaos of geological formations coming undone or societal waste from agricultural production.

⁴⁷⁸ Michael Kantor and Laurence Maslon, *Broadway: The American Musical* (New York: Bulfinch, 2004): 117.

⁴⁷⁹ Robert Muller and Theodore Oberlander, *Physical Geography Today: A Portrait of a Planet* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1984): 380.

The history of the Mississippi River helps us re-conceive of the preceding fluvial dynamics in “social and elemental” terms as John Protevi puts it in his discussion of Hurricane Katrina.⁴⁸⁰ Protevi uses the language of complexity theory to explain the history of the Mississippi and the emergence of Katrina based on hundreds of years of interplay between the physical properties of the region and the socio-cultural transformation of the city. The point is, above all, that these relays are reciprocal and so never the story of nature overwhelming culture or culture conquering nature. In terms of fluvial dynamics, for instance, the constant building up of artificial levies was needed to make permanent settlement possible. In preventing even natural flooding, however, the height of the river increases and with it an increase in the river’s potential energy that must be run-off intermittently. And, as Katrina made abundantly clear, sometimes these new dynamics create a cascade of effects that result in massive floods beyond the scope of available control efforts.⁴⁸¹ Needless to say, the displacement of the river’s built up potential energy has a history of uneven distribution: whether the purposeful flooding of black and immigrant neighborhoods in 1927 to pre-emptively avoid damage to the affluent sections of New Orleans or the scenes of an immobilized urban poor, primarily black, left behind in the wake of Katrina receiving nothing but military occupation.⁴⁸²

The dynamics of the river help us better understand such processes of racialization or the normalization of social violence, because it articulates the ways in which rhizomatics can ossify. Or, as Deleuze and Guattari put it in the sixth principle of the rhizome, “Does not a multiplicity have strata upon which unifications and

⁴⁸⁰ Protevi, “Katrina,” 165.

⁴⁸¹ Muller and Oberlander, *Physical Geography*, 404-405.

⁴⁸² On 1927 see John Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How it Changed America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

totalizations, massifications, mimetic mechanisms, signifying power takeovers, and subjective attributions take root?”⁴⁸³ The rhizome can be transformed into what Glissant calls totalitarian roots through this sedimentation of strata, which is precisely a fluvial process: “Strata are historical formations...As sedimentary beds they are made from things and words, from seeing and speaking, from the visible and the sayable, from bands of visibility and fields of readability...”⁴⁸⁴ The distribution of things and words is a process determined by relative speeds and slowness that ingrain formative patterns over time. The musical “Showboat” is a helpful example of a profound rhizomatic connection slowing down and settling into a new stratum cemented over time.⁴⁸⁵ The negro spiritual becomes white entertainment, presaging the transformation of Afro-Caribbean performance rituals into sites of tourist consumption and de-politicized, de-racialized sites of sentimental attachment.

III. Space, Translation, and the Political: On the Opacity of Caribbean Studies

“The intellectual journey,” Glissant reminds us, “is destined to have a geographical itinerary.”⁴⁸⁶ He insists relentlessly on a poetics of landscape, the idea that the imagination expresses itself through the materiality of place. The practice of translation helpfully encapsulates this relationship, intertwining the linguistic transition between languages with the spatial residue of its etymological meaning, to carry across. In that sense translation is both a particularly geographical act and a promise that one can move beyond determinate cartographies. It is no wonder then Glissant turned to

⁴⁸³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 13.

⁴⁸⁴ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 48.

⁴⁸⁵ On “Showboat,” see Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, chapter 2: “Pax Americana: The Case of Showboat.”

⁴⁸⁶ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 4.

translation in his later work while attempting to articulate a praxis and rhythm of a poetics of Relation, expressed through the specificity of a creolizing landscape yet not reducible to a bounded spatiality.

Some critics of Glissant periodize the rhizomatic work analyzed above as part of an apolitical turn—or worse, a creeping complicity—in Glissant’s thought, increasingly uninterested in the specific violence of globalization.⁴⁸⁷ This accusation tends to point to the relationship I have highlighted between Glissant and Deleuze and Guattari as evidence of his flight from Caribbean politics. The following traces the relationship between Glissant and Deleuze and Guattari in terms of the politics of translation to bring into relief important questions about the *political economy of scholarly influence* in the French Caribbean and the usefulness of translation itself as a model for cultural contact, particularly when theory travels within a colonial context.⁴⁸⁸ Tying together these three different but related threads—space, translation and the political—will further elucidate materialist philosophy at work in Glissant’s thought. Based primarily on the open rootedness of identity revealed in the intertwining of bodies, landscapes, and the imagination, this philosophy repositions the Caribbean as not only a physical place but also an affective force and an intellectual trajectory defining the rooted futures of decolonial genre studies. And the path to Glissant’s uniquely Caribbean materialism begins with nothing more than a small aside about a translator’s omission.

⁴⁸⁷ Chris Bongie, *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/Colonial Literature* (Liverpool (UK): Liverpool University Press, 2008; Peter Hallward, “Édouard Glissant between the Singular and the Specific,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 11.2 (1998): 441-464.

⁴⁸⁸ Per the last chapter, the definition of political economy I am using comes from my reading of Wynter and C.L.R. James: a regime of domination and the network of accumulation and exchange it makes possible. The orientation and relation between the former and the latter changes and shifts at different historical moments and so does not provide a standard blueprint so much as a way of reading specific economies of domination.

a. The Uneven Geography of a Missing Note

For Paul Gilroy, a moment of translation (or non-translation) encapsulates the problematic nature of the politics of purity in black nationalism. He fears the nation-state model has, despite the transnational tenor of many of its theorists, determined their horizon of meaning and stifled a more dynamic discussion of race and its many possible fractures (class, gender, sexuality, nationality) along with obfuscating the varied and global influences flowing through decolonial thought. Glissant is enlisted as a valuable example of how the embrace of heterogeneity and radical difference against origin myths can still maintain a political valence and extend an analytics of power. Unfortunately, Gilroy writes, Anglophone readers of Glissant may mistake him for another reductive nationalist with an eye for purity because of a failure of translation:

A small but telling example can be drawn from the case of Édouard Glissant, who has contributed so much to the emergence of a creole counter-discourse that can answer the alchemy of nationalisms. Discussion of these problems suffers when the translator excises Glissant's references to the work of Deleuze and Guattari from the English edition of his 1981 book *Le discours antillais*, presumably because to acknowledge this exchange would somehow violate the aura of Caribbean authenticity that is a desirable frame around the work.⁴⁸⁹

And indeed, J. Michael Dash, the translator of *Le discours antillais*, does omit "Note 1" from chapter thirty-five, in which Glissant briefly and elliptically considers the rhizomatic thought of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.⁴⁹⁰

Leaving aside for now the content of "Note 1," Gilroy appropriately points out how Glissant's work from its earliest inception openly interacts with a diverse geography

⁴⁸⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 31.

⁴⁹⁰ Édouard Glissant, *Le discours antillais* (Paris: Galimard, 1997), 336-340.

of thought beyond a narrow demarcation of authentically Caribbean identity. In her review of Gilroy's crucial work, however, Joan Dayan is skeptical about the political stakes of his intervention. Once again, Glissant finds himself molded into the tip of a political spear, but this time launched at the cultural diasporic thought of Gilroy. Dayan criticizes Gilroy for metaphorizing the middle passage into historical oblivion; she tries to illustrate that his fashionable lauding of transnational hybridity obfuscates the profound continuity between the slavery of the past and its ongoing legacy in "the drive of global capital and political terror."⁴⁹¹ Where Glissant allowed Gilroy to move beyond a politics of black purity, Glissant here serves to expose how Gilroy is really moving beyond politics altogether. "Although Gilroy mentions Glissant, in connection with 'modernity' and 'the emergence of a creole counter-discourse,' he omits any mention of Glissant's analyses of the dehumanizing gifts of emancipation, money, and modernity to the people of Martinique."⁴⁹² Citing the same passage in which Gilroy criticizes Dash's translation, Dayan points out how the former inverts the latter's failure to include European thinkers by privileging European thought in the romantic textualization of material suffering: "It should give readers pause that Gilroy's 'reconstructive' project mentions Mannoni but not Césaire, Lacan but not Fanon."⁴⁹³

I have no intention of adjudicating this disagreement. Instead, the tension between these plausible invocations of Glissant provides a grounded moment when the political stakes of geography and translation are made stark. This moment is a helpful

⁴⁹¹ Joan Dayan, "Paul Gilroy's Slaves, Ships, and Routes: The Middle Passage as Metaphor," *Research in African Literatures* 27.4 (1996): 10.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

point of departure to consider, finally, the content of “Note 1,” what it means for the increasing popularity of Glissant’s thought, and the uneven movements of theory.

First, a subtle but powerful geographical slippage marks the primary difference between Gilroy and Dayan’s deployment of Glissant. For Gilroy, Dash’s translation seeks a “Caribbean” authenticity when, in fact, Glissant’s ideas exist in the movement and exchange of the Black Atlantic. He sees *Le discours antillais* as a creole counter discourse triangulating Africa, Western Europe, and the Americas in a hopeful rearticulation of the cartography of the Middle Passage. Dayan, on the other hand, emphasizes Glissant’s description of the neocolonial dehumanization of the *Martinican* people. He is a profoundly rooted thinker for her, immersed in the specificity of the historical and ongoing violence experienced in Martinique. The political tension between Gilroy, Dash, and Dayan stems directly from their respective placement of Glissant’s work. In other words, spatial frames matter: Martinican, Caribbean or the transatlantic black diaspora?

Neil Smith helpfully describes such spatial frames as the construction of “scale: “The continual production and reproduction of scale expresses the social as much as geographical contest to establish boundaries between different places, locations, and sites of experience.”⁴⁹⁴ The invocation of particular scales, in other words, is not a neutral exercise because it not only undergirds relationships of power but also sets the terms for political contestation. Scale is always political then as it actively contours the range and limits of relations of domination and resistance as the preceding discussion evidences. There is nothing self-evidently emancipatory, however, about a particular scalar fix. Like

⁴⁹⁴ Neil Smith, “Contours of a Spatialized Politics: Homeless Vehicles and the Production of Geographical Scale,” *Social Text* 33 (1992): 64.

the power relationships that might be maintained or challenged, the production of scale is a strategic exercise. Smith wrote initially in a primarily Marxist vein, so he traced scalar transformations to fluctuations in capital flows where spatial production helped resolve the built-in crises of capitalism. “It is possible,” for example, “to see the scale of the nation-state as a territorial compromise between differing needs of the capitalist class.”⁴⁹⁵ As the nation-state becomes increasingly less efficacious, it is necessary to “jump scales” or move to another scale according to the need to institutionally reorganize or politically reframe. The move from the national to the transnational works, for instance, in reaction to crises brought on by capitalism’s increasing flexibility, from the creation of the European Union to the prevalence of free trade zones.⁴⁹⁶

Smith emphasizes that scale operates beyond political economy as well, also serving to place the construction of subjectivity and identity in the world because “scale demarcates the sites of social contest.”⁴⁹⁷ Those caught in political struggles make decisions about the boundaries of their struggle, spatially from the local to the global as well as in terms of who is included, and hold out the possibility of also “jumping scales” to disrupt the smooth functioning of power. In the case under consideration here, the political import of *Le discours antillais* depends on whether it is contextualized to Martinican politics first and foremost or if it is understood in terms of transatlantic cultural production. In the first case, the resulting emphasis is on Glissant’s theorization of local violence, lingering neocolonialism, and the need for a distinctly Martinican national consciousness. Gilroy argues Dash is trying to preserve a “Caribbean”

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Clare K. Reid and Matthew Sparke, “The Cultural Geography of Scale,” in Kay Anderson et al. eds., *Handbook of Cultural Geography* (London: Sage, 2003): 485-486.

⁴⁹⁷ Smith, “Contours of a Spatialized Politics,” 66.

authenticity in excluding Deleuze and Guattari from his translation. That is to say Dash, according to Gilroy, establishes a determinate relationship between place and politics such that only those voices grounded in the islands of the Caribbean Basin may legitimately articulate a vision of regional collectivity. And finally Gilroy favors the Black Atlantic frame, emphasizing Glissant as a purveyor of a diasporic cross-cultural poetics embodied in the chronotope of the ship “in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa and the Caribbean.”⁴⁹⁸

Smith analyzes how scalar fixes are boundary projects, necessarily reified social productions that require maintenance to prevent their fraying edges from becoming totally porous. If one pushes at the border of each of the preceding frames for *Le discours antillais*, each reveals itself as contingent and contested despite their seemingly natural self-evidence. The legacy of colonialism in Martinique, for instance, and the historical amnesia it breeds is lived very differently across the internal urban-rural divide as well as in relation to varying levels of intimacy with European culture, such as the figure of the “négropolitain” discussed by Frantz Fanon.⁴⁹⁹ Sexuality and a public code of proper masculinity, moreover, contribute decisively to what may count as a Martinican consciousness.⁵⁰⁰ The many fault-lines of the Caribbean frame attributed to Dash stem in part from variegated histories of colonialism: what makes the proximity of the Dutch Caribbean and the Hispanic Caribbean congeal into a coherent identity formation any denser than the cultural and linguistic ties between the latter and Latin America (a scalar

⁴⁹⁸ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 4.

⁴⁹⁹ See Richard Price, *The Convict and the Colonel: A Story of Colonialism and Resistance in the Caribbean* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans., Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008): 19-21.

⁵⁰⁰ See David A.B. Murray, *Opacity: Gender, Sexuality, Race and the ‘Problem’ of Identity in Martinique* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

fix unto itself)? Racialization continues to divide any regional collectivity as well, illustrated by the continuing salience of the specter of Haiti.⁵⁰¹ Finally, even Gilroy's broad notion of the "Black Atlantic" obscures the long history of trans-Pacific colonialism and the continuing legacy of historical connections between the Caribbean Sea and people from India, China and the Philippines. One could go on like this indefinitely because the complexity of the world always outstrips the frames we use to make it intelligible; the point, for now, is simply to show that space (and its representation) is not merely the inert or neutral stage upon which social relations play out but an active force in political struggles.

Thus, uncritically taking the implicit assumptions about scale around any socio-political question as given despatializes practices that, in reality, affect and are affected by material landscapes. In the case of translation, disarticulating the movement between languages from the geography of that movement produces a model only able to account for, in Glissant's words, "problems of equivalence": "When one translates an economic document from one language to another, it is a relation of equivalence, what to do to find tricks for expressing as closely as possible the meaning of the document... This is technical translation as an art of equivalence."⁵⁰² Gilroy seems to understand translation

⁵⁰¹ See Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Jorge Duany, "Racializing Ethnicity in the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean: A Comparison of Haitians in the Dominican Republic and Dominicans in Puerto Rico," in *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 1.2 (2006): 231-248.

⁵⁰² Édouard Glissant, interview by Luigia Pattano, "Traduire la relation des langues," *Trickster: Rivista Del Master in Studi Interculturali*, April 2010, May 15, 2012, http://www.trickster.lettere.unipd.it/doku.php?id=lingue_future:pattano_glissant_fr; my translation of original: "“Quand on traduit un document économique d'une langue à l'autre on a des relations d'équivalence, ce qui fait qu'on trouve des trucs pour exprimer à peu près, au plus près possible le premier document dans le deuxième ... C'est la traduction techniquement comprise comme un art d'équivalence.”"

narrowly as a process of linguistic equivalence insofar as he believes a capable translator ought to maintain the essential meaning of a text simply in a different language. The meaning of the text becomes the natural referent for a sign in a different sign system. What the preceding discussion of scale suggests, however, is that translation is not just a movement from one language to another: it is a geographical movement by way of language. Of course, this shift in emphasis represents a much different view of language as one material of interchange among many others, a view I will flesh out in the next section. Understood in this way, the itinerary of the missing “Note 1” takes on a different trajectory.

When the University of Virginia Press commissioned a translation of *Le Discours Antillais* in the late 1980s, Glissant did not enjoy the same level of fame in the Anglo-American academy he does today. Translating this 503-page tome, an expensive and time-consuming project, represented a risk for the press particularly given the highly specific nature of the work, which often focuses on the nitty-gritty of Martinican political economy. So the press asked for a book of “selected essays” that would not only provide a representative sample of Glissant’s work to a new audience but also that would prove most interesting or exciting for an English speaking audience outside the French Caribbean or France. Beyond the note on Deleuze and Guattari, various chapters do not appear in the translation such as Glissant’s close analysis of family structure in Martinique or his discussion of the radical Martinican student journal *Légitime Défense*

founded in Paris in 1932. In other words, the parts considered narrowly Martinican or overly idiosyncratic might not translate to the Anglo-American market.⁵⁰³

It is interesting here how translation works through and against scale, indexing the boundaries of different spatial formations at the same time it reveals the possibility of a movement beyond. Without dismissing Gilroy's complaint against Dash entirely, it seems that the former's referential view of translation practice is too simplistic to account for the way Glissant's work travelled to an American market. In the context of the late 1980s literary market, Dash's task certainly was not to preserve a "Caribbean authenticity" in his translation; indeed, his task was to create an intellectually honest but still marketable version of Caribbean thought. The translated version, to have any traction, would have to clearly articulate the sort of theoretical resources it provided outside the specificity of Martinican politics.

It is no secret that intellectuals from the global south, in comparison to their French and German contemporaries, often find themselves confined to a specific historical moment. They may be thinkers but they appear more like activists than philosophers, historical footnotes more than conceptual scaffolding in Western canon formation. Chela Sandoval approaches this "stubborn apartheid of theoretical domains" in search of the incredibly deep but obscured links between Western critical theory (particularly post-structuralism) and decolonial thought.⁵⁰⁴ Paragons of European thought, such as Roland Barthes, Frederic Jameson and Jacques Derrida, she argues, actually work along lines similarly laid out by third-world thinkers and women of color

⁵⁰³ This information comes from conversation with J. Michael Dash. To be clear, I do not mean to impugn either the University of Virginia Press or Dash's translation, but do see this anecdote as a helpful point of departure.

⁵⁰⁴ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 11.

feminists for understanding the fragmentation of the subject under contemporary capitalism and the political struggle to reassemble collective life. The conceptual recreation of power relations through an intellectual apartheid divided by race, class, colonialism and sexuality undermine these vast resources for ethical and political alliance. She describes, for instance, the deep affinities between institutionally sanctioned critical theory and the critical practices of marginalized populations excluded from the space of the university: “In attempting to repossess identity and culture, U.S. feminists of color during the 1960s and 1970s, U.S. punks during the early 1980s, peoples of color and queers during the 1990s developed survival skills into technologies for reorganizing peoples and their collective dreams for empowerment into images-turned-fact.”⁵⁰⁵ These survival skills should be understood as aspects of the same critical toolbox provided by thinkers like Foucault and Deleuze in the formation of an oppositional consciousness. Sandoval illustrates here how theorization at the temporal register of survival, the literal struggle for individual and community persistence occurring everyday, does not seem to count as legitimate theory or philosophy. Needless to say, this division of intellectual production reproduces social violence and leads to less effective scholarship. Sandoval exposes, moreover, how thinkers from the global south only receive recognition as more than “just” activists when approved (or perhaps cannibalized) by a Western thinker.

The conceptual work of these various groups and their asymmetrical relationship to the Western academy is part and parcel of the “international division of labor,” as Gayatri Spivak puts it. In the particular case here, the movement of concepts between France, Martinique, and Anglo-American universities, colonial cartographies also work

⁵⁰⁵ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 34.

to map out in advance the routes theory might travel and the origin points we ascribe to its journey. This latticework of colonialism, geography, and globalization forms the field in which one might trace what I call the political economy of scholarly influence, precisely the force that Dash's translation had to negotiate.

Translation-as-equivalence, or despatialized translation, obscures the many aspects of "Note 1" that make it a more complex event of meaning than just abstract fidelity to Glissant's original words. Translation occurs between geographical places understood at different scales: the spatial frame for understanding the original work, in this case the "Caribbean" broadly construed, and the spatial frame for the second language, in this case the American academic market. This means the politics of translation has no inherent promise. It can act to shore up the territoriality of certain power relations just as much as it may challenge them. Ignoring the centrality of the geopolitical to translation, however, tends to be complicit in status quo division of intellectual labor described in the preceding paragraph.

Finally turning to the content of the omitted "Note 1" illustrates the uneven itinerary of theory. In that section Glissant suggests, by citing a passage from *L'intention poétique*, he has long considered the tree in the connected but irreducible play of the roots, the trunk and the flowering branches.⁵⁰⁶ The original passage reads, "When I say: tree, and when I think of the tree, I never feel the unique, the trunk, the mast of sap which, appended to others, will group together this stretch of forest cleaved by light....But here the tree is the surge, the Whole, the boiling density. Let me try clumsily to draw a tree: I will reach a span of vegetation, where only the sky of the page will put an end to

⁵⁰⁶ Glissant, *Le Discours Antillais*, 339n1.

the indeterminate growth. The unique loses itself in that whole."⁵⁰⁷ Long before Deleuze and Guattari famously distinguished arborescent from rhizomatic thought, Glissant was considering the internally differentiated tree in terms of a philosophy of the One versus the Multiple. Glissant is not being proprietary here by any means (he does not use the language of "first" or worry about who gets to monopolize botanical imagery); he is highlighting an incredible resonance between his thought and these two celebrated French thinkers.

In light of these decades of philosophical affinity including years of friendship between Glissant and Guattari, perhaps Gilroy hoped the faithful translation of an English equivalent to Glissant's discussion of the rhizome would yield a deeper dialogue between French and Caribbean philosophy and a recognition of the bidirectional nature of their exchange. While that conversation happens in fits and starts, the evidence points to a more asymmetrical absorption of Glissant into the Deleuzo-Guattarian fold. Take for instance the authoritative biography on Deleuze and Guattari published by Columbia University Press (originally published in France in 2007) entitled *Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*. In a section on their legacy, Dosse ties together the ascendancy of Deleuze's attraction to nomads in the American academy alongside Glissant's increasing popularity within the ambit of post-colonial literary studies:

Ultimately, Deleuze explores a place that is neither America nor Europe but the territories of hybrid heterogeneity, of linguistic and cultural mixtures. The work of Édouard Glissant, a friend of Deleuze and Guattari, is *a good example* of this hybridity. A writer of mixed Afro-American and French culture born in 1928 in Sainte-Marie, Martinique, Glissant studied philosophy and later ethnology at the Sorbonne; he won the Renaudot Prize in 1958 for his first novel, *La Lezarde*. . . Édouard

⁵⁰⁷ Édouard Glissant, *Poetic Intention*, trans. by Nathalie Stephens with Anne Malena, (Calicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2000), 41.

Glissant was deeply influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, as their positions bespoke a philosophy that integrated orality. In a concept like the rhizome, Glissant saw “a system of intrusion into identity” recalling a composite identity that he knew so well in the Caribbean.⁵⁰⁸

Intellectually speaking, Glissant was indeed influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, a debt he never denied. But Dosse makes two claims in this excerpt that illustrate how theory travels along imperial routes, such that translation in the Caribbean must be pushed beyond a narrow linguistic rendering. First, Glissant’s work and identity become an example of a Deleuzo-Guattarian concept. One is reminded of Fanon’s plea to Sartre to stop intellectualizing the lived experience of the black man.⁵⁰⁹ Despite initially foregrounding Glissant’s work in this comparison, Dosse is clearly more interested in how the excess embodiment of a hybrid culture and composite identity provides the raw material for a refined philosophical idea. The historical context of “hybridity” or any qualitative notion of the nature of the relationship it might describe is evacuated. And secondly, the concept of the rhizome enters the system described by Sandoval where *mere* modes of survival await articulation from an outside authority. Mirroring the colonial relationship between France and Martinique, Glissant becomes part of the passive landscape of the “Caribbean-he-knew-so-well,” onto which the rhizome is overlaid. In this model, he simply imports the unchanged concept from France to Martinique.

b. Rhizomes from Translation to a Spiral Retelling

⁵⁰⁸ Francois Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, trans., Deborah Glassman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010): 437-438; emphasis mine.

⁵⁰⁹ Fanon, *BSWM*, 134.

Beyond enabling Dosse's less than flattering compliment, the geopolitics of translation-as-equivalence forms in part the foundation for arguments lamenting late-Glissant's apolitical turn. Peter Hallward's scathing criticism has become the standard-bearer for this periodization. He relies, however, on the same claim as Dosse about the unidirectional influence between Deleuze and Guattari and Glissant:

Against the dialectical historicism of *Le discours antillais*, *Poétique de la relation*, like the *Tout-Monde* which it anticipates, is a profoundly Deleuzian text. Once again, all reality exists at the same level...Reliance on Deleuze is explicit: 'Rhizome-thought will be the principle of what I call a poetics of Relation, according to which every identity spreads in a relation with the Other.' Do not be fooled by the relational vocabulary: like Deleuze, Glissant has little time for the specific as such, for active differences...Through this version of Relation, the singular replaces the specific.⁵¹⁰

The bright-line, quite simply, between the early Glissant of *Le discours Antillais* and the late Glissant of *Poétique de la relation* is the explicit rhetoric of the rhizome as a principle of Relation. Glissant finds himself a convenient oppositional avatar, drafted into Hallward's ideological battle against the popularity of chic Deleuzeanism. In the following, I want to complicate the straightforward equivalence between Deleuze and Glissant that renders the latter a sort of Caribbean knock-off by examining how the rhizome functions in the case of translation politics.

Glissant only directly addressed translation in a few places. As we have already seen, he did not believe translation could be limited to the technical question of problems of equivalence. He privileged a different sense of translation, however, as an ideal site for the experience of Relation. In a packed two-pages of *Introduction à une poétique du divers*, given almost as an aside, Glissant extols "What I consider the most important art

⁵¹⁰ Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 120.

of the future: translation.”⁵¹¹ The art of translation, he goes on to say, is Creolization at work, the unpredictability of Relation. But what exactly does he mean by translation?

In a follow-up interview based exclusively on this short aside, Glissant steadfastly refuses to provide a prescriptive answer. Proposing a comprehensive checklist or a set of rules, he argues, regresses to a view of translation as equivalence. He reiterates the cryptic idea from his 1995 lecture that translation constitutes an art of the future because it gives us, “A real conception of what passes in that moment between two languages, of course, but between two languages in the presence of other languages.”⁵¹² The material practice of linguistic translation, moving a text in one language to another language, is ensconced here in a much broader theory of language that, for Glissant, indexes the totality of global Relation. In other words, the way two languages interpenetrate in a specific act of translation actualizes the network of unpredictable ties that every single language has to every other language in cultural, geographic and affective terms. At its best, translation is Relation.

Glissant returns us to the resonance of “Note 1” when he suggests the first step in moving towards this view of translation is shifting our understanding of language: “One begins to understand that the being of a language is a rhizome.”⁵¹³ The previous section detailed this transformed sense of the rhizome taken up by Glissant. Translation understood as an embodied and material practice, in which more is at stake than linguistic

⁵¹¹ Édouard Glissant, *Introduction à une poétique du divers* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 45; my translation of original, ““Ce que je considère comme un des arts futurs les plus importants : l’art de la traduction.”

⁵¹² Glissant, “Traduire les relations des langues,” Online; my translation of original, “Une conception réelle de ce qui se passe à ce moment-là entre deux langues, bien sûr, mais entre deux langues en présence des autres langues”

⁵¹³ Ibid; my translation of original, “On commence à comprendre que l’être d’une langue est un rhizome.”

fidelity, is one mode by which the self and the other can reciprocally transform—that is reject the Oneness of the totalitarian root—without entirely giving up their rhizomatic rootedness in the landscape. Glissant’s rhizomatic translation, moreover, questions the hegemony of scale in the thought of the political.

Hallward criticizes *Poétique de la relation* for its seamless uptake of Deleuze’s nomadic smooth space; his primary problem with this shift seems to be the way the rhizome has replaced the nation as the operative frame for collective existence. “In short, if Glissant’s early texts narrate the constitution of the nation, the later texts revel in its dissolution.”⁵¹⁴ The very word “Martinique,” according to Hallward begins to fall out from Glissant’s later work. Hallward isolates the last chapter of *Poétique de la relation* for instance, “The Burning Beach,” as illustrative of Glissant’s flight from a national politics and embrace of chaos for its own sake.⁵¹⁵

While “The Burning Beach” does not utilize the word Martinique, it foregrounds the intimacy between Glissant and his landscape. A scene takes place in which the author follows a man wandering the beach in Martinique in clear proximity to the volcanic rumblings of Mont Pelée. He finds himself fascinated by how this man’s seemingly aimless walk “sends rhizomes into the earth,” which become not only a profound mode of connection with this specific environment but also trace unpredictable relations beyond the boundaries of this place and time.⁵¹⁶

This version of the rhizome, different forces connecting through the material flows of Antillean soil, is a far cry from the type of Deleuzianism attributed to Glissant by Hallward, the kind in which “rhizome” has become an all too unrigorous way of

⁵¹⁴ Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial*, 119.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 207.

denoting nothing but flux or decentralization. Glissant is precisely dismissing the romantic celebration of nomadic smooth space when it manifests as an exuberant celebration of change and mutation for their own sake. “Antillean soil could not become a territory,” Glissant writes elsewhere, “but rather a rhizomed land.”⁵¹⁷ Shifting from the national dialectics of territory to the rhizomed land engenders a different mode of organizing politics that attempts to cut diagonally through the trap of, on the one hand, the determinate legacy of the past, and on the other, a completely unmoored future. The man exhibits an ambiguous agency at work in his wandering that is not “political” in the sense of immediately articulating resistance vis-à-vis a national project, but it leads Glissant to try to think the politics of Martinique through the idea of an affective landscape that no longer relies on spatial frames to determine the horizon of Caribbean politics.

Watching this anonymous man, Glissant has to resist the desire to know him and his intentions fully. All he can know, however, is “in the end that his traveling, which is not nomadism, is also not rambling. It traces repeated figures here on earth.”⁵¹⁸ The man’s movement presents one point of entry into a relationship with the environment of the burning beach, such that the chapter ends up tracing his ambiguous footsteps into the fullness of Martinican, and global, political ecology. It is precisely the opacity, the unresolved ambiguity, of this other that leads to an embodied and interpenetrated relationship between the material landscape and extended subjectivity.

In letting the shadow of this wondering man haunt him, Glissant traces new and unexpected paths along the beaches and hillsides of Martinique. He was resisting, in a

⁵¹⁷ Ibid, 146.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid, 208.

sense, the comfort of intelligibility that can be brought on by the imposition of scale.

Glissant describes the larger attempt to banish opacity in the name of transparency in just these terms: “In order to understand and thus accept you, I have to measure your solidity with the ideal scale providing me with grounds to make comparisons and, perhaps, judgments. I have to reduce.”⁵¹⁹ The identity of the other must be disarticulated into its component parts and, for the sake of collectivity, an ideal encapsulation of a subject is reified as the price of entry. The nation, most obviously, is one such reification. The politics of reduction to scale has little interest for Glissant because it does not create anything anew, it does not harness the kernel of unpredictability through which a revolutionary consciousness becomes possible. Thus, he makes the difficult suggestion, “perhaps we need to bring an end to the very notion of a scale. Displace all reduction.”⁵²⁰

As explained earlier, the model of translation as equivalence is founded upon the double reduction of the two languages it abstractly relates. To explain the possibility of a more radical poetics of translation, Glissant returns to the full richness of the senses: “Translations will become an important aspect of poetics...and I think of all this infinite variance of the nuance of possible poetics where each language will be more and more penetrated by this fragrance, this bursting of the poetics of the world. It will be a new sensitivity.”⁵²¹ New possibilities of sensation are not born *sui generis*, but from an open rootedness in a landscape. And while the ambiguity of this affective turn in his work perhaps frustrates those more directly seeking out resources for a conventionally national

⁵¹⁹ Ibid, 190.

⁵²⁰ Ibid, 190.

⁵²¹ Édouard Glissant, interview by Lise Gauvin, “L’imaginaire des langues,” *Études françaises*, 28.2/3 (1992): 11-22; my translation of original, “Les traductions vont devenir une part importante des poétiques... Et je pense à toute cette variance infinie de nuances des poétiques possibles des langues, et chacun sera de plus en plus pénétré par toute cette fragrance, cet éclatement des poétiques du monde. Ce sera une nouvelle sensibilité.”

movement, it seems he was already beginning to think in these terms at the time of *Le discours antillais*.

Glissant articulates the relationship between his two landmark texts in the following terms: “The present work is a reconstituted echo or a spiral retelling [of *Le discours antillais*].”⁵²² While others have effectively engaged with Hallward’s critique by either defending the holistic continuity of Glissant’s work or gleaning a political orientation within his later work, I am more interested in the specific dynamics of a “spiral retelling.”⁵²³ What characterizes the trajectory from the one book to the next that requires the image of the spiral rather than carbon copy of equivalence or the linear projection of progress?

As Glissant puts it, the primary shift that occurred from *Le discours antillais* to *Poétique de la relation* concerns the opening up a binary system, where originally he was working primarily to privilege the suppressed half of a dualistic hierarchy, he came to explode it by proliferating the components of Relation: “It changed because there was a two-sided ridge—oral-written— that is outmoded as I think of a poetics of Relation. The poetics of Relation is never bi-anything, it is always multiple.”⁵²⁴ A spiral retelling, then, is the movement out to the multiple from this economy of the One, but it is rhizomatic in the sense of producing a rootedness in the world.

⁵²² Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 16.

⁵²³ See Chris Forsdick, “Late Glissant: History, ‘World Literature,’ and the Persistence of the Political,” *Small Axe* 14.3 (November 2010): 121-134; Celia Britton, “Globalization and Political Action in the Work of Édouard Glissant,” *Small Axe* 13.3 (November 2009): 1-11.

⁵²⁴ Glissant, “Traduire les relations des langues,” Online; my translation of original, “Ça a changé parce qu’il y a un côté bilatéral – oral-écrit – qui est dépassé par ce que je pense d’une poétique de la Relation. La poétique de la Relation n’est jamais bi-quelque chose, elle est toujours multiple-quelque chose.”

Moments in *Le discours antillais* that are rooted in the specificity of Martinique and its struggle for independence still index this openness and presage the possibility of thinking the politics of the Caribbean otherwise. Glissant concludes one of the larger sections on political economy in complex fashion, reminding us that his historical materialism is densely networked with affective and discursive circuits. After a paragraph on the nature of technological development in Martinique, there is a sudden, jarring break. An inch of white space before, the italicized word “Land”—a discontinuous conjunction, like Benitez-Rojo’s archipelago, in the spatiality of the book.⁵²⁵ The next three paragraphs under the label “Land” are a powerful take on the beautiful flowers growing in Martinique. “I remember the lingering fragrances that lay thick in my childhood world. I feel that then all the surrounding land was rich with these perfumes that never left you...All these flowers have disappeared, or almost....The Land has lost its smells. Like almost everywhere else in the world. The flowers that grow today are cultivated for export.”⁵²⁶ An olfactory cartography takes us to the heart of globalization and landscapes of consumption. He is clear, however, that the point is not to return to the floral scents of a lost childhood, but to think about the Martinican identity in terms beyond national territory, economic indicators like GDP, or even a reductive focus on language.

It is true that the fragile and fragrant demanded in the past daily care from the community that acted on its own. The flower without fragrance endures today, is maintained in form only. Perhaps that is the emblem of our wait? We dream of what we will cultivate in the future and we wonder vaguely what the new hybrid that is already being prepared for us

⁵²⁵ Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1997), 2.

⁵²⁶ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 52.

will look like, since in any case we will not rediscover them as they were, the magnolias of former times.⁵²⁷

The spiral retelling exists at this point of tension, perhaps providing a different model alongside translation to articulate the possibility of *une nouvelle sensibilité*. Scale is no longer reduction to an ideal grounds for comparison here, because each unique folding of matter and energy—from the magnolias of his childhood to his own body, to the body-politic of territorial Martinique—indexes the affective lines that draw together the many scales we arbitrarily impose.

In the end, however, Hallward appropriately warns about the risk of an overly generalized Caribbean theory entirely unrooted from the land. The growth of a flower with no fragrance is the risk of all Caribbean theory exported for general use, a risk Glissant foresaw in *Le discours antillais* when he cautioned in his definition of Antillanité: “More than a theory, a vision. The force is such that it can say anything. I have heard Antillanité, without further specification, proposed on two or three occasions as a global solution to problems both real and imagined. When a word becomes a master key, we anticipate that it catches up to reality.”⁵²⁸ The move from translation to spiral retelling undermines the illusion of global translatability and the possibility of pure transparency, because we move through and across scales only by way of the opacity of others and their language.

In the floral dreams of childhood fragrances, Glissant is searching for the bits of a past that linger, not in pure form, but as resources for an unknowable future, specifically

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ Glissant, *Le discours antillais*, 823; my translation of original, “Plus qu’une théorie, une vision. La force en est telle qu’on en dit n’importe quoi. J’ai entendu en deux ou trois occasions proposer l’antillanité (sans autre précision) comme solution globale à des problèmes vrais ou fantasmes. Quand un mot devient ainsi passe-partout, on préjuge qu’il a rejoint le réel.”

Caribbean and yet always-already moving and multiple. Florists might call this a graft, a generative cutting and rearticulation that transforms every part assembled. The translators of the future might call this a spiral retelling.

Political ecology has a political economy. That is to say, the biocentric description of the human that inheres not only in neoliberalism but in contemporary “new materialist” approaches to socio-political challenges emerges out of a materially striated world of relation and exposure to the nature-culture interface. There is a regime of domination—the overrepresentation of Man²—that precedes and remains untroubled by the descriptive flattening of the ontological turn. A transformative *sarco*-politics offers a different political economy of political ecology than the certainty of declarations that we just give up all of the narcissism already: “Today, how can we view this viewing eye,” one thinker of the post-human turn asks, “from our own greater will to survive, or would it not be better to start to look at the world and ourselves without assuming our unquestioned right to life?”⁵²⁹ If you have made it this far, it almost goes without saying that there is no unquestioned right to life extended to the whole of humanity, except in moments of sentimental suture to the unjust present, and that the continually frustrated yet persistent will to survive of liminal subjects is not the closure of a future becoming otherwise, but precisely where it begins.

How does it look from down in the muck and the messiness of the nature-culture interface, the submerged field in and through which thought emerges, rather than the imagined environments of theorists who build their political economy of scholarly

⁵²⁹ Colebrook, *The Death of the PostHuman: Essays on Extinction, Volume 1* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2014): Online.

influence through a political ecology of biocentric reduction that confidently laughs:

“[From] doughnuts to dogfish to the Dog Star to Dobermans to Snoop Dogg. People, plastic, clothes, pegs, piranhas and particles are all objects. And they are all pretty much the same, at this depth.”⁵³⁰ Nah. The view is a lot different, especially at *this* depth, what students at the Lake Area NTEC High School in New Orleans might call comin’ “Straight Outta Swampton.”⁵³¹

In a collection of writing by local creative writing students, another archive of “The Neighborhood Story Project” published by the University of New Orleans Press, stories of New Orleans at the threshold of “nature and civilization” bring into relief landscapes of memory as ecological autopoiesis. From this depth, there is nothing inherently celebratory about the dissolution of boundaries, however artificial, between the natural and the built-world, but there is also a germ of the future in each tale of survival and each tracing and crossing of the border. Unique Benoit writes, “Over time, I’ve learned to love New Orleans, and I plan to build more connections and make more memories, good and bad.”⁵³² In one swift blow, Benoit exposes the flattened models of the ontological turn as part and parcel of the “pieza” framework: they reinstate the fungibility of bodies unmarked by durational memory and uprooted from a landscape, thrown into the abyssal non-place where, once again, these captive bodies become a source of extractive value (bodies made flesh). Benoit’s answer? The ambivalence of

⁵³⁰ Timothy Morton, “Objects as Temporary Autonomous Zones,” *Continent* 1.3 (2011): 150.

⁵³¹ Straight Outta Swampton: Life at the Intersection of Natural and Built Worlds in New Orleans (New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2014).

⁵³² Benoit, “The Crescent City Connection,” in *Straight Outta Swampton*: 114.

“love,” of loving a place and loving in a place through connections and memories that are, ambivalently, human.⁵³³

Taharah James recalls a terrifying day out at the park with her little brother Josh and two cousins. Their playing and relaxing is interrupted suddenly with a sharp cry. She turns around to see her brother and cousin struggling in the lake. “They were using all their energy to try and get back to the surface, but it wasn’t enough. They both went under the water, and they didn’t come back up. Bubbles appeared on top of the water.”⁵³⁴ Like a vision, a burly man dives in and brings the two boys to the surface, saving them from certain death. She describes her feeling since then when standing near water, the daily apprehension of being in this romanticized city-on-the-river, always feeling on the edge of an engulfing abyss, trying to embrace the ambivalence of embodied precarity: “My body starts to shiver and then I get goose bumps all over my body... The Wind off the water gives me comfort, as it did before. As if I’m flying on clouds. But I still can’t stand very close to the edge of the lake; I’m still working on that.”⁵³⁵

A story later, we meet Taharah and Josh again. She goes to meet him in the parish prison where he is held captive. The words exchanged are mere placeholders for the deeper exchange of what is not quite sayable effected by glances and comportment. “We talked, but sometimes I’d just stare at him. I tried to think where I went wrong as a sister and a mentor. I cried. ‘I can’t take it anymore,’ he told me.” She ends up standing at the edge of the prison waiting for him to come out of those doors even when she knows he

⁵³³ In future research, I would like to read Benoit’s insistence on love here as tying together the work on decolonial love by Sandoval and Maldonado-Torres with my argument for “animal faith” as a kind of spiritual love, following Bergson, in multi-species assemblages (see Hantel, “Bobby Between Deleuze and Levinas or Ethics Becoming-Animal,” *Angelaki*).

⁵³⁴ Taharah James, “Josh and the Lake,” in *Straight Outta Swampton*: 73.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid*, 74.

won't. No vision appears, no burly man with Josh over his shoulder gasping for air but thankfully *there*. "A week after I visited, Josh was placed in solitary confinement for seventy days. I don't know exactly what happened... But I know it had to do with what he said, 'I can't take it anymore.'"⁵³⁶ Both of these stories appear in the section called "The Intersection," or the stories that try to convey the grainy texture of the hyphen in material-semiotic or nature-culture or body-city. In relation to the current episteme of Man2, James seems to describe that hyphen as always a set of abysses in Glissant's sense, the kinds that swallow up and suffocate and make the indeterminate determinate and the free unfree.

These stories theorize the truth of the system and point to its constitutive outside in the daily struggles for survival of liminal subjects. Fittingly, the last section is called "The Future." Janessa Langston concludes the collection imagining the voice of "Old Gator," allowing her enunciative locus to slip between city and swamp and her human agency to come into intimate contact with the non-human world.

There are people who talk about what they are going to do for the swamps, but most don't do what they say, leaving 50 year old gators like me out of luck. Fact is, our wetlands are being destroyed. What people fail to realize is that Hurricane Katrina could have been worse. The swamps and wetlands acted as a sponge, but we are losing them. Where will we all go when they're gone?

I do not reproduce these stories and scenes to provide more grist for the academic mill or insist on a self-consolidating subaltern who simply *knows* the truth. In Wynter's terms, the challenge is to "marry" our thought to these moments and do justice to them when describing the world and subsequently imagining the world-otherwise, not to simply

⁵³⁶ Taharah James, "Josh and Orleans Parish Prison," in *Straight Outta Swampton*: 77-78.

interpret them or deploy them as evidence of a need *for us*.⁵³⁷ That would be to once again render them as fungible and passive as a cadaver, another abyss where a humanism made to the measure of the world slips away. Hence, Morton misses the point when he sneers about all those do-gooders: “Many believe that theory is the opposite of practice. I’ve been accused of not wanting to help Katrina victims because I’m too busy theorizing.”⁵³⁸ This self-regard is the flipside of Bush’s invocation of the second-line parade as a linear narrative of life overcoming death. The black bodies, the poor bodies, the exposed bodies, open to endless exchange, casually invoked here as a generic category of “victims” presumably never meant to survive regardless. The view from “Straight Outta Swampton” suggests that no one was asking for that kind of help anyways, for an injection of life through either neoliberal capital or proper ontological description of what they *really* are. Theory at the temporal register of survival is already a

⁵³⁷ Interestingly, in her articulation of the *pieza* as a pluri-conceptual framework, Wynter deploys the exact same argument from Deleuze and Foucault that Spivak cites as the basis for her critique in “Can The Subaltern Speak?” Spivak argues that the deconstruction of the subject in Western theory takes place through the positing of a transparent and self-consolidating Other free from ideological contradiction (i.e. the working class masses or the colonized subject), ultimately allowing the intellectual to recede from view. Wynter reads the famous interview with Foucault and Deleuze much differently, using their dialogue as evidence for the following point: “The rubric of *pieza* includes all the experimental categories of the coerced, the non-norm. The mode of oppression must dictate the specific mode of organization to fight that oppression. There is no universalized mode of organization which is scientifically correct since the modes of oppression are multiple.” (Wynter, “Beyond the Master Conception,” 83). Implicitly, she rejects Spivak’s reading of the “Intellectuals and Power” interview. For Wynter, the role of the intellectual is much different than a speaking-for or speaking-about, but instead an ethics of resonance or, put spatially, a grasping of the liminal opening as a mode of finding the demonic ground. Much like Fanon’s prayer to his body to make of himself a Man who questions, marrying one’s thought to the truth of the liminal is not about a set of answers, but about posing new questions: How can we marry our thought so that we can now pose questions whose answers can resolve the plight of the Jobless archipelagoes, the NHI categories, and the environment?” (Wynter, “No Humans Involved,” 65). While I do not pursue this question further, it is worth noting that it calls into question Weheliye’s deployment of Spivak in *Habeas Viscus* as part of a Wynterian critique of Foucault and Deleuze. To the contrary, their combined projects form a latticework this dissertation has defended as the field of genre studies (see Weheliye, 47-49).

⁵³⁸ Morton, “Don’t Just Do Something, Sit There,” in *RETHINK: Contemporary Art and Climate Change*. <www.rethinkclimate.org>

step ahead, living and working at the point of translation—the embodied actualization of carrying across—the confluence of what is and what could be.

Epilogue

Second-Lining the Anthropocene

In “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” Dipesh Chakrabarty argues we have entered a moment of universal history, whether we like it or not, thanks to the “unintended consequence of human actions” called global climate change.⁵³⁹ The age of the anthropocene has begun, in other words, a new geological epoch in which humans as a species have become geological agents, perhaps even the primary ones acting “as a main determinant of the environment of the planet.”⁵⁴⁰ Drawn together by a new temporality of impending present calamity, Chakrabarty insists, humanity must move past the divided histories of modernization to rewrite a deep species history of catastrophe shared by all. He quickly adds,

This is not to deny the historical role that the richer and mainly Western nations of the world have played in emitting greenhouse gases... Whether we blame climate change on those who are retrospectively guilty – that is, blame the West for their past performance – or those who are prospectively guilty... is a question that is tied no doubt to the histories of capitalism and modernization. But scientists' discovery of the fact that human beings have in the process become a geological agent points to a shared catastrophe that we have all fallen into.⁵⁴¹

To put it a bit glibly, we are all in the same boat, it turns out, and “there are no lifeboats here for the rich and privileged.”⁵⁴²

Many theorists have enthusiastically taken up the language of the anthropocene—and indeed, if there is evidence the anthropocene is *everywhere*, it is in the titles of papers, conferences, special collections and forthcoming books—for many different

⁵³⁹ Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History,” 221.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid, 209.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid, 213.

⁵⁴² Ibid, 221.

reasons, finding it a useful disruption to business-as-usual. As the jolt the humanities needs, or as *the* political crisis demanding address, the diverse array of anthropocene thinkers focus primarily on the –cene bit of the equation (from the Greek *kainos* for new). And indeed, reframing questions through the language of the anthropocene has proved a helpful heuristic for considering the complexities of humanism, the interplay between political economy and political ecology, and multi-scalar geography. Rushing to the temporal force of *kainos*, the slow work of *anthropos* has become obscured. The anthropocene label proves so jarring perhaps because of the way it marks a fall from grace from for those who reside within the comfortable confines of Man2, the bearers of civilization accustomed to the airy self-regard of proper *humanitas* rather than the undifferentiated mass of *anthropos*.⁵⁴³

According to Wynter, this unmarked slippage represents a prestidigitation at the heart of the anthropocene discursive formation. In reference to the report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, she writes,

[The report] attributes the reality of behavioral activities that are genre-specific to the West's Man in its second reinvented concept/self-conception as homo economics, ones that are therefore as such, as a historically originated ensemble of behavioral activities—as being ostensibly human activities-in-general . This, in spite of the fact that they do historicize the origin of the processes that were to lead to their recent natural scientific findings with respect to the reality of the non-naturally caused ongoing acceleration of global warming and climate change, identifying this process as having begun with the West's Industrial Revolution...."⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴³ Nishitani Osamu, "Anthropos and Humanitas: Two Western Concepts of 'Human Being,'" in *Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference*, eds. Sakai and Solomon (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006): 259-273.

⁵⁴⁴ Wynter, "Human Being as Noun? Or Being Human as Praxis? Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overturn: A Manifesto," Unpublished Talk, 2007.

To this concern, Chakrabarty would perhaps retort that the blamegame approach is precisely besides the point. Defending the term, Morton makes the case that we are past the need for colonial or racial stratification in assessing the political ecological impact of our species: “Although the desire for it emerged in America first, chronologically, it turns out that everyone wants air-condition. On this issue I am in perfect accord with Dipesh Chakrabarty.”⁵⁴⁵ Wynter’s reattribution of blame is not, however, simply about resolving liminal subjects of guilt by pointing the finger elsewhere. It is not, in other words, about making sure that those who have suffered at the hands of *humanitas* be granted a symbolic victory while everyone’s shared ship, the USS Anthropos, sinks. If, as I have argued, liminal subjects are both the negated truth of the system and the index to an outside, then locating them in the generic terminology of the *IPCC Report* speaks to a much more fundamental challenge to the ontologism that precedes and exceeds the narrow frame of anthropocene discourse.

As Wynter goes on,

...the now purely secular genre of being human...came to be actualized in the British and Western bourgeoisie as the new ruling class was, from then on, to generate its prototype specific ensemble of new behavioral activities, that were to impel both the Industrial Revolution, as well as the West's second wave of imperial expansion, this based on the colonized incorporation of a large majority of the world's people, all coercively homogenized to serve its own redemptive material telos, the tells initiation global warming and climate change....in the wake of the range of successful anti-colonial struggles for political independence....because the new entrepreneurial and academic elites had already been initiated by the Western educational system in Western terms as homo economicus, they too would see political independence as call for industrialized development on the collective bovarysme model of the western bourgeoisie.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁵ Timothy Morton, “How I learned to Stop worrying and Love the Term Anthropocene,” *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 1.2 (2014): 261.

⁵⁴⁶ Wynter, “Human Being as Noun? Or Being Human as Praxis? Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overturn: A Manifesto,” Unpublished Talk, 2007.

The *IPCC Report*, like Chakrabarty and Morton, makes the distinction between the West and its others in terms of the initial moment where the “anthropocene” as a possibility was born. And yet, in its generic articulation of the human vis-à-vis Man, it still posits such a mode of existence (industrialization, material accumulation, exploitation and expropriation) as the natural telos of properly developed man. So we set off looking for solutions at a universal level because developed humans have naturally worked toward this telos of modernization as they progress from the backwardness of pre-capitalist society: from anthropos to humanitas. Needless to say, these solutions fall within the descriptive statement of bio-economic man, whether it is market solutions under the moniker of green capitalism, the possessive individualism of ethical consumption, or the neoliberal subject of resilience. Wynter here posits a continuity at the level of ontologism between the causers and drivers, however, that points to the need for an insurrection at the level of the human.

Thus, the critique of the overrepresentation of Man is not just the politics of green guilt, but a crucial force in a rethinking of political ecology. In *The Methodology of the Oppressed*, Chela Sandoval calls this willful ignorance of the power and utility of thought from the Global South a form of theoretical apartheid.⁵⁴⁷ This violent separation not only obscures connections between Western critical theory and various forms of decolonial thought but also relegates the latter to lesser status. As I have argued, one of the key demarcations between the rarefied air of proper theory and its soiled others is the temporality of survival. Theorizations borne out of oppositional consciousness and daily struggles for survival amongst groups who were “never meant to survive” failed to

⁵⁴⁷ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, chapter 3: “On Cultural Studies: An Apartheid of Theoretical Domains.”

register as proper “theory” in Western canon formation. It is necessary today to disrupt a parallel process of climate change catastrophe canon formation intent on deploying an uninvestigated category of the anthropocene.

Take Sandoval’s intervention into the work of the eminent Marxist critic Frederic Jameson. She counters the exclusion of third world feminism not simply in the name of inclusion for its own sake, but because of the vital conceptual resources developed there to effectively diagnose and mobilize against racist, patriarchal capitalism. Frederic Jameson find himself confronted by the fragmenting effects of late capitalism, disorientation and displacement, the “waning of affect,” the loss of the self and the flattening of depth. In Arundhati Roy’s sardonic words: welcome to the world.⁵⁴⁸ While the generalized effects of late capitalism have perhaps accelerated and intensified processes of deterritorialization, there exists centuries of theorizing that just might help him understand what it is like to live as a fragmented self dislocated from place. It comes from sources like Chicana feminism, decolonial thought, or queer theory, sources that seem beyond reach from Jameson’s side of theoretical apartheid.⁵⁴⁹ It is not just about drawing a parallel in terms of conditions (*they* experienced this, now *we* are experiencing this), but truly reaching across the boundary line to think with, through, and sometimes against the theoretical scaffolding developed in spaces of coloniality and enslavement. To confront the landscapes of violence and ecologies of memory and forgetting from which the *anthropocene* as a shared but uneven catastrophe emerges, there is no better place to

⁵⁴⁸ Arundhati Roy, “Come September,” transcript at <http://www.vvawai.org/archive/wot/ComeSeptember.html>

⁵⁴⁹ See Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, “Frederic Jameson: Postmodernism is a Neocolonizing Global Force.”

begin than the confluence of Afro-Caribbean and feminist thought. That is, a humanism I have called intergenerational geographies of race and gender.

Recall the opening scene of this document, when George W. Bush drafted the second line parade into his neoliberal narrative of life overcoming death.⁵⁵⁰ Clearly, the symbolic codes of life and death at work in that deceptively uplifting tale fail to question the conditions of violence or catastrophe that turned Hurricane Katrina into a disaster. Let's try again. Jump into the second-line and try to follow the music to the outside of the descriptive statement of Man.

A second line is "a rolling block party, a cultural institution, a community event that carnivalizes and colonizes the public sphere, a weekly celebration of neighborhood or clan, a walkabout for urbanites."⁵⁵¹ Although these roving parades are known as second lines, they are led by neighborhood-specific Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs, the members of which constitute the "main line." The members of the SAPC dress up in matching, flamboyant suits and dance out front with a hired brass band. The second line is what makes this a community wide event: each SAPC makes available the dates and routes of their parades and people join up, dancing along with the parade in whatever way they see fit, and tailgating as they go.⁵⁵²

⁵⁵⁰ "In this place, there is a custom for the funerals of jazz musicians. The funeral procession parades slowly through the streets, followed by a band playing a mournful dirge as it moves to the cemetery. Once the casket has been laid in place, the band breaks into a joyful "second line" -- symbolizing the triumph of the spirit over death. Tonight the Gulf Coast is still coming through the dirge, yet we will live to see the second line"

⁵⁵¹ Dinerstein, "Second Lining Post-Katrina: Learning Community from the Prince Wales Social Aid and Pleasure Club," *American Quarterly* 61.3 (September 2009): 618.

⁵⁵² Ibid, 618-619.

Borrowing from Helen Regis, Simon Stow emphasizes the importance of second lines to “a community of memory ... the parades stop at specific locations and play particular tunes to honor the former residents of certain buildings or neighborhoods... Regis asserts that: ‘Like ancestors in the lineage-based societies, the memory of people and places defines communities in the contemporary New Orleans second-line.’”⁵⁵³ The nature of memory work in second lines is far more complex than Bush’s simple celebration of life over death. For one, the second line is profoundly place-based and, in this sense, reliant on the interaction and shared intensities of bodies sharing space. One does not necessarily have to be from a certain neighborhood to join a second line, but there are a set of markedly local rituals that serve as social horizons for a given parade. Moreover, the second line brings people physically together to reengage and strengthen community bonds through the mutual exchange of nourishment, rhythms, and conversation.

The second line is not simply about the good overcoming the bad, or life overcoming death, although it is certainly a celebration. It celebrates, however, the bonds of collectives that are only strengthened as they stretch and scar. The movement of the dancers to age-old New Orleans beats, occasionally repurposed and remixed, provides comfort in the feeling that the community and its traditions continue to exist and regenerate. It does not promise transcendence, nor could it because the second line is a site grounded in the mourning of a community’s scars. The purposeful flooding of St.

⁵⁵³ Simon Stow, “Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans: George Bush, The Jazz Funeral, and the Politics of Memory,” *Theory and Event* 11.1 (2008): 23.

Bernard's Parish and Plaquemines county in 1927 may not have stained the collective American conscience, but it is remembered in the second lines of the lower ninth-ward.⁵⁵⁴

In this sense, the status of Katrina as an “event” in the sense of a radical break or rupture also becomes complexly ambivalent. Katrina is, of course, a negative marker for these communities in New Orleans for all of the death, destruction and displacement it caused. At the same time, it is less an event than an instance or an episode within the long and winding history that animates the movements of the second line. They were born, after all, out of early twentieth-century mutual aid societies trying to help the least well-off of their members make ends meet.⁵⁵⁵ The continuation of the second lines defy the idea that Katrina killed off New Orleans and the culture of its most precarious inhabitants at the same time that it belies a view of Katrina as a temporary aberration overcome by an evolutionary narrative of economic natural selection.

The second line poses a profound challenge to the overrepresentation of Man at the collective level of liminal subjects insisting on an intergenerational ethics, “demonstrating the civil right of the community to exist.”⁵⁵⁶ There is nothing transcendent or assured in this solidarity with liminality; it only promises a push from ontologism to ethico-politics, some music to get you moving in a different direction, to an outside, a beyond: to “a humanism made to the measure of the world.” Asked what her SAPC, the New Orleans Lady Buck Jumpers, stand for, Linda Porter responded: “The

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid, 24.

⁵⁵⁵ Jordan Flaherty, *Floodlines: Community and Resistance from Katrina to the Jena Six* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010): 9.

⁵⁵⁶ Sublette, quoted in Flaherty, *Floodlines* 8.

Buck Jumpers say that the ones here are jumping for the ones gone and the ones to come.”⁵⁵⁷ Jump.

⁵⁵⁷ Linda Porter, interviewed by Gerald Platenburg, “Buck Jumping,” in *Coming out the Door for the Ninth Ward* (New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2006): 212.

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