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The Politics of Wounds

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Theory and Criticism

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Abstract

What configuration of strategies and discourses enable the white male and settler body politic to render itself as simultaneously wounded and invulnerable? I contextualize this question by reading the discursive continuities between Euro-America's War on Terror post-9/11 and Algeria's War for Independence. By interrogating political-philosophical responses to September 11, 2001 beside American rhetoric of a wounded nation, I argue that white nationalism, as a mode of settler colonialism, appropriates the discourses of political wounding to imagine and legitimize a narrative of white hurt and white victimhood; in effect, reproducing and hardening the borders of the nation-state. Additionally, by turning to Fanon and Mbembe, I argue that settler colonialism produces what I term as "scenes of captivity," where the settler nation-state detains, incarcerates, and interrogates brown, Indigenous, and black bodies both for producing knowledge about those bodies and protecting and securitizing the nation-state. Understanding the ways in which settler colonialism's logics of detention, captivity, and interrogation, both then and now, provides insights into how we might begin dismantling detention centres.

Keywords

Critical race theory, racism, War on Terror, 9/11, French Algeria, settler colonialism, biopolitics, necropolitics, Frantz Fanon, Achille Mbembe, violence, epidermalization, the right to maim, Trump

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pour Rudy -

Je te verrai mes rêves . . .

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1 Introduction:

And yet, when I see Mbappe running as fast as Husain Bolt, when I see Pogba or Umtiti or Varane scoring a decisive goal, or Ngolo Kante or Matuidi hustling the opponent as if they were endowed with two lungs, I am not cheering French nationalism, the nationalism that has caused so much suffering in Africa and is still causing so much suffering among French citizens of African descent in the "banlieues" of the North.

-Achille Mbembe, "France and its 'NEGRO SUBSIDY'"

1.1 The Night of the Absolute

The recent controversial dialogue between Trevor Noah and the French ambassador for the United States, Gerard Araud, finds its residue beyond the context of the *Coup de monde*. Responding to the French victory against Croatia in the 2018 FIFA World Cup, *The Daily Show* host had said in jest that it was, instead, an African victory, not a French victory. Disturbed with Noah's suggestion, Araud issued a lengthy response to Noah, accusing him of repeating the very same logic and rhetoric of exclusion deployed by white supremacists and nationalists. For Araud, the victory belongs to France if only because the players that comprise the team can only be French. They were educated in France. They were raised in France. They were properly assimilated into Frenchness—a victory that can be claimed by the centuries-old civilizing mission.¹ Therefore, despite the routes that brought them to France and despite the roots that extend beyond France, the players can only claim a French identity. "To us, there is no hyphenated identity, roots are an individual reality," writes Araud. "By calling them an African team, it seems you are denying them their Frenchness." Yet, even if Araud's sentiments originate from a place of benevolence, that is to say, that French identity is ultimately "inclusive," it is only through the exclusionary logic of erasing

¹ Araud concludes his letter to Noah by referring to the tenants of French civilization: fraternity and equality. The letter in full can be found here: <https://france-amerique.com/en/world-cup-ambassador-raud-answers-trevor-noah/>

roots and routes that one can find inclusion into so-called Frenchness. In other words, one is only French, as Araud seems to suggest, if one plays the role of French identity—as if identity is a mask to wear. Truthfully, on whose behalf is Araud permitted to speak?

To be sure, this dialogue between Noah and Araud, which sparked quite the controversy across social media and mainstream news outlets, is neither new nor revolutionary. Frantz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre had a very similar exchange of intellect amidst the wave of decolonization across Africa and the Caribbean. Rather problematically, Sartre attempted to think through and against the category of race, positing that blackness is a phase in a Hegelian dialectic, a phase waiting to be overturned where the universal category of the human awaits its discovery. As Sartre writes, “thus [Africanness] is the root of its own destruction, it is a transition and not a conclusion, a means and not an ultimate end.”² Much like Sartre, Araud seeks the next step in the grand dialectical narrative: the abolition of race, routes, and roots for the security of French identity.

Fanon did not let Sartre off the hook for his dialectical positing of Africanness or Negritude as the antithesis to Frenchness and its whiteness. For Fanon, Negritude was not necessarily “a minor term” in a Hegelian schema.³ It was a movement for one to lose their consciousness “in the night of the absolute.”⁴ As Fanon shrewdly points out, Sartre had forgotten the necessity of losing oneself in the “essences of determinations of its being”; as such, Fanon read Sartre’s description of the dialectic as always already robbing Fanon of his experience of blackness. More importantly, Sartre’s dialectic robbed Fanon of the potential to write his own history, narrative, and being. Fanon writes, “And so it is not I who makes a meaning for myself, but it is the meaning that was already there, pre-existing, waiting for me. It is not [...] that I will shape a torch with which to burn down the world, but it is the torch that was already there, waiting for that turn of history.”⁵ It was for Fanon, in short, that he was predestined to be white within this *historical* and *racial* schema.

Noah’s critique of Araud’s response finds resonance with Fanon in addition to serving as a critique of Sartre’s dialectic. There is no room for hyphenated identities, it seems, in Sartre’s historical narrative. Frenchness and blackness are opposite poles of a

² Jean-Paul Sartre, qtd. in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 102.

³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 103-104.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

dialectical equation that foresees the eventual erasure of both or, in Araud's case, the absorption of blackness into the eventual absolute that is French identity. Noah rejects these claims, posing the question of why is it that both "identities" *cannot* be lived simultaneously.⁶ Indeed, Araud misreads Noah's criticism, understanding Noah as positing that one either rejects their Frenchness or their Africanness. Instead, the opposite is true: one can live both. In other words, Noah rejects the dialectical hypothesis entirely. This conclusion from Noah comes from a recognition of the deeply embedded hypocrisy of Araud's words. Even if Araud means what he says whole-heartedly, his words cannot escape the colonial reality as well as history that influence the movement of populations, the epistemic violence behind France's civilizing mission, and the xenophobic rhetoric that remains in everyday Euro-American politics. Noah poignantly says:

Here's what vexes me the most [...] when I read stories [about] Africa and when I hear what politicians say—especially in France about African migrants—when they are unemployed, when they may commit a crime, or when they are considered unsavoury, it's the African immigrants. When their children go on to provide a World Cup victory for France, we should only refer to them as French.

I think that the dialogue now and the dialogue then point to a broad issue: that of the preservation and protection of whiteness *as* Frenchness or *as* Americaness. Even as shrewd as Noah's critique becomes, it also fails to reflect on the settler colonial replication of national identities such as "French" or "American" within the dialogue itself and the ways in which the dialogue secures these "identities," geographies, and borders as natural fact. Within the question Noah poses of *why can one not be both French and African or African and American*, another question lurks: can one be neither? I raise this question as a way to draw attention to the problem in which this dialogue reinforces and naturalizes the formation of settler nation states and their borders. Further, while Araud celebrates the "diversity" of France, this comment emerges within a global paradigm of hardening borders, securing

⁶ Trevor Noah, "The French ambassador to the U.S. @GerardAraud criticized Trevor for congratulating Africa on France's World Cup victory. Trevor responds #BetweenTheScenes:," @TheDailyShow, (July 18, 2018). <https://twitter.com/TheDailyShow/status/1019751037853241344>. All proceeding quotations and paraphrasing of Noah are sourced from his video posted by The Daily Show twitter handle.

borders, and closing borders entirely across the Euro-American frontiers post-9/11. In other words, while Araud finds suspicion in Noah's controversial joke, lamenting that it "legitimizes the ideology" that claims France can only be white, France in addition to the majority of Euro-America have committed to the process of securing or hardening nation-state borders. In the end, Araud reifies and strengthens French borders as something unchanging, impermissible, and as constituting a social body that distinguishes itself as an Us opposed to Them.

Indeed, while France now heralds a rather liberal leader—who seems to have thwarted a toxic, radical right wave within the French government—President Emmanuel Macron fails to uphold the humanistic and liberal ideologies that Araud uses to found his critique of Noah. In brief, Macron's agenda when it comes to the politics of immigration has been set on toughening French borders as he tries to attend to the divide between the left and the right.⁷ Furthermore, the notorious and opaque white supremacist, Steve Bannon, has continued to stir the pot with regards to the radical right agendas, fanning the flames of France's own anti-immigration party in addition to proposing a far-right election think tank for Europe. His goal, of course, is the *hardening* of borders and the reformation of discrete national identities. As Bannon recounts in an interview with the *Daily Beast*, "Right-wing populist nationalism is what will happen. That's what will govern [...]. You're going to have individual nation states with their own identities, their own borders."⁸ Indeed, Bannon is deploying the same strategy and politics he used while acting as advisor for President Trump, who instituted a ban on immigration from Muslim countries and has committed an exorbitant amount of American resources towards constructing a border wall against Mexico, under the pretense of strengthening, protecting, preserving, and hardening the national body of the United States of America.

1.2 Fragile Nations, Fragile White Bodies

The desire for hard national bodies contra fragile nations can be found in both current events and their historical parallels. This thesis, then, situates itself within an ongoing *exchange*, both historical and discursive, between French and American modes of empire and settler

⁷ Aljazeera, "France's National Assembly approves tough immigration reform," *Aljazeera*, (April 21, 2018).

⁸ Steve Bannon qtd. in Aljazeera, "Steve Bannon Planning Foundation Boost Europe," *Aljazeera*, (July 21, 2018); par 3.

colonialism. I attend to these exchanges by presenting a thesis composed of two parts, which are linked by an affinity for a War on Terror that is shared between America and France. On the one hand, post-9/11 Euro-American military intervention into Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, for example, marks current events. On the other hand, France's drawn out war to suppress Algerian independence from 1954-1962 marks a historical parallel where discourses of terror delegitimized Algerian nationalism. These so-called Wars on Terror conceal(ed) the insidious projects of racism, xenophobia, settler colonialism, and Arab death that have been naturalized as the necessary collateral damage to preserve the body of the nation along with the usual civilizing-democratic mission.

I began thinking through the problem of the hard body or hard nation when I confronted its twin, albeit also its opposite, within the Euro-American philosophical responses to September 11, 2001. This twin of hardness, which most often persists on the edge of these responses, and yet has been critically investigated by broader postcolonial and critical race scholarship, is hurt, injury, or vulnerability. Whenever a Euro-American nation refers to the necessity of fortitude or whenever a settler state addresses the need for the nation to heal, it is making a claim about its perceived injuries (whether present, present-past, or future possibilities). Indeed, the philosophical responses that I speak of—such as Slavoj Žižek's *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Jean Baudrillard's *The Spirit of Terrorism*, and Giovanna Borradori's collection of interviews in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*—rightfully describe the cultural and socio-economic discovery of “vulnerability,” “injurability,” and “hurt” by Euro-America in the wake of September 11, 2001. However, these philosophical responses offer little to no attention on how this constellation of fragility within their respective works allows for a deeper commentary on white male subjectivity. That is to say that whiteness, and its manifestation into settler nation-states such as America, has quite problematically capitalized on its own perceived vulnerability for the suppression of exogenous others, the justification of military occupation of the Middle East, and the maintenance of the claim that whiteness, as demographic or race, is confronting its own genocide after 9/11.

Again, these sentiments are nothing new, which is why I attend to the exchange between America and the settler colonialism of France. Indeed, amidst the independence of Algeria from France, the French Algerian colonizers foresaw only two choices: either face extinction by staying in Algeria or “return” to the metropole. As well, up until and during

Algeria's war for independence, the French Republic frequently utilized the discourse of the "terrorist Muslim threat" to sanction not only a war against the Front de libération nationale (FLN) but to round up and massacre, torture, and humiliate thousands of Muslim bodies. As such, by exchange I mean that a citational practice brings these two seemingly discrete events into conversation. Indeed, Algeria's war for independence and this contemporary War on Terror are separated by a recognizable temporal and geographical difference. Nevertheless, the last decade and a half has witnessed a renewed interest in Algeria's war for independence under the contextualization of America's military engagement in the Middle East. Prefaces, introductions, as well as reviews of a growing library of memoirs, biographies, and critical literature on Algeria stress the relevance of Algeria to today's War on Terror.⁹ Quite often, this body of literature poses the question: what can we learn about terrorism by studying France's engagement with the FLN and other rebel groups over the course of its (illegitimate) occupation of Algeria? How can we further understand the pathology of the terrorist, Arab body? While I do follow this exchange throughout the course of my thesis (particularly in part three), I reject this grotesque mode of questioning that has emerged within the context of the invasion of the Middle East by Euro-America. Instead, I unveil a different problem and set of questions that underlies our current political moment and the settler colonialism of French Algeria. This thesis interrogates the ways in which predominantly white male bodies come to surface within the context of September 11, 2001 and the broader settler colonial narrative. Furthermore, the thesis interrogates the ways in which these white bodies imagine themselves as the legitimate victims of historical processes.

The primary question, then, that this thesis pursues is *what configuration of strategies, technologies, and discourses enable the white, settler body politic to render itself as simultaneously injurable, wounded, or hurt and hard, secure, and invulnerable?* I explore this question in two chapters that think through this problem from two different theoretical perspectives. On the one hand, I attend to this problem by reading how the politics of wounds, which was originally elaborated by postcolonial, Indigenous, and critical black feminist theoretical perspectives, has been appropriated by whiteness as a way to claim an

⁹ See, for example, Alistair Horne's 2006 edition of *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954 – 1962*. The front cover remarks that "anyone interested in Iraq should read this book immediately."

injured identity. This problem becomes quite apparent in recent events across Euro-America such as Charlottesville where crowds of white male bodies assemble in public spaces and universities to claim they are oppressed by the winds of left-wing radicalism. As such, I perform critical comparative reading of the discourse that emerged out of Charlottesville alongside the political-philosophical responses to 9/11 by Euro-American philosophers as well as President Bush. I find that these *seemingly* disparate discourses, that is, these discourses that *could be* readily plotted as right wing and left wing, utilize very similar language to understand not only 9/11 but to imagine the American body politic as, ultimately, a wounded body.

However, I am careful to distinguish the politics of wounds that emerges in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 from the important and radical work of Indigenous and critical black scholars, writers, and activists. They are not identical. Throughout Chapter One and in the Conclusion, I attend to the work of these thinkers and how their politics of wounds not only refuse contemporary political-social structures but actively works toward and invest in anterior futures. In juxtaposition, I find that the futures that an injured whiteness imagines are bleak, apocalyptic, and eternally invested in reproducing the same.

On the other hand, Chapter Two turns to the controversial war for independence that took place in French Algeria between 1954-1962. It is here where I think through the biopolitics of knowledge production within the settler colony, tracing similarities into present contexts. More to the point, I find that the detention, torture, and interrogation—which is also a *widespread* contemporary phenomenon—produces a form of knowledge called an ethnoepisteme. This ethnoepisteme demarcates which bodies are vulnerable and which are invulnerable. In the case of French Algeria, in addition to America's Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, and refugee detention centres in abandoned Wal-Marts, the brown, black, and Indigenous body is produced as always already woundable in juxtaposition to a white body impervious to harm. Once again, I confront this simultaneity of whiteness' perceived injurability and invulnerability insofar as the French settler colonial regime detained and tortured Muslim terrorist "suspects" in an attempt to thwart further settler colonial injury (in the form of FLN bombings within the settlers' quarter predominantly in the city of Algiers). Yet the gratuitous display of violence on the part of the French colonialists reveals the unequal distribution of vulnerability that defines not only the settler colonial context of French Algeria but the continued settler colonial occupation of Turtle Island. I also find,

however, that this is a violence that the settler colonial regime, both then and now, tirelessly works to conceal from view such as in the case of the Abu Ghraib archive which has been sealed behind the bureaucratic walls of the United States military.

I do not centre the white male body within this thesis. The organization of my research—in addition to thinking about my own positionality, as a white male body, in relation to both the critical theoretical work from Indigenous and Black scholarship and whiteness as it is taken up in the following pages—does not work to centre whiteness, even if at times the white male body becomes the object of knowledge under interrogation. Surely, as a white male body, I do not intend to “redeem” whiteness or found a whiteness that is compossible with social justice. Such a method works to centre whiteness or to preserve whiteness. I critically analyze white embodiment within the politics of wounds so that I can decentre and debunk its claims of injury, hurt, and genocide. I believe that this is the work, that is, the work of decentring whiteness, that every white male settler scholar must do. It is where my research begins. While I may take up the white male body as an object of analysis, I do so from the critical theoretical perspective of Indigenous and black scholarship. As such, I cite predominantly Indigenous, black, and feminist thinkers who centre indigeneity and blackness, allowing the possibility of life, for futures, and of knowledges that are otherwise. That is not to say, however, that I am centring blackness or indigeneity. I do not have that capacity, nor do I desire that capacity. I can only, I believe, decentre whiteness and that is the work that I will take up.

Ultimately, the two chapters are linked together by their work to decentre the politics of wounds that are claimed by settler coloniality and whiteness. While Chapter One concerns itself with the centring of the politics of wounds within a post-9/11 America, Chapter Two decentres this politics by attending to the material and psychoexistential wounds of Indigenous and black bodies, which are engendered by settler colonial and biopolitical logics of control, captivity, and domination. Both chapters find a similar conclusion: the logical extreme of settler colonialism is the detention or interrogation centre where Indigenous and black bodies are wounded, hurt, and made vulnerable for the preservation of whiteness and its coloniality. Yet, it is by the material creation of these centres of detention that whiteness strategically centres itself. In other words, by decentring from view the horrors that have emerged from settler colonialism—and by extension the War on Terror—whiteness can centre itself as the wounded subject thereby justifying its exploitive use of detention centres.

I see these problems of knowledge, the (white) body politic, and racialization identified here as deeply connected to the dubious debates surrounding Trevor Noah's response to France's "victory" of the World Cup. Not only do Araud and a variety of media outlets work to conceal the long-running legacy of settler colonialism that has upturned and exploited populations, they construct Euro-American identity and borders as something in need of "protecting" or "purifying." While these supposedly liberal positions find themselves in opposition to the work of Bannon, Trump, and the myriad of white supremacist groups that continue to find a political platform across public spaces and university campuses, they in fact share a similar concern for the protection of the nation as if it is always already vulnerable to its exterior.

2 Chapter One - “The Intimate Memory of Wounds”: Charlottesville, Whiteness, and Wounded Bodies in the Time of Terror¹⁰

Paranoia is in that sense dialectical rather than binary, for its violence erupts from the force of its multiple, cascading contradictions: the intimate memory of wounds, defeats, and humiliations condensing with cultural fantasies of aggrandizement and revenge, in such a way as to be productive at times of unspeakable violence.

-Anne McClintock, “*Paranoid Empire: Spectres of Guantánamo...*”

2.1 Introduction:

How do wounds enter politics? It was not until the tragic and shocking events that took place in Charlottesville in the summer of 2017 that I realized that this is the question that organized my research. This question is incredibly timely because white nationalism rallies around a wounded identity, and as such it finds too many allies and too many sympathizers, as if the horrors of the twentieth and twenty-first century Euro-America—colonialism, white supremacy, and genocide—did not already have enough advocates.¹¹ With this in mind, then, I want to specify the question even further: what role do wounds play in the formation of white nationalism and white identity (which I sometimes include under the singular banner of *whiteness*)? To frame the question in a different light: how has whiteness come to see itself as wounded? In this chapter, I argue that whiteness, particularly in this contemporary moment after 9/11, hinges on a wounded and vulnerable

¹⁰ Anne McClintock, “Paranoid Empire: From Guantánamo to Abu Ghraib,” *Small Axe* 28 (2009): 54.

¹¹ Euro-America in the past the past year has seen no shortage of white supremacist marches and related ideology, from the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville of early August of 2017 to the burning of a Nazi swastika in Georgia in April 2018 and finally to Dr. Ricardo Duchesne touring a book called *Canada in Decay: Mass Immigration, Diversity, and Ethnocide of Euro-Canadians* (2017). As it will become apparent in the course of this chapter, they all share the twisted belief in a reality of white genocide.

identity that shapes not only the embodiment of whiteness but also whiteness' relation to temporality. Indeed, whiteness has come to believe that it is under attack, and that a hostile world threatens it with genocide and future hurt. I think through these questions and this argument through what I denote as *the politics of wounds*.

Over the course of my research for this chapter, I have come to identify a constellation of terms: vulnerability, injury, hurt, and wound. For the purposes of this chapter, these terms often stand in for one another, that is, one gestures towards the other. To be sure, these terms find resonance in critical race, Indigenous, and black feminist scholarship—which the making of this thesis is indebted to—but they also find political use in national discourses and rhetoric, a use which I believe has been unexplored up until now. As such, what wound, injury, and hurt come to represent has been appropriated from “minority politics” by a myriad of versions of white nationalism. At times, then, this chapter is somewhat comparative in its trajectory—thinking through wounds in both subaltern or minority politics and whiteness. Of course, the politics of wounds deployed by the two are far from identical. Whereas minority politics grounds its politics of wounds within a material and tangible history as well as the present, whiteness, like a hypochondriac, imagines the historicity and materiality of its wounds. Nevertheless, this citational complex of imagined wounds on the part of whiteness provides credence to a milieu of phobias towards racialized others (Islamophobia and negrophobia) in addition to anxieties towards an uncertain future.

I privilege wound as a category of analysis, however, because it offers something that vulnerability, injury, and hurt do not necessarily connote. Hence, I do not speak in terms of “the politics of vulnerability” or otherwise, which might be closer to Butler’s later projects or Wendy Brown’s contributions to the political-philosophical project that I am grappling with. As the title of this chapter suggests, a phrase borrowed from Anne McClintock’s shrewd critique of American empire, ‘wound’ as a category of analysis leaves room to think through memory, temporality, and history. These concepts are significantly important to settler colonial forms of white nationalism. In other words, memory and history are always at stake for white nationalists. Indeed, the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville assembled over the possible removal of a statue of a Confederate soldier, Robert E. Lee. Of course, also, the event of 9/11 has been called a wound on

America time and time again, and the World Trade Centre has been called a monument to the triumph of global capitalism. After the fall of the Twin Towers, what has been denoted as Ground Zero has come to memorialize not only the towers but also the possibility of future hurt—or maybe even future annihilation. In short, wound as a political category allows the flexibility of thinking through the intersection of material bodies, national monuments, and history as woundable subjects.

I proceed predominantly with discourse analysis and a close reading of what might first appear as an odd assemblage of works. Although I am fascinated with white nationalism in its more opaque forms, such as the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, I am also keen on identifying how whiteness functions in Euro-American political-philosophical knowledge production. The sources I have chosen to examine, then, include important works by Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, and Jean Baudrillard, considering they have offered invaluable insights into vulnerability, wounds, and future hurt. I read these texts alongside President Bush, President Trump and the outspoken voices of the Alt-Right because they all use the same language of wounds and all make very similar assertions, participating in the unfettered proliferation of whiteness whether cognizant of this participation or not. Namely, the over-determination of September 11th, 2001 as a wound on America, an expression of future hurt, and the blurring of how, in fact, vulnerability and injury is unequally distributed along racialized and gendered lines in the War on Terror. In other words, the white male body is narcissistically centred as the body in need of protection.

As such, this chapter encompasses three parts. In part one, I think through how wounds inform white nationalism and white identity. I will show that “wound” is a keyword in constructing national identity and a sense of national unification. Part two interrogates how wound, injury, and vulnerability after 9/11 were important philosophical concepts for Euro-American philosophical-political knowledge production to understand history, temporality, and ethics *after* 9/11. I also wish to identify, however, that this shared project of knowledge production works to conceal the visibility of injured white (male) bodies. This thesis thinks through a contradiction in whiteness insofar as whiteness builds an identity as both vulnerable but also invulnerable. Finally, part three, which serves as a conclusion, tackles the question of temporality insofar as the politics of

wounds imagines a paranoid temporality of possible future hurt. I close this chapter, then, by thinking through the embodiment of whiteness in relation to future hurt, that is, it is always preparing itself for future hurt.

2.2 Wounded Attachments: National Discourses and Identities of Injury

“A wound inflicted upon one member of our community is a wound inflicted upon us all,” President Trump read from his script, in a rare, sober moment to an audience of a few thousand in Phoenix, Arizona, during his summer 2017 tour of the United States.¹² Amidst the controversy of wishy-washy statements regarding the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville (read: white supremacist march), Trump attempted to save face by evoking a sense of a unified, American community—albeit a *wounded community*—in his discourse on the march. Moments later, Trump reiterated that “when one part of America hurts, we all hurt.” As always, though, Trump did not fail to contradict himself by reminding his audience that America is ultimately an “unbreakable team.” By “unbreakable,” I find that Trump is suggesting to his audience that the American body politic is strong, powerful, and invulnerable.

Benedict Anderson notes that the imagined community that makes up the nation is a historically situated phenomenon, emerging with both emotional fervor and the confluence of diverse political-ideological leanings.¹³ It is in this historical instance that is commonly characterized as a “time of terror” that I investigate the simultaneous resurrection of white nationalism and imagined as wounded communities, which I think converges through Trump’s speech quoted above. How is it that a community or a nation comes to see itself as “wounded”? In what ways is wounded America taken up in Euro-American political-philosophical projects?

The Euro-American nation, I argue, imagines the delimitations of vulnerability—

¹² For a complete transcript of Trump’s address, see *Time Magazine*’s “President Trump Ranted for 77 Minutes in Phoenix: Here’s What He Said,” August 23rd, 2017 (March 29th, 2018). It is fascinating to ponder how Trump’s speeches will be compiled and archived alongside those of previous presidents, considering his many inarticulate moments in which he veers off script or stares dumbly into the cameras of the media.

¹³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso, 2006), 4.

that is, how a nation comes to see the vulnerability of itself and of communities inside and outside itself. Further, these terms are always shifting at the whim of critical political moments and contexts. Anderson offers a particularly potent starting point in thinking through the aforementioned questions: “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”¹⁴ Indeed, as I will show, America as a nation is imagined in the style of resentment towards a hostile world that promises nothing but future hurt. I situate a portion of this chapter, then, within the conflict between the right and the left that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia. This Unite the Right Rally, I suggest, mobilized through a shared sense of political wounding: white genocide and white displacement, finding its rhetorical rigor in post-9/11 style paranoia and fear. But I also think through Charlottesville alongside the philosophical-political responses to September 11, 2001, as well as the intoxicating affects of fear and paranoia that ferment white nationalism in this post-9/11 era.

I do not entirely wish to separate these categories—identity and nationalism—nor conflate them. Inseparable and irreducible, these congruous categories rather seem to share a certain level of immanence in the other, a reverent love for each other. To be sure, nationalism, and to an extent whiteness, does not find its exuberance without patriotic love. As Anderson writes, “it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love.”¹⁵ Indeed, while these movements might mobilize on a shared imaginary wound created by alien threats or insidious Marxist and postmodern ideology, they ultimately cloak themselves with a passion for their country, their heritage, and their memory. Why else would hundreds of right-wingers flock to Charlottesville like migrating birds to protect what they believe to be one of the last remnants of a Great America? Of course, whiteness does not stand in for the Euro-American nation and vice versa, but they nevertheless inform and inflect each other’s respective projects, and find their reproductive technologies in the other.¹⁶ During the night of August 1, 2017, white

¹⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁶ Nandita Sharma. “White Nationalism, Illegality and Imperialism: Border Controls and Ideology,” in *(En)gendering the War on Terror: War Stories and Camouflage Politics*, ed. Kim Ryege and Krista Hunt (London: Routledge, 2016), 123. See also the introduction to *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2015) by Sara Ahmed.

nationalists marched through the streets of Charlottesville with torches in hand, chanting, “We will not be replaced. Jews will not replace us.” Under the premise of “uniting the right,” this assembly was composed of white nationalists, neo-Nazis, and bored white college students. With the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee from Emancipation Park to occur on August 12, white nationalists found the most opportune moment to rally with the intention to protect American memory against the encroaching left’s alleged crusade on wholesome American values and heritage. This Unite the Right Rally did not appear in a vacuum, however, and surely not without opposition. The left mobilized in response, and after two days of confrontation, thirty people were injured and a counter-protestor, Heather Hayes, was run over by a member of the Unite the Right who thought it prudent to drive into a crowd of counter protestors. Indeed, his comrades offered the alibi that he was just trying to protect himself from angry leftists. Regardless, the eyes of the left were on President Trump to denounce the rally for what it was—white nationalism dreaming of a new ethno-state and worshipping the catch-phrase “Make America Great Again.” Instead of denouncing the rally, Trump doubled down, announcing that the rally was composed of some “very fine people.” While a great deal of criticism against Trump rightfully acknowledges his roundabout way of supporting the rally, I am keen on thinking through his sense of nationalism that emerged in response to Charlottesville. Indeed, Trump was silent for days after the murder of Heather Hayes, and Trump could not help but subtly praise the rally for its political views. However, he utilized this politically charged moment in an attempt to “unite” America. One of the things I show in this chapter is how politics of wounds, which might just find vitalization in September 11, 2001, underpins the political agenda of Trump and Charlottesville: unification, resentment, and xenophobia.

To be sure, this politics that I name as a “politics of wounds” is not isolatable to Charlottesville nor Trump’s own twisted sense of nationalism. And certainly, it is not exclusive to the right. It finds, I suggest, particular resonance in this so-called time of terror that memorializes what might be thought of as the exceptional wound on the nation that is September 11, 2001. In the aftermath of the attack on the World Trade Center,

President Bush offered his own rendering of the national wound through his dialogues to the American people. “I will never forget this wound to this country,”¹⁷ Bush mourned. In the same speech, Bush further lamented the damage unleashed on one of America’s other national symbols, the Pentagon. Bush said, “The wound to this building will not be forgotten. But it will be repaired. Brick by brick, we will quickly rebuild the Pentagon.”¹⁸ However, America is not alone in its nationalisation of a wound.

In Canada, the constellation of discourses concerned with Truth and Reconciliation have imagined the nation as “wounded” by its residential school history. Maintaining a temporal distance from its coloniality through the partitioning of colonialism to its supposedly far-away history, Canadian politicians and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reminded Canadians and Indigenous persons that reconciliation means healing the national wound that is the residential school system, which unfortunately burdens the memory of all citizens. As the final report by the Commission explains, “A just reconciliation requires [...] talking about the need to heal the deep wounds of history”.¹⁹ Of course, this appropriation of Indigenous pain and wounds for national progress—that is, moving past its history into a truly postcolonial national identity—comes at the expense of Indigenous communities.²⁰ Nevertheless, the Commission’s report, which is supposedly liberal and progressive in its foundation, chillingly echoes Trump’s already frigid response to the Unite the Right in Phoenix: “I say we have to heal our wounds and the wounds of this country.” In short, national progress is often tied up with sentiments of national healing.

France, capitalizing on its own terrorist spectacle with the Paris killings of November 13, 2015, also reinvigorated its nationalism through the expression of a wounded French identity. In a special seminar, Alain Badiou reminded his audience that

¹⁷ President George W. Bush, *Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush* (Washington: U.S. Government, 2011), 73.

¹⁸ Bush, *Selected Speeches*, 71.

¹⁹ *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future: Summary of the final report of Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. (Ottawa: Canadian Government, 2015), 263.

²⁰ See David Garneau’s contribution to *Arts of Engagement*, “Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation: Art, Curation, and Healing,” for a wonderful explication on the ways in which Indigenous pain is exploited by a myriad of institutions and political bodies for the benefit of Canadian “progress.”

“[these] French wounds are not so recent.”²¹ Responding to what he calls the “identarian drive,” Badiou interrogates the rash responses by commentators linking the attacks and ensuing trauma to national identity. In other words, French identity is constructed around and through the spectacle of the attack. To be French, in this both emotionally and politically charged moment, meant to be wounded. “With the tri-color flag in hand, [...] a horrific massacre on French territory can only reinforce national sentiment,” Badiou said. “As if trauma automatically referred us back to identity.”²² This identarian drive that Badiou identifies in the responses to the attack is starkly reminiscent of post-9/11 U.S. where the language of “wounds” frequently enters both political and philosophical discourses to imagine a cohesive, American identity. However, the politics of wounds does not find an origin in national discourses alone: injury, wounds, and vulnerability has been theorized and debated within critical race, Indigenous, and feminist scholarship.

2.2.1 The Political Sphere of Wounds

In the *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed suggests that “our response should not simply be to critique the rhetorical use of injury or wounds, but to attend to the different ways in which ‘wounds’ enter politics.”²³ As such, I must delineate between how the “wound” enters white nationalist projects and how it enters other political projects such as Indigenous resurgence and black feminist theory, which sometimes operate on a politics of redress through legal and economical claims. Indeed, quite a breadth of scholarship in critical race and feminist theory attends to the politics of wounds as it enters the discourses of marginalized groups and subaltern voices, aiding in the construction of cohesive identities. Notably, feminist scholar Wendy Brown makes the argument that identity formation in marginalized communities tends to fetishize a wounded subjectivity by virtue of being excluded from the benefits of neoliberal capitalism. For Brown, this strategy reinforces the structures that excluded them in the first place, ultimately undermining their criticisms of the structure itself. As such Brown

²¹ Alain Badiou, *Our Wound Is Not So Recent: Thinking the Paris Killings of 13 November*. (London: Polity, 2016), 1.

²² Badiou, *Our Wound Is Not So Recent*, 3.

²³ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 32.

poses a shrewd question: “what kind of political recognition can identity-based claims seek—and what kind can they be counted on to want—that will not resubordinate a subject [...]?”²⁴ I raise Brown’s question here because wounds share an affiliation with the politics of recognition that have been addressed by various critics, as I will show below.

Recent Indigenous scholarship has critically addressed the political stakes of recognition, particularly within the context of the settler colonial state. Rather than offering new political avenues for recognition within the colonial state, many Indigenous thinkers have argued for a politics of refusal to avoid the appropriation of wounds by the colonial state in these acts of recognition, which often leads to the further disenfranchisement of Indigenous communities and disavowment of Indigenous wounds that do not readily fit into national narratives of healing and progress. For example, as Glen Coulthard points out, in an attempt to repair an injurious legacy, the colonial state frames Indigenous claims to ongoing wounds or pain as reactionary politics that impedes the colonial state’s “healing process.” As Coulthard rightfully and bitterly contends, “what gets implicitly represented by the state as a form of Indigenous *ressentiment*—namely, Indigenous people’s seemingly pathological inability to get over harms inflicted in the past—is actually a manifestation of our righteous resentment: that is, our bitter indignation and persistent anger at being treated unjustly.”²⁵ Coulthard avoids the pitfall of political recognition that resubordinates the subject, by positioning Indigenous resentment as refusing the settler state’s recognition of Indigenous wounds within a narrow purview.

In her seminal work, *Scenes of Subjection*, Saidiya Hartman expertly charts how the scene of the wounded flesh of the slave, as an event of recognition, fails to liberate the slave from this fleshly subjection. Instead, these scenes merely conflate “injury with

²⁴ Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 55.

²⁵ Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the colonial politics of recognition*. (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2014), 126. See also Audra Simpson’s *Mohawk Interruptus* and Leanne Simpson’s *As We Have Always Done* for an important contribution to what a politics of refusal looks like in both active scholarship and ethnography as well as embodied practice.

personhood.”²⁶ Of course, this has engendered all too convenient “bare life” and “victimization” tropes in critical scholarship that all too often inhibit the possibility of active refusals and creative futures, which have become central to black feminist thought.²⁷ While I intend to pick up these threads in the proceeding chapters, in this chapter I am interested in further thinking through how pain, wounds, and suffering enter—or perhaps more accurately have been appropriated—into “the political struggles” of white nationalist movements, particularly in the realm of identity/group formation.

I suggest, then, that Euro-American (white) nationalism co-opts the language of wounds, vulnerability, and injury, familiar to minority politics, to frame the (white) nation as *exceptionally wounded or exceptionally vulnerable*. In his analysis of France’s political and moral defeat with the loss of its colony, Algeria, in 1964, Achille Mbembe asserts that “to be acknowledged politically, struggles for recognition must be constructed around an exceptional signifier—my suffering and my wounds.”²⁸ The exceptional signifier of suffering and wounds in contemporary American discourse without a doubt is September 11, 2001. My intention here is not to downplay the tragedy that is 9/11 nor to create a hierarchy of tragedy within the politics of wounds. I am merely investigating the exceptionalisation of 9/11 as a national wound and how the wound in discourse is moored to 9/11, and how it enters into the political project of whiteness. After all, the fall of the Twin Towers has commonly been documented as a wounding of neo-liberalism, late stage capitalism, and imperialism—all of which are political and economic categories that find their roots, if not gratuitousness, in white supremacy. As such, September 11, 2001 becomes the exceptional event that describes historical and material wounding insofar as it interrupts America’s narrative of its own continuity of exceptionality. This exceptionality poses serious political and material ramifications that have led to both the acceleration of and concealing of the “unequal distribution of death, suffering, and pain,” which have become hallmarks of late liberalism. In other words, the very “exceptionalisation” of 9/11 as wound renders all other wounds in the realm of political

²⁶ Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6.

²⁷ Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Thought*. (Cambridge: Duke University Press, 2014), 1-2.

²⁸ Achille Mbembe, “Provincializing France,” *Public Culture* 23, no. 1 (2011): 114.

discourse mute. Hence, I am struck by Elizabeth Povinelli's radical question in light of this event that apparently jumpstarted an inert history: "How do specific arrangements of tense, eventfulness, and ethical substance make affectively and cognitively sensible and practical, late liberal [unequal] distributions of life and death, hope and harm [...]?"²⁹ In other words, while, for example, Indigenous communities and black communities materially suffer under the violent economical tectonics of late liberalism, whiteness rallies around its wounded ego post-9/11 as if it is the only legitimate political concern facing the 21st century. As such, as I will show later in this chapter, there is an interesting discursive link between the rhetoric of terror and the Unite the Right Rally's foundational claims of white genocide, white displacement, and white injury.

However, whiteness and its relation to injury has been economically and legally constituted in Euro-American jurisprudence. This is particularly pertinent in the context of the United States and Canada—settler-colonial nation-states which have remained committed since the creation of their geographical boundaries to classifying the races of the world through law and science in an attempt to protect the economic interests of whiteness. American legal scholar Cheryl Harris traces how whiteness became "property" in the legal discourses of American law in the advent of the sciences and liberalism.³⁰ Pivotal to the formation of whiteness as identity, Harris claims, is whiteness as property—that is, whiteness is something that can be possessed, held, and transferred between *legal persons*. In effect, a person who has the privilege of identifying as white could claim *injury* against their whiteness as if it were property in the event a law, a transaction, or insubordination by racialized others would incur negative economic outcomes to their livelihood. Unsurprisingly, this "whiteness as property" juridical structure prolonged racial segregation, economic as well as social anti-immigration policies, and mass incarceration of racialized bodies which continues today in late liberal's unequal distribution of vulnerability.³¹

How does a collective identity form around a shared sense of injury in the context

²⁹ Elizabeth Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*, 5.

³⁰ Social critic Ta-Nehisi Coates has pointed out that whiteness is indeed an heirloom, inherited through the generations. See his article "The First White President" (2017) published in *The Atlantic* for a shrewd analysis of Trump's (not-so) bizarre ascendancy to Presidency.

³¹ Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1244-56.

of whiteness (as identity and as nationalism)? Prior to the outbreak of white nationalists into the streets of Charlottesville, these nationalists were spreading their inflammatory remarks on a host of social media sites. Notably on Twitter, these nationalists claimed that “there is a war against you, white men and white women, on the streets of our cities.” In basic xenophobic fashion, they asserted that “foreigners are continuing to float across the border to ensure that this trend of white displacement and genocide continues.”³² Perhaps whiteness sees itself in a losing struggle for recognition in the neoliberal order of things—where the Hegelian script of master and slave is reversed, and whiteness seeks to restore the balance.

These anxieties and fears towards diminishing access to resources, now and in the future, are not limited to blatant white nationalists. Indeed, many journalists and thinkers have attempted to explain away the rise of Trump (and white nationalism) as reactionary politics towards a defunct American Dream for white families as American factory cities seem to turn into empty economic shells. As Linda Alcoff argues, a spectre in the form of a demographic and economic shift “haunts” Euro-America as the “white population” is projected to recede into “minority status” by 2050. Alcoff writes, “a specter [haunts] the United States as well as Europe, producing a white reaction that can take pretty hysterical forms, although it is often carefully cloaked to avoid the charge of racism.”³³ In other words, whiteness perceives a much larger hurt within the memory-making of 9/11 and other historical artefacts such as the Robert E. Lee statues, which engenders the lived fear of being replaced, displaced, and erased along with their monuments and symbols of superiority.

David Roediger offers another perspective on this logic in his analysis of the white worker. Roediger argues that whiteness has gone hand in hand with the white worker’s sense of identity. As such, “whiteness was a way in which white workers responded to a fear of dependency on wage labour and to the necessities of capitalist

³² New York Times, “The Fight for the White Race: What some of the Charlottesville Participants Stand For,” *The New York Times*, last modified August 19th, 2017.

³³ Linda Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), 4.

work discipline.”³⁴ Not only did white workers utilize this whiteness (as property) to distance themselves from racialized workers who were also exploited by the American Dream, it allowed them to think of themselves as always better off. By virtue of possessing whiteness, the white worker believed they had a bountiful economic future. Yet, as the average worker increasingly identifies as a person of colour, and as labour is displaced by neoliberal policies, the white worker’s fears and anxieties towards the system that he or she depends on ignites into resentment and fierce white lash.³⁵ Hence, white nationalists’ and President Trump’s call for uniting the right or uniting the nation against economic displacement, demographic shifts, and, as I will show, future terrorist attacks.

Whiteness unifies as a formidable group identity—ripe for the picking by Trump to install a white nationalism in his discourse—under the assertion that this group is wronged by an openly hostile world, a world plagued by terrorists and unfair deals. In other words, whiteness as identity infuses its energy from what Wendy Brown calls resentment. Borrowing from Nietzsche, Brown describes resentment as a realm of minority politics where their “injury,” by way of exclusion from the “white middle-class ideal,” becomes the foundation of their group identity.³⁶ For Brown, this resentment produces a kind of politics that “presents itself as a self-affirmation [but is] predicated on and requiring sustained rejection by a ‘hostile world.’”³⁷ Although whiteness in the context of Euro-America does not fit the criteria of minority politics, I do think that the current mobilization of whiteness and white identity appropriates minority modes of politics to render their claims as something recognizable and legitimate.³⁸ Indeed, on the

³⁴ David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. (London: Verso, 2007), 13

³⁵ American commentator and author, Van Jones, introduced the term “white lash” into the discourse on President Trump’s election, which baffled political commentators across the spectrum. Jones remarked on Trump’s election during a CNN interview: “This was a white-lash. This was a white-lash against a changing country, it was a white-lash against a black president, in part, and that’s the part where the pain comes.”

³⁶ Brown, *States of Injury*, 55.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

³⁸ In the short and viral documentary produced by Vice Media, *Race and Terror* (2017), which followed white nationalists on the ground during their Charlottesville march, one media jockey, Christopher Cantwell, boasted that the right is borrowing every mobilization trick from the leftist playbook to be “finally” seen and heard.

surface, the white claim to barred access to the middle-class ideal does not appear radical. But these claims quickly mutate into anti-immigration and racist “solutions,” which have devastating material consequences.

2.2.2 The Visibility of Wounds

Up until now, I have predominantly been thinking through how “wounds” enter the politics of white nationalism and white identity. Despite claims to a wounded identity, however, how whiteness takes up space is quite different. How do we come “to see” (injured) white (male) bodies? Indeed, the discourses of injury, wounds, and vulnerability popularly deployed by whiteness does not discursively produce vulnerable, injured, or wounded white bodies in space.³⁹ Rather, whiteness embodies as hard, armoured, or invulnerable, which I seek to explore further in the next two sections.

I identify this stark difference between embodiment and discourse as a contradistinction that not only emerges within the political mobilization of white nationalists in Charlottesville or the rhetoric of Donald Trump, but that this contradistinction also permeates political-philosophical projects that have attempted to grapple with the event that is 9/11 and the War on Terror more generally. Much like how the “wound” enters politics, 9/11 *qua* wound has been a talking point of philosophy in this alleged time of terror. I take this as a point of analysis because this philosophical-political knowledge production reproduces and naturalizes whiteness in the way it theorizes the event that is 9/11. As feminist scholar Sunera Thobani frequently brings to our attention throughout her work, Euro-American knowledge production often haphazardly reproduces systems of dominance, violence, and imperialism even when these projects seek to contest these systems.⁴⁰ As such, I explore Judith Butler’s *Frames of War*, Jacques Derrida’s response to Giovanna Borradori in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, and Jean Baudrillard’s *The Spirit of Terrorism*. These are thinkers who have contributed critical work on the War on Terror and terrorism after September 11, 2001.

³⁹ At a first glance, this might appear contradictory to the matter of bodies that Judith Butler describes in *Bodies That Matter* (1993). That is to say, the idea that “discourse produces what it names.”

⁴⁰ Sunera Thobani, “The Secularity of Empire, the Violence of Critique: Muslims, Race, and Sexuality in the Politics of Knowledge-Production,” *Hypatia* 23, no. 3 (2017): 717.

Nevertheless, my intent here is to demonstrate how these thinkers—although they offer useful insights into philosophy and politics that emerged with the event named 9/11—both invisibilise whiteness and legitimate its claim to a wounded identity. Particularly, Baudrillard and Derrida render absent the materiality of wounded white (male) bodies as they fetishize the symbolic and structural wounding of 9/11. Beginning with Butler, I hope to return the body as the primary object of analysis in these dialogues insofar as the body is the site or sight of the wound. However, Butler, in her ontology of vulnerability, neglects how vulnerability is not only racialized but unequally distributed among bodies. Only certain bodies, in other words, have material access to hardness. Yet, I wish also to show how these thinkers overdetermine the historical and symbolic significance of the fall of the Twin Towers, contributing to the exceptionalisation of this so-called wound.

2.3 Wounds Without Bodies: The Symbolic Imagery of 9/11 in Political-Philosophical Knowledge Production

Amongst the exoticised torches and Confederate flags, shields and assault weapons were in the hands of many of the Unite the Right protestors during their march to protect a beloved statue of the Confederate soldier, Robert E. Lee (see figure 1). Ironically, Lee opposed the erection of statues and memorials of the bygone Confederate days because he believed they closed the wounds of the civil war rather than leaving them open to fester and agitate, in something akin to resentment. In the cultural memory of Confederate loyalists, Lee, who as a soldier was wounded during the Mexican-American war from 1846 to 1848, represents the stoic, hard *male* body that has been forfeited in the softening of the nation. Sara Ahmed makes a striking correlation between softness and the nation in right-wing rhetoric: “indeed, the metaphor of ‘soft touch’ suggests that the nation’s borders and defenses are like skin.”⁴¹ I enter “softness” into the discourse because President Trump reminds his audience that America’s borders must become hard with cement walls and military outfitting—a hard nation is hardly a vulnerable nation. Indeed, the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville heeded Trump’s wisdom, embodying the hardness of their beloved male hero through the clinging to shields, kevlar, and

⁴¹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 2.

weapons as if America was entrenched in a civil war over a softening nation.

Unfortunately for the protestors, their skin is not chemically augmented or supernaturally imbued with impermeability like so many heroes that have filled cinema with narratives and myths of an America (as the centre of the world) in need of protecting from an alien invasion. What I deduce from Charlottesville and the political-philosophical responses to September 11, 2001, is a somewhat irresolvable sense of vulnerability and invulnerability that, I argue, finds its acme in the “time of terror.”



Figure 1: Participants in the Unite the Right Rally with shields, kevlar, and tiki torches.

In this section, I propose that statues, symbolic edifices, and the national body itself, stand in for all other white wounded bodies. Slavoj Žižek makes the observation that in the media coverage of September 11, 2001, “it is surprising how little of the actual carnage we see—no dismembered bodies, no blood, no desperate faces of dying people.”⁴² To be sure, 9/11 has largely been memorialized as the moment of the American nation coming together or unifying. Hence, the absent imagery of the dead and wounded bodies of almost 9000 persons at the site of Ground Zero. In New York, the 9/11 Memorial and Museum as well as the Ground Zero Museum Workshop are dedicated to preserving the memory of 9/11, offering contrasting imagery that gives credence to Žižek’s observation. Particularly with the photo collection curated in the Ground Zero Museum, viewers bear witness to pillars of smoke and fire, the torched and contorted steel skeleton of the World Trade Center, and the stoic first responders

⁴² Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (London: Verso, 2003), 15.

attending to the disaster, who are predominantly white men that are depicted as hard bodies. Even Bush in his address to the nation, as quoted earlier, seemed to substitute bodily injury with infrastructural damage. In other words, the wound that tends to represent Ground Zero is seemingly represented without the materiality of wounded human bodies. As I show, the nation and its symbols are depicted as always at risk and as vulnerable in place of white bodies in an expanding archive of terror. Indeed, these archives and other representations of 9/11 (philosophical or otherwise) foreclose from view the materiality of wounded bodies within the visual and textual fields.

Yet, in juxtaposition to white bodies, racialized bodies are frequently depicted as injured, damaged, or pathologically unable to “heal” in these visual and textual fields. Commenting on Canadian representations of Indigenous persons within the neoliberal industries of medicine and care, Sherene Razack explains that Canadians have become familiarized with Indigenous bodies as ontologically vulnerable, and, as such, “sickness and dysfunction” populate law, medicine, and government documents that frame or picture Indigenous persons.⁴³ The literature of terrorist or terrorism studies dutifully renders terrorist *qua* Muslim bodies as mentally debilitated or wounded by social and cultural upbringing as a way to explain their vulnerability to indoctrination into the so-called barbarism of Islam and radical extremism.⁴⁴ In other words, the vulnerability of racialized bodies is openly rendered as a natural fact of existence rather than something that can be prevented or protected.

Alongside these archives, offering a visual depiction of the unequal distribution of vulnerable and wounded bodies in the visual field, is what W.J.T. Mitchell has coined as the “Abu Ghraib Archive.” With the invasion of Iraq underway by America, photos of the Abu Ghraib detention centre surfaced, depicting Arab and Muslim bodies being tortured, humiliated, and wounded by American soldiers. Characterizing these photos as war images, Mitchell chillingly paints the picture of these photos’ purpose: “the wounds are not meant to inflict pain on the actual victim. They are meant to be transmitted in visual

⁴³ Sherene Razack, *Dying From Improvement: Inquests and Inquiries into Indigenous Death in Custody*. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2015), 20.

⁴⁴ See Fitzgerald, Puar, Rai

or verbal images that will terrorize and traumatize the victim's kinfolk."⁴⁵ In these documented scenes of captivity, not only do these photos relate, as Hartman suggested earlier, injury and personhood, but they relate terror and enjoyment, engendering the very subjectivity of whiteness as invulnerable to injury.⁴⁶ As Butler points out in her own reading of this archive, bound up in the act of torture is both the production of the Arab (or Muslim) subject and the white subject. Butler offers an important insight, however, into how whiteness is pictured in its very absence outside these photos' frames.⁴⁷ Butler attends to the ways in which this archive—as well as the broader Euro-American media empire—renders “the [white] subject's own destructiveness as righteous and its own destructibility unthinkable.”⁴⁸ In the case of the archive of terror, by concealing or precluding injured white bodies through specific framing techniques within both the visual and textual fields, whiteness tames or coaxes its anxiety towards its own destructibility, which is less the unthinkable, and more an open secret. As such, I think through below how Euro-American philosophical-political knowledge production after September 11, 2001 conceals wounded white bodies for them to merely surface on the edge of the frame.

2.3.1 Ontology of Vulnerability

Theorizing bodies and violence, Butler posits a fundamental ontology of vulnerability shared by all life forms. In an attempt to understand mourning, grievability, and violence after September 11, 2001, Butler refers to this ontology in terms of precarity. For Butler, life is inherently precarious, and through recognizing this precarity that belongs to every organic being, the Euro-American philosophical-political project can properly think through community in a globalized, interconnected world. In light of this shared precarity, Butler asks: “Is there a way that we might struggle for autonomy in many spheres, yet also consider the demands that are imposed on us by living in a world of

⁴⁵ W.J.T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 97.

⁴⁶ Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 7. In chapter two, I re-read these scenes as “scenes of captivity.”

⁴⁷ Mitchell, *Cloning Terror*, 123. Mitchell calls this the shadow archive—although unseen, its scenes are present in their absence.

⁴⁸ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable*. (London: Verso, 2016), 47.

beings who are, by definition, physically dependent on one another, physically vulnerable to one another?”⁴⁹ Indeed, Butler attempts to disavow any shame or fear that one might feel living in their vulnerability. In fact, vulnerability for Butler opens up, aside from the possibility of destruction, the possibility for support, care, and being together.⁵⁰ As such, for Butler, vulnerability is something that must be embraced rather than rejected—especially in a War on Terror that is contingent upon bodily vulnerability, both in the sense that the enemy is something to be destroyed and September 11, 2001 reminded the world that Euro-American empire does indeed share vulnerability with the rest of this world, despite centuries of myths that suggest otherwise.

In this ontology, Butler theorizes the body, of course, but a body which seems to transcend the work of racializing technologies. In other words, Butler does not place enough critical pressure on the ways in which vulnerability is unequally distributed within racializing assemblages and technologies. I think Butler is right in saying that “the body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch, and to violence.”⁵¹ But how this vulnerability is lived—how it materializes across time and space—is radically different for racialized bodies where vulnerability is not only their lived experience, but is what white supremacist projects, such as settler-colonialism, exploit for their continued opulence.

Yet, an even more pressing problem emerges from Butler’s ontology of vulnerability: whiteness rears its head at the periphery of Butler’s ontology. Thobani, responding to a host of white feminist scholars, shrewdly points out that their responses to the War on Terror, including Butler’s, articulate new, privileged formulations of whiteness. Critiquing Butler, Thobani writes, “the use of such ‘primal vulnerability’ as the primary lens for an examination of an imperialist war places her discussion in a liberal-individualist frame so abstract as to severely hinder understandings of how geopolitical power relations are being restructured.”⁵² To put it another way, Butler avoids how vulnerability is redistributed in the War on Terror through racializing technologies,

⁴⁹ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. (London: Verso, 2003), 27.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵¹ Butler, *Precarious Life*, 31.

⁵² Sunera Thobani, “White Wars: Western feminisms and the War on Terror,” *Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (2007): 177.

neoliberal agendas, and globalization, which function to naturalize this unequal distribution of vulnerability. Thobani makes one more point that is important to consider: by positing vulnerability as something necessarily ontological to life, Butler invisibilises whiteness and its imperial pet projects, continuing a long-standing tradition of “racial power” in the Enlightenment heritage.⁵³ Certainly, whiteness is present in its absence in this ontology of vulnerability like white bodies are present in their absence from the photos’ frames in the Abu Ghraib archive.

2.3.2 Wounds To Come

Whereas Butler theorizes bodily vulnerability in response to the War on Terror, Derrida and Baudrillard think through vulnerability in terms of a temporality of the wound. However, the wound becomes symbolic insofar as structures and monuments are rendered as metonyms for the body itself in their reading of September 11, 2001. The open wound on American symbolism haunts the status of invulnerability that America claimed prior to 9/11. In their own way, they invisibilise whiteness, particularly as something injurable, insofar as they avoid disclosing the materiality of the body within the rubble of Ground Zero, the collateral damage of drone strikes, and the thousands of wounded veterans who return home from one invasion after the other. Indeed, the wound they characterize is symbolic in essence, representing a closed, paranoid temporality where only one possible future informs the present: that of the next terrorist attack, which demands an impossible level of preparedness and preventative measures. Of course, this instills unease in the neoliberal machinery that feeds from fine-tuned calculations of profit and risk. Yet, that does not mean bodily wounds of whiteness are completely veiled. Instead, they fester on the margins of these responses. As Elaine Scarry writes, recounting the structure of war, “human wounds are not [...] escorted out of view but are instead escorted from the center of view to the margins.”⁵⁴ As such and anxiously, glimpses of the injured white body appear in their philosophical dialogue with the War on Terror.

⁵³ Thobani, “White Wars,” 177.

⁵⁴ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 72.

Through the cinematography of disaster, Giovanna Borradori introduces her seminal text, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, evoking the atmosphere of the apocalypse in her description of September 11, 2001. Like any vivid recounting of the event(s), it reads like a script from a movie.⁵⁵ Even though Borradori recalls people plummeting from the Twin Towers (into the margins), her emphasis focuses on the infrastructural devastation that accompanied the attacks. A burning America becomes the protagonist of her “philosophical story” that she wishes to tell as she evokes the iconography of civilizational progress of the nation:

All communication was suddenly cut: the phone and the Internet were down, no public transportation was available, the airports were closed and so were railway stations and bridges [...] As the World Trade Center collapsed, the escalation of events looked thoroughly open-ended: the Pentagon was in flames, the President evacuated, and reports of an explosion at the Capitol had just created a stampede of senators and congressmen. Until the fourth hijacked plane was confirmed to have gone down in Pennsylvania, like many, I was convinced that the worst was still *to come*.⁵⁶

Skyscrapers, streets, malls, and monuments compose the materiality of the body politic, names itself America. Built to endure like any good civilization, these structures were destined to withstand the test of time. Yet, as Baudrillard acknowledges in his fetishization of the Twin Tower’s architecture, the American Dream included within its myth the disappearance of the Twin Towers, and by extension, of course, the crumbling of the urban centre, which loops into the visual field with every summer blockbuster season.⁵⁷ Perhaps this helps to explain the extreme fascination with the reinvigoration of history at the moment of the (short-lived) demise of neoliberal capital’s centre. As

⁵⁵ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), ix. Borradori is clear in her remembering of the morning that the “apocalypse” unfolding around her and on her television was like a movie.

⁵⁶ Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, x. My emphasis.

⁵⁷ Antonio Sánchez-Escalonilla. “Hollywood and the Rhetoric of Panic: The Popular Genres of Action and Fantasy in the Wake of the 9/11 Attacks.” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 38, no. 1 (2010): 14.

Borradori reminds us, this was “the most devastating terrorist attack in history.”⁵⁸ Of course, one could muddy the waters here and interrogate the claim by asking: whose history? What is the onto-epistemological content of a terrorist attack? Nevertheless, two things will hopefully appear apparent in the readings of Derrida and Baudrillard. On the one hand, the wound that is September 11, 2001 references a material mark on the body politic that is America. On the other hand, this wound marks a temporal fear and anxiety towards the future commonly characterized as a fear of the next 9/11.

Indeed, Derrida also focuses on this infrastructural carnage, effectuating a relationship between wound and the materiality of the urban centre. He also discusses this wound in terms of his philosophical concept of the “to come.” In Derrida’s rendering of the event, the infrastructural becomes—to echo Ahmed—like skin, like the flesh of the nation, and as such it becomes fragile and vulnerable in its exposure to the (hostile) world. Derrida writes an eloquent musing on what the attack means in perhaps its failure to mean anything and the stickiness of the name-date that finds its residue in the rubble:

Is, then, what was touched, wounded, or traumatized by this double crash only some particular thing or other, a “what” or a “who,” buildings, strategic urban structures, symbols of political, military, or capitalist power, or a considerable number of people of many different origins living on the body of a national territory that had remained untouched for so long? No, it was not only all that but perhaps especially, through all that, the conceptual, semantic, and one could even say hermeneutic apparatus that might have allowed one to see coming, to comprehend, interpret, describe, speak of, and name “September 11”—and in so doing to neutralize the traumatism and come to terms with it through a “work of mourning.” What I am suggesting here might appear abstract and overly reliant on what seems like a simple conceptual or discursive activity, a question of knowledge; it is as if I were in fact content to say that what is terrible about “September 11,” what remains “infinite” in

⁵⁸ Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, x.

this wound, is that we do not know what it is and so do not know how to describe, identify, or even name it.⁵⁹

For Derrida, September 11, 2001 is the absolute event because there is no name for it that could ever be exhumed from the ruins. Further, there is no prior episteme of vulnerability that could have calculated it. Hence, the infernally inadequate name-date, 9/11.

If the philosopher might be a physician of the political, then Derrida offers an important pathological diagnosis of the event *qua* wound.⁶⁰ The event under investigation becomes very much a wound for Derrida—a permanent mark on temporality and historicity which remains in the purview of the American visual field. As such, “wound” as diagnostic language appears five more times throughout Derrida’s interview. However, Derrida seems to locate this wound not so much in the geographical coordinates of Ground Zero, but in language itself. The wound is the name-date, September 11, 2001 or 9/11.

As a philosopher of the metaphysical trace, which is the sinew that connects the past and future with the present, the name-date becomes an investment into more than the pain of the past injury like Brown’s resentment.⁶¹ The political function of the wound, for Derrida, is contingent upon the notion that a future wound or a future pain is always *to come*. Derrida writes, “it comes from the to-come, from the future, a future so radically to come that it resists even the grammar of the future anterior.”⁶² This concept of the to-come describes not so much a deferral, which he might be known for with his tacit

⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida, “Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides—A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida,” in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, ed. by Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 93-94. One of the most striking things I find with this passage is that, like President Bush, Derrida equates the wound with the infrastructure. It recalls Bush’s speech to the nation in which he talked about the wound on the Pentagon.

⁶⁰ See Nandita Biswas Mellamphy’s *The Three Stigmata of Friedrich Nietzsche* (2010), where Mellamphy discusses the political physiology in Nietzsche’s thought. Mellamphy develops the role of the philosopher-physician by reading what she calls Nietzsche’s “three stigmata” or “wounds” that persist throughout his corpus: eternal reoccurrence, great politics, and the philosopher of the future. I borrow this concept of the *philosopher-physician* because Derrida, in writing the pathology of the event as well as diagnosing the auto-immunity of Euro-American democracy in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* and elsewhere, assumes the role of interpreting the physiology of the political.

⁶¹ Brown, *States of Injury*, 74. Brown writes further that the wound or injury, as a mark on memory, acts as an “investment in its own pain, through its refusal to make itself in the present.”

⁶² Derrida, “Autoimmunity,” 91.

monument excavated from *différance*, but rather the calling forth of future iterations.⁶³ These future iterations do not fulfill the destiny of their coming, however, as one does not know what it is in advance of its arrival. As such, the possibility of the to-come remains forever (im)possible: hence its ocular trick of deferral. The nature of the to-come, of this wound, generates the affect and effect of terror. Recall Borradori who explained in scenes unfolding on her television: she did not know if the worst was yet to come.

In this excavation of the wound from the site of Ground Zero, Derrida displaces the material bodies that bear this wound, or perhaps buries them further beneath the double crash he brings to our attention. Derrida asserts the ontological claim, almost antithetically to Butler's ontology, that America was once invulnerable insofar as it remained "untouched" for so long. In the unforeseen event of being touched by the other, America recoiled in its newly discovered vulnerability and the fear of being touched once again. I will reiterate Thobani's critique of Butler and white feminists here as I believe it applies equally in Derrida's and Borradori's case: "This framing foregrounds, however unintentionally, the experience of the (white) American subject, who has suddenly and graphically discovered its own vulnerability."⁶⁴ Indeed, this framing—intentionally or unintentionally—reproduces whiteness as the only imaginable wounded subject, despite failing to draw attention to the (white) bodies—home and abroad—that suffer from material wounds.⁶⁵ Democratic America unifies within Derrida's discourse as the wounded nation.

2.3.3 Wound as the Absolute Historical Event

If "an event always inflicts a wound in the everyday course of history," as Derrida postulates, then what or whose wounds count as wounds in the grand theatre of Euro-American historicity?⁶⁶ What is the historical content of September 11, 2001? The content of history has been debated since the eruption of post-modernism, since the fall

⁶³ Ibid., 97.

⁶⁴ Thobani, "White Wars," 176.

⁶⁵ The greatest tragedy of 9/11, if we are quantifying tragedies by statistics, is that three times as many persons were injured at the site of Ground Zero. Yet, even more persons have been maimed and killed in the resulting military crusades, which continue under Trump's presidency.

⁶⁶ Derrida, "Autoimmunity," 96.

of the Soviet Union and the big win of global capitalism, and now since 9/11. Regardless, 9/11 might find its “historical content” rather controversially in the touching of what went untouched for so long, that is, the double crash. But as Jean-Joseph Goux bluntly puts it: “it is not as if a meteor fell on New York City on September 11, 2001. Even if the tragic events of 9/11 are disconcerting politically as well as morally, even if 9/11 upsets all of our ethical, religious, and strategic categories, it was not completely unexpected.”⁶⁷ Goux’s observation is not too distant from Derrida’s own auto-immune diagnostic reading of the event insofar as the neoliberal order of things lined up the dominos for the faintest of touch for them all to fall over. However, Derrida, in preserving the historical content or symbolic significance of 9/11, concedes to the onto-epistemological redundancy that “we do not know what it is and so do not know how to describe.”⁶⁸

Baudrillard offers a different reading of September 11, 2001—and yet, he shares some sensibilities with Derrida. For Baudrillard too, September 11, 2001 re-energized history, and, as such, Baudrillard possesses an unfailing faith in the symbolic significance of this event. As he begins his collection of essays on the attack, “throughout the stagnation of the 1990s, events were ‘on strike’ [...] well, the strike is over now. Events are not on strike anymore. With the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, we might even be said to have before us the absolute event, the ‘mother’ of all events.”⁶⁹ In naming September 11, 2001 as the “mother of all events,” Baudrillard contorts the comfortable, linear course of history. Like Derrida’s trace, September 11, 2001 radically shifts the frame in which events are henceforth perceived. As the matriarch of history, it engenders all events: past and future. History, then, hinges on the “absolute event” that is 9/11. Yet, this is all quite precariously conditional on the symbolic significance of September 11, 2001, which Goux rightfully troubles. In other words, September 11, 2001, among other things noted above, does not necessarily symbolize the inevitable convergence of temporalities and histories into the apex of Western time (the West meets East, or Islam meets secularism, intertwining their destinies henceforth). It was already

⁶⁷ Jean-Joseph Goux, “Untimely Islam: September 11th and the Philosophies of History,” *SubStance* 37, no. 1 (2008): 54.

⁶⁸ Derrida, “Autoimmunity,” 94.

⁶⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism*. (London: Verso, 2012), 3-2.

happening, and 9/11 is but one consequence of these collisions—this collision was merely materially demarcated on American territory. Goux insists, “What makes current events enigmatic is that they are the consequence of a tremendous and dangerous collision of two temporalities and temporal modes.”⁷⁰ To be sure, these temporal collisions are traceable to at least the violent contacts and collisions that narrate colonialism. Ultimately, within the context of Baudrillard’s analysis the work of the exceptional signifier in securing a particular narrative of Euro-American history that posits America as the exceptionally wounded subject, alienating alternative histories that suggest the contrary.

By way of example, Baudrillard determines that America persisted without any notable wound in the course of history until the fateful morning of the double crash. Baudrillard writes:

The Americans lacked such a wound (at Pearl Harbor they suffered an act of war, not a symbolic attack). An ideal reverse of fortune for a nation at least wounded at its heart and free, having atoned for it, to exert its power in all good conscience. A situation science fiction dreamed of from the beginning: that some obscure force would wipe them out and which, until that point, merely existed in their unconscious (or some other recess of their minds).⁷¹

Baudrillard then proceeds to fantasize and fetishize the architecture of the Twin Towers. The event earns its status as *absolute*, it seems, by both its architectural and capital materiality (as the hub of World Trade). How do so many historical catastrophes in the geographical context of America go unwarranted as significant events? What renders it possible to make the claim that America lacked a wound for so long? Indeed, Baudrillard centres a symbol of whiteness in American historicity as the ultimate bearer of wounds.

I am struck, however, by Baudrillard’s tracing of “wound” to the fancies of

⁷⁰ Goux, “Untimely Islam,” 55. I hold a modicum of caution towards Goux’s all-to-easy geographical binary between the East and the West, Islamism and (secular) Christianity—a duality which he leaves untroubled and summons the spectre of Samuel Huntington’s nefarious text, *Clash of Civilizations* (1996). In short, this duality effaces the myriad of other temporalities, histories, and chronologies that persists in face of *and* refuse neoliberalism, colonialism, and religious-spiritual hegemony.

⁷¹ Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism*, 61-62.

science fiction. Hollywood has proven that the disappearance of the Twin Towers, and civilized America more broadly is a constant paranoia embedded in the consciousness of America. However, America's dreaming of this disappearance might find a historical trace in the institution of slavery. In naming the Black Man as a wound—"the symbol of a person at the mercy of a whip and suffering"—Mbembe offers an all too apparent alternative historical rendering of the wound.⁷² Too easily can philosophical-political knowledge production render racialized bodies outside the history or the body of the nation. As such, alternative histories of wounded subjects and bodies hang in the wake of Euro-American empire.

For example, Mbembe asserts that the spectre of disappearance, extinction, and genocide of whiteness that haunts white America exists with the plantation. Mbembe writes, "A paranoid institution, the plantation lived under a perpetual regime of fear. It combined aspects of a camp, a pen, a paramilitary society. The slave master could deploy one form of coercion after another, create chains of dependence between him and his slaves, and alternate between terror and generosity, but his existence was always haunted by the specter of elimination."⁷³ In brief, then, whiteness does not find its fears, its anxieties, and its paranoia exclusively within the realm of science fiction. Extinction, extermination, and genocide continue to fester in the recess of white minds and memory, manifesting, as we will now see, as a paranoia towards the im/migrant and black bodies in newfound institutions that take the shape of the camp.

2.3.4 Preparing for the Worst To Come

Reading the work of Frank Wilderson as well as considering her own blackness in relation to the wake of slavery, Christina Sharpe notes that black wounds are not analogous in any way, shape, or form to other renditions in the politics of wounds. As Sharpe writes, "the suffering of black people cannot be analogized; [...] 'we' do not experience suffering on the same plain of conflict, since the Black is characterized, as Wilderson tells us, by gratuitous violence."⁷⁴ When tracing the politics of the wound,

⁷² Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason* (Cambridge: Duke University Press, 2017), 18.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁴ Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 29.

then, through subaltern politics, Enlightenment-inspired philosophical-projects, and national discourses in the wake of September 11, 2001, I do not seek to catalogue or compare wounds, injury, and suffering. In short, the wound that belongs to racialized bodies is often not an analogy nor analogous, but a lived, material experience that at times becomes discursively displaced in its reality by the twin discourses of unification and healing (that belong to white nationalism).

Sharpe offers an additional poignant moment of reflection in her reading of black death and black maiming that is an everyday lived experience. In light of these “paranoid temporalities,” that is, the fear that the worst is yet to come, evoked by Borradori, Derrida, and Baudrillard and institutionalized by Trump, Bush, and other white nationalists, it is Sharpe who refuses the naturalization of this temporality. Sharpe writes, “the constant production of Black death *is* and *as* necessary returns us to the singularity. But just as the weather is always ripe for Black death, the singularity also produces Black resistances and refusals.”⁷⁵ In other words, instead of conceding to a politics of wounds that engenders paranoia, which for whiteness unleashes storms of black and Arab death, Sharpe maintains the possibility for a future that is otherwise through resistance and refusal. Indeed, alternative temporalities—thinking otherwise than the epistemic trajectory preordains—has been a significant political project for radical black thinkers as well as for Indigenous scholars and activists. In perhaps what is his most renowned text, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes, “Let us not lose time in useless laments or sickening mimicry. Let us leave this Europe which never stops talking of man yet massacres him at every one of its street corners, at every corner of the world.”⁷⁶ For Fanon, finishing his final text on the horizon of death, progress or healing may only be achieved outside the purviews of Euro-American philosophical-political knowledge production—knowledge which routinely hierarchizes the human body into genres for exploitation and elimination to preserve and protect whiteness.⁷⁷

It is always the black parent, however, in the context of policed black bodies, who

⁷⁵ Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 124. Sharpe’s emphasis.

⁷⁶ Frantz Fanon. *The Wretched of the Earth*. (New York: Grove Press. 2004), 235.

⁷⁷ Sylvia Wynter. “Unsettling The Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument.” *The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 269.

must prepare their child for the worst possible outcome that is scarcely included within the paranoid temporalities of whiteness. In 2016, the publisher Jubilee released the video, “Dear Child – When Black Parents Have to Give the Talk,” revealing the necessary and ongoing conversation black parents have with their children about living in a world where their bodies are targeted for violence and extinction.⁷⁸ “I need you to always be prepared and be on your guard,” one mother says to the camera with a solemn look in her eye. The highly personal conversations repeated in the short video showcase how persons that are racialized by state institutions must always be prepared for the worst possible confrontation with whiteness (either in its institutional form or as it is embodied by a white police officer and their doppelgängers, the Unite the Right protestors). Of course, after 9/11 the American discourse along with economical and foreign policy shifted to being prepared for the next terrorist attack in what Deepa Kumar has called the “Bush Doctrine”.⁷⁹ I proceed, then, in the final section to think through what “preparedness” denotes within the paranoid temporalities of white nationalism.

2.4 Paranoid Temporalities: Preparedness in a Time of Terror

The streets of Charlottesville on August 11, 2018, reflected the paramilitary impulse at the centre of whiteness that Mbembe speaks of, where white bodies brandished firearms in an attempt to “take back” what they believed rightfully belonged to them. Postcolonial critic Anne McClintock rightfully characterizes this impulse as imperialism’s—and thus by extension whiteness’—megalomania.⁸⁰ Proud white nationalist Christopher Cantwell is the epitome of this megalomaniacal character. In the 2017 documentary co-produced by Vice and HBO, *Charlottesville: Race and Terror*, correspondent Elle Reeve interviewed Cantwell in his hotel room in the concluding night of the march. He casually tossed an AR-15 style assault rifle onto his bed along with three pistols and a knife. He tells Reeves with a crooked smile:

⁷⁸ *Dear Child – When Black Parents Have to Give the Talk*, (The Jubilee Project, Nov 3, 2016), *YouTube*.

⁷⁹ Deepa Kumar. *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), 113-138.

⁸⁰ Anne McClintock. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*. (New York: Routledge. 1995), 26.

I came pretty well prepared for this thing today. Kal-tech 93AT, .380 cp. Glock 19, 9mm. Ruger LC9, also 9mm. And there's a knife. Well, I actually have another AK in that bag over there. You lose track of your guns, huh? I'd say it was worth it. We knew we were gonna meet a lot of resistance. The fact that nobody on our side died, I'd go ahead and call that points for us. The fact that none of our people killed anybody unjustly, I think is a plus for us. And I think that we showed our rivals that we won't be cowed.⁸¹

As a harbinger of the ethno-state, Cantwell's exorbitant display of potential violence reveals this megalomaniacal character animating white nationalism. Following McClintock, however, I wish to read this moment in the hotel room as an ambivalent scene. Reading the scene of "discovery" in the colonial literary narrative, McClintock writes, "[this] augural scene [...] becomes a scene of ambivalence, suspended between imperial megalomania, with its fantasy of unstoppable rapine—and a contradictory fear of engulfment, with its fantasy of dismemberment and emasculation."⁸² If there is any discovery to be claimed here it is the discovery of America's vulnerability with September 11, 2001. As much as Cantwell displays his capacity to kill, wound, and maim his perceived enemies (in which he describes as commies, animalized blacks, and the Jewish community), beneath his bravado is paranoia, which is exposed in his military-esque preparation for the march.

In this final section, I contend that there is a tangible relationship between white embodiment and the paranoid temporalities produced by whiteness. That is, whiteness embodies hardness, such as in the form of pseudo-military garb, in anticipation of future hurt. Whiteness embodies in such a way to prepare for the worst possible outcome. Indeed, the analysis could find its beginning in an exegesis of the to-come. That is to say, Cantwell totes an exaggerated arsenal with him into Charlottesville because he is always thinking of the next attack to come. After all, Cantwell cites September 11, 2001 as one

⁸¹ *Charlottesville: Race and Terror*, with Elle Reeve, produced by *Vice* and *HBO*, 2017. The interview continues with Cantwell expressing his satisfaction with the murder of Heather Hayes.

⁸² Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 26.

of many reasons for the increasing visibility of white nationalists like himself.⁸³ Other Alt-Righters, too, cite 9/11 as the penultimate terrorist attack, speculating what the “next 9/11” might look like in actuality. Regardless, in preparing to do pre-emptive violence, Cantwell is preparing for an(other) attack on whiteness. Another voice in the Alt-Right—Vincent Law, a blogger for Alt-Right think tanks, media outlets, and podcasts—frequently cites the white genocide by and white dispossession from im/migrants and terrorists as necessitating a call to action. Indeed, for Law the right must unite and arm themselves to take the fight to the tyrannical left-leaning government and invading illegal aliens. Of course, these sentiments were reverberated throughout the Unite the Right rally. Angered after the municipality prohibited the rally from hosting Robert Spencer and other white voices at Emancipation Park, a former Grand Wizard expressed his anger towards the continued ethnic cleansings of whites in America, which was, for him, abetted by the government.⁸⁴ In short, for the Unite the Right rally, the American way of life is (always already) at risk of future hurt.

The rhetoric shared by Alt-Righters, Trump, and other white nationalists is always in the future tense. As Derrida suggests, September 11, 2001 is hardly a memory. Instead, it is an open wound that offers predictive power for the future to come. Furthermore, white nationalists disassociate “genocide” from its historical and geographical contexts, to echo Mbembe, to invest in the supposedly ongoing suffering, vulnerability, and wounds of whiteness in the present and future.

These discursive maneuvers can be found within speeches by President Bush (and later President Trump). While the United States has been preparing for the worst possible outcome since at least the Cold War, September 11, 2001 offered the prime opportunity for President Bush to raise the debt ceiling, allowing the expanse and purchase of the military’s arsenal and investment into radical surveillance technologies. Reminding Americans of their new-found softness, Bush’s immediate response to 9/11 was to harden the nation in preparation against future attacks:

⁸³ After Reeves exposes the names of white terrorists, Cantwell retorts, “but can you tell me the names of all 19 hijackers on 9/11”?

⁸⁴ *Charlottesville: Race and Terror*, with Elle Reeve, produced by Vice and HBO, 2017.

The next priority of my budget is to do everything possible to protect our citizens and strength our nation against the ongoing threat of another attack. Time and distance from the events of September 11th will not make us safer unless we act on its lessons. America is no longer protected by vast oceans. We are protected from attack only by vigorous action abroad.⁸⁵

Indeed, there is a striking resemblance between the embodiment of the Unite the Right rally and Bush's discourse on a nation that needs to protect itself from further wounding. But it also expresses the seeding of resentment in (white) American nationalism to follow from Bush's speech. In other words, America, Cantwell, and the Unite the Right rally believe they are always under threat within a hostile world, and where harm is always expressed in the future tense—as a paranoid temporality.

2.4.1 Paranoid Temporalities

Since the first ruminations of this thesis, I have been troubled with the catch phrase, “in a time of terror.” Perhaps originally popularized by Giovanni Borradori's *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, the phrase finds common use in advancing the theme of how a discipline or category of analysis radically changed after 9/11, much in the same way as the oft-cited exceptionalisation by Adorno that there can be no poetry after Auschwitz. The phrase at once limits a temporal period—everything that came *after* September 11, 2001—yet also simultaneously imposes a temporal uncertainty. When does this time of terror end? What is the limit of this so-called time of terror? Regardless of these fuzzy temporal boundaries, 9/11 *qua* wound has engendered what Puar calls a “paranoid temporality”; a term which I borrow to analyze how the politics of wounds might configure temporality in negative terms. Indeed, as Derrida and Baudrillard have demonstrated earlier, “wound” shares a specific affinity with history and temporality. Not only has a national wound reinvigorated the Euro-American project of historiography, but it has reshaped projects of memorialization into projects of not only “present pasts” but “present futures.”

⁸⁵ Bush, *Select Speeches*, 107.

For Puar, temporality has become inextricably bound to paranoia. Puar writes that “this is a temporality of negative exuberance—for we are never safe enough, never healthy enough, *never prepared enough*.”⁸⁶ Indeed, here Puar is indebted to the work of radical queer thinkers who think through temporality in terms of the queer subject and body that has been historically denied the promises offered by heteropatriarchy and instead offered foreclosed futures amidst the AIDS crisis. For queer thinkers, temporality became a question of creativity and a project of thinking the future outside heteronormative temporalities, which endlessly produce the same promised by heteropatriarchy.⁸⁷ However, Puar advances this paranoid temporality that has been renewed at a specific, timely historical juncture: the propagation, if not acceleration, of neoliberal projects of risk assessment and calculation globally in the wake of 9/11, alongside the emergence of homonationalist discourses that normalized the white gay male subject. Puar does not read the marriage of the two as mere coincidence. The white gay male subject just so happens to become a new expression of the nation and its sovereignty. The once-marginalized white gay male can participate in the middle class ideal—to harken back to Brown—and can thereby reproduce the same, in the form of white nationalism, but always as a project of progressive white nationalism against the backdrop of regressive cultural and racialized others. This historical moment, however, produces, as Puar observes, nothing but temporal uncertainty. Most importantly, for Puar, risk calculation is an attempt at ensuring the endless reproduction of the same, often against dismal future projections such as the next terrorist attack. Paranoid temporality, then, is “driven by imitation (repetition of the same or in the service of maintaining the same) rather than innovation (openness to disruption of the same, calling out to the new).”⁸⁸

Already, Puar anticipates the interrogation of the “history-making” and the

⁸⁶ Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: homonationalism in queer times*. (Cambridge: Duke University Press. 2004), xx. My emphasis.

⁸⁷ See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003), Lee Eldeman’s *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), and Sarah Schulman’s *The Gentrification of The Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (2013) for further work on queer temporalities and creative future-making.

⁸⁸ Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, xx.

“history-vanishing” that becomes part and parcel of the phrase, “in a time of terror.”⁸⁹ Grappling with the historical moment in which her project emerges, Puar writes, “The futures are much closer to us than any pasts. What does it mean to be examining, absorbing, feeling, reflecting on, and writing about the archive as it is being produced, rushing at us—literally, to entertain an unfolding archive?”⁹⁰ Indeed, the future archive or body of knowledge rushes towards this project as the past seemingly both expands and recedes (it is a little less present as time moves forward). However, as Puar rightfully posits in her own reflection, these moments, events, or flashpoints refuse “the binary of watershed moment and turning point of radical change.”⁹¹ Hence, my own attempt to think through the historical continuities that can be uncovered within different temporal and geographical contexts. In other words: “this has meant in part less emphasis on historicization [...] and [instead] a move toward collecting, shaping, and interrogating an archive that will be available for future historicization.”⁹² It has also meant, I argue, a resistance to the continued foreclosing of future possibilities ushered in by a paranoid temporality, which is ultimately sustained by Euro-American knowledge production. Indeed, this is what it will forever mean when Fanon writes in the context of decolonization, as quoted earlier, “let us not *lose time* in sickening mimicry” of the Euro-American project (of whiteness in all its iterations).

Nevertheless, I must pose this question: if a paranoid temporality is eternally invested in reproducing the same, then how does it invest in both injured white nationalism as well as the embodiment of hard white bodies? Here, I would like to return to the statue of Robert E. Lee and the bodies that rallied to protect it. Indeed, the statue, which is located within the ironically named Emancipation Park, has been transformed into a battlefield of “present pasts” and “future presents.” To be sure, this battle also continues to thrive within the poisonous phrase “Make America Great Again,” which again serves to recall an almost forgotten time as a model for the future—but always

⁸⁹ Ibid., xvii.

⁹⁰ Ibid., xix.

⁹¹ Ibid., xviii.

⁹² Ibid., xix. I am reminded here of a talk delivered by queer and feminist scholar Stephen Dillon called “We’re Not Hiding, But We’re Invisible” at Western University, where Dillon observes in his own research that this so-called “Trump era” has yet to be archived and fully understood by scholars. That is not to say, however, that this thesis attempts to accomplish this task!

within an antagonistic relationship with a hostile world that imposes future hurt. This phrase, evoking a paranoid temporality, becomes a bulwark against the futures alternative to what the “again” promises. And so too does every statue of Robert E. Lee that rests on the mass graves of American prosperity. For the white nationalist, the only ointment for their wounds is a recalling of the “same” in the mold of the “again”.

As much as these statues preserve an idealized past—that is, what is beckoned like a ghost in the “again”—they carry with them the “myth of permanent progress”.⁹³ Indeed, Robert E. Lee as a statue might very well be America’s vexed angel of history. In thinking through the monument and its investment into memory, Andreas Huyssen argues that “memories of the twentieth century confront us not with a better life, but with a unique history of genocide and mass destruction that mars *a priori* any attempt to glorify the past [...] Witnessing the ever-widening gap between rich and poor, the barely controlled meltdown of whole regional and national economies, and the return of war to the continent that spawned two world wars in the last century has surely brought with it significant entropy of our sense of future possibilities.”⁹⁴ As McClintock might encourage an ambivalent reading of Cantwell and his cronies in the Unite The Right Rally, so too must these statues be read ambivalently with respect to memory and history. These statues encompass both the history and the future possibility of genocide and displacement, which white nationalists appropriate for the legitimization of their own belief in targeted genocide and displacement of whiteness. To cull these statues, to knock them down—for them to fall—is all too reminiscent of the iconic fall of the World Trade Centre (see figure 2). For the white nationalist, removal of these statues is akin to white genocide, injury, and the continued wounding of whiteness. As such, these statues, especially in the context of Charlottesville which resulted in the (celebrated) death of one person, require protection at all costs. In a word, the statue annotates this white nationalist’s politics of wounds.

⁹³ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and The Politics of Memory*. (California, Stanford University Press. 2003), 25.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25. My emphasis.



Figure 2: A toppled confederate soldier monument, one of many through the country.

President Bush’s speeches after 9/11 also effectuate this ambivalence, not only that of paranoia and megalomania, but of this entropy of future possibilities. In his address to the Republican National Convention during the onset of his second presidential campaign, Bush says:

I believe in the energy and innovative spirit of America’s workers, entrepreneurs, farmers, and ranchers—so we unleashed energy with the largest tax relief in a generation. Because we acted, our economy is growing again, and creating jobs, and nothing will hold us back. I believe in the most solemn duty of the American President is to protect the American people. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.⁹⁵

Nearly fifteen years later, President-elect Donald Trump campaigned with the same promises of a better future, however, upping the ante alongside increased military spending with the promise of a “beautiful” border wall between the United States of

⁹⁵ Bush, *Select Speeches*, 258.

America and Mexico as well as a Muslim ban. Nevertheless, Bush's speech here speaks in terms of temporality in much of the same way Trump's vow to "Make America Great Again." But it also speaks in terms of imperial rapine, on the one hand, and a fear of engulfment on the other. Still reeling from the "tragedy" of September 11, 2001, President Bush, as once the world's great decider, saw to it to "protect" America from a (hostile) world. Indeed, wherever Bush spoke of "protection," along with it came notions of the future attack and geographical boundaries. In short, to protect means, in the context of the War on Terror, to thwart the enemy in advance of their arrival through drone strikes, ceaseless military campaigns, and, of course, the dropping of the unprecedented M.O.A.B..⁹⁶

2.4.2 Conclusion: Bodies in Advance of Their Arrival

This chapter has predominantly focused on the temporality of the discourses and symbols tethered to the politics of wounds, scarcely considering the significance of temporality's relationship to bodies. While neoliberal commitments to risk assessment and predictive analysis of "future threats" might at first appear as petty discursive maneuvers to give credence to bombastic policy making, it is certainly grounded in alarming material and spatial relations.⁹⁷ As such, with this chapter's conclusion approaching and in anticipation of the second chapter, I wish to shift focus onto *the body* once again. Indeed, the algorithmic work of neoliberal machinery—whether that of war, surveillance, or commerce—triangulates bodies in advance of their arrival. As Nandita Biswas Mellamphy expertly puts it, "the American security paradigm consists not in identifying a statistical relationship between data on past activities and future terrorist attacks; rather, the goal is to develop the capability to use algorithmic analysis to identify 'a potential terrorist, a subject who is not yet fully in view, who may be unnamed and as yet

⁹⁶ Following through with his commitment to "bomb the shit" out of ISIS, Trump ordered the dropping of the largest non-nuclear bomb on Afghanistan, which stands for Massive Ordinance Area Blast. However, it has also been referred to as the *mother of all bombs*. I wonder what relation it might share with 9/11 as the mother of all events?

⁹⁷ Claudia Aradau and Rens van Minster. "The Time/Space of Preparedness: Anticipating the "Next Terrorist Attack," *Space and Culture* 15, no. 2 (2012): 104.

unrecognizable’.”⁹⁸ Of course, the data under the duress of neoliberalism’s centrifuge is always already racialized. Piercing the epistemic unknown to pinpoint a future terrorist threat or body always already preordains a racialized body. In other words, there at least persists an a priori epistemic object within these algorithms: the pathology of criminality, terrorism, and threat belongs to racialized bodies.

Interrogating state surveillance and the police apparatus in Canada, Robyn Maynard makes the argument that—in the context of settler colonialism—“to be black is to be perceived as a risk.”⁹⁹ Indeed, as a risk, the settler state attempts to detain, incarcerate, remove, and deport these racialized bodies to protect white bodies. Then, this neoliberal technology of risk assessment advances the claims of white vulnerability or as a body in need of protection. To be sure, a history of white protectionism extends a few centuries as critical race and postcolonial critics have shown. Regardless, neoliberalism has altered the ways in which bodies “surface,” to borrow Ahmed’s parlance.

This constant “anxiety of annihilation” (i.e., white genocide) and fetishization of future hurt felt by white bodies, I wish to suggest, demarcates both the ontological and epistemological limits of bodies in terms of their surfacing, or how they come to surface, both materially and within textual and visual fields. While this assertion might rest in phenomenology or existentialism, I couch it within the political thought of Fanon and Mbembe (to which Ahmed picks up certain threads for her own phenomenological project, which I unfortunately do not have the room to tread in the detail it very much deserves). Nevertheless, writing about the colonizer or Euro-American subject more broadly, Mbembe posits that:

Colonialism had to a large extent consisted in a constant effort to separate: on one side, my living body; on the other, all those ‘body-things’ surrounding it—with my human flesh as the fundamental locus through which all other exterior ‘flesh things’ and ‘flesh meats’ exist for me. On one side therefore, is me—the basic nexus and source of orientation in the

⁹⁸ Nandita Biswas Mellamphy, “Larval Terror and the Digital Darkside,” *E-International Relations* (2015).

⁹⁹ Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada From Slavery to the Present*. (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing. 2017), 192.

world—while, on the other, are the others with whom, however, I can never completely fuse—other with whom I may relate, yet never genuinely engage in relations of reciprocity or mutual implication.¹⁰⁰

From this passage, I derive two observations about colonialism's genesis of being that can be applied to white subjectivity and its anxiety of annihilation in the War on Terror. The first, is the genesis of megalomania in the white subject insofar as all fleshy things exist in proximity and in relation to its own flesh. The second, as has been explored already, this megalomaniac relationship begets the "anxiety of annihilation" by virtue of this proximity. And indeed, there is a certain discovery of one's own vulnerability in the desire of mastery and exploitation of these "fleshy" others, but also the discovery of bodily borders. As such, the flesh of the other becomes an object of fear, necessitating either mastery or disposal of *its* flesh.

Hence the troubling ambivalence in the exclamation that Fanon interrogates in *Black Skin, White Masks*: "Look! A Negro!" This exclamation, which is my second observation, marks the flesh of the other, constitutes a relation between the two bodies, and orients the world. Rather than read this scene as a moment of interpolation, which it very much is, I instead read it as a peculiar commentary on the embodiment of whiteness in relation to blackness. Considering the condescending paternalism inherent to colonial discourses, it is most ironic that it is a child who is first identified as the one who utters this remark. Fanon writes:

"Look! A Negro!" It was a passing sting. I attempted a smile.

"Look! A Negro!" The circle was gradually getting smaller. I was really enjoying myself.

"Maman, look, a Negro; I'm scared!"¹⁰¹

In the conclusion of this scene, Fanon narrates his laughter at the proposition of this white child's experience of being scared. For what does the child have to fear of the black

¹⁰⁰ Achille Mbembe, "The Society of Enmity," *Radical Philosophy* 200 (2016): 25. For English readers, this line of thought can be traced back to Mbembe's seminal publication in English, *On the Postcolony* (2003).

¹⁰¹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 90.

body, considering the long history of white terror enacted on the surface of black bodies? Nevertheless, it is in this exchange of fear that two bodies surface: the white body as vulnerable and in search of protection from the mother and the black body as an object of fear. For Fanon, “the black man is a ‘phobogenic’ object, provoking anxiety.”¹⁰² Fanon continues:

The choice of the phobic object is thus overdetermined. Such an object does not come out of the void of nothingness; in some situations it has previously evoked an affect in the patient. The phobia is the latent presence of this affect on the core of his world; there is an organization that has been given a form. For the object, naturally, need not be there, it is enough that somewhere the object exists: is a possibility.¹⁰³

Here, Fanon might offer an interesting insight that might be applied to Islamic/black phobia after 9/11. Unlike Ahmed’s phenomenology, which suggests that bodies surface in proximity to each other, Fanon allows us to think through how some bodies surface in advance of the arrival of their phobogenic object; that is to say, these bodies are present in their absence. In other words, the object of fear need not be materially present or for that matter materially exist—it is enough that it exists in the cultural imagination and that there is a possibility of its arrival. Ahmed gestures towards this notion in the 2015 afterword of *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*.¹⁰⁴ Fear and anxiety toward a phobogenic object, racialized as a Muslim body or black body, particularly in the form of an anticipation of future hurt or future terrorist attack, surfaces whiteness as both vulnerable and protected. Fanon exposes this duality through the depictions of whiteness as the child, who represents vulnerability, and as the mother who represents protection. Hence, the intense desire to always be prepared in advance of these bodies’ arrival and in advance of future hurt—whether that means the military outfitting of Unite the Right Protestors, the building of absurd walls at borders, or the gratuitous expansion of military spending.

¹⁰² Ibid, 129.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 133.

¹⁰⁴ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 220.

3 Chapter 2 - “Bonne Blessure!”: The Biopolitical Logics of Captivity in French Algeria¹⁰⁵

For eight years you have been in this country.
And no part of this enormous wound has held you back in any way.
And no part of this enormous wound has pushed you in anyway.
You have been free to discover yourself at last as such you are.

-Frantz Fanon, “Letter to a Frenchman”

In this unending colony the truth stood naked, but the settlers preferred it hidden away or at least dressed: the Natives had to love them and all they had done, something in the way a cruel father is still loved by the children who are wounded by his selfish hands.

-Taiaiake Alfred, “Foreword” to Red Skin, White Masks

3.1 Introduction:

“Algeria is too controversial,” historian Martin Evans muses in his nearly four-hundred-page study of the Algerian war for independence.¹⁰⁶ Between 1954 and 1962, Algeria staged one of the twentieth century’s bloodiest decolonial movements. This eight-year war resulted in the expulsion of nearly one million French *colons* and the death of an estimated three-hundred thousand Algerians, including both civilians and Front de liberation nationale (FLN) combatants. While the official record imagines the war beginning November 1, 1954, collective consensus with Indigenous Algerians describes the conflict finding its humble beginning with the Sétif Massacre that took place between

¹⁰⁵ A phrase for farewells between French Soldiers during the Algerian war for Independence, it means “have a good wound.”

¹⁰⁶ Martin Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War*. (United Kingdom: Oxford UP, 2012), 82-88.

May 8 and May 12, 1945.¹⁰⁷ Upon the return of French and Algerian soldiers from World War Two, celebrating victory, Algerian protestors—armed with the green and white flags—rallied for their own emancipation from French settler colonialism. French police attempted to confiscate the flags as well as arresting protestors on mass. However, after a gunshot rang through the crowded streets of the market town of Sétif, leaving a young Algerian boy dead, the growing tension between French *colons* and Indigenous Algerians quickly transformed into outright violence. To put down this nationalism once and for all, Governor-General Yves Chataigneu mandated a nationwide state of siege. Ten thousand French soldiers were deployed, resulting in the executions, torture, and bombing of Indigenous Algerians. The French engine of massacre revved across the Algerian *bled*, reaching the market town of Guelma. Despite the massacres finally ending on May 24, “French soldiers wanted to ram home who had won and who had lost [...] Soldiers also had made rings out of fingers mutilated from the dead, war trophies that would be bragged about for years to come.”¹⁰⁸ Nine years later, a struggle for independence would blossom across Algeria as the FLN utilized every means deemed necessary to remind the *colons* that there was no French Algeria and that the *pied noirs* did not belong in Algeria.

My research for this chapter began with an investigation of the containment of Algeria’s war for independence as an object of knowledge shrouded within controversy. Either the controversy emerges as a question of what the acceptable limits of torture are in the name of the civilizing mission *or* to what extent can France’s excessive responses through force towards militant nationalisms, such as the FLN, be justified. After all, the

¹⁰⁷ I recognize that “indigenous” as a term is not a universal category of experience or knowledge. I use the term in this chapter cautiously to unpack the experiences of Indigenous Algerians under the settler colonial rule of France. I am also not suggesting, however, that Indigenous as a category of knowledge is conditional upon settler colonialism. It is that I do not wish to universalize the communities, linguistic groups, or demographics under the term “Arab” or “brown” because, indeed, the geographic continuity that is now Algeria, before colonisation from both Europeans and the Ottomans, consists of diverse groups of people, including Arab and Berber (which implies quite a few different linguistic groups, depending on the province). In other words, I am using Indigenous in the context of French Algeria to avoid colonial and racial master narratives that often dominate the conversation, that is, French against the Arab terrorists, or white persons against brown persons. Indeed, I follow J. Kēhaulani Kauanui’s argument that Indigenous as a category of knowledge or analysis is separate from that of race (although it may intersect in many different instances. To be sure, Indigenous bodies can be racialized—nevertheless, it is important to attend to the nuances of both categories). But I also recognize the difficulties of using “indigenous” in the context of French Algeria, considering, as Scott Schaffer points out, the term *indigène* implies a great deal of conceptual and historical “baggage” within the French colonial context (2004: 122-123).

¹⁰⁸ Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War*, 82-88.

FLN is commonly framed as a terrorist organization rather than a complex, layered political organization comprised of many actors. These questions unravel a second controversy: can the FLN's use of violence for emancipation ever be justified? As such, the controversies that emerge within the discourse often quarantine an investigation of French Algeria to a temporal period between 1954 and 1962. The effect of this endless controversy conceals French Algeria as a mode of settler colonialism. Further, as I argue in this chapter, French Algeria as a mode of settler colonialism persists in the contemporary moment as well as persists in concealing itself as a mode of settler colonialism.

I turn, then, to what can be traced as the biopolitical logics of captivity that defined French Algeria's pernicious mode of settler colonialism. I argue in this chapter that French settler colonialism, especially as it unfolded within Algeria, both enforced and concealed itself through the logics of detainment, interrogation, and torture. Furthermore, detainment, interrogation, and torture are bound up in an economy of knowledge production that can be implicated within a politics of wounds. As such, this chapter is devoted to the politics of wounds in terms of these biopolitical logics of detainment, interrogation, and torture. Indeed, captivity falls within the (bio)politics of wounds insofar as it was detained Muslim, Arab, Berber, and colonized bodies that were injured, hurt, and wounded to not only extract knowledge about the FLN but to produce a body of knowledge about both the Muslim body and body politic. Furthermore, the staging of torture within interrogation centres concealed from view these processes of knowledge production.

Indeed, while France once fanned the flames of its own War on Terror in Algeria, a certain torch of knowledge concerning Muslim bodies has been passed to the imperial successor that is the United States of America. To be sure, the American military complex has mined French Algeria's tactics of subordination as seen in French Algeria as well as Indochina for tips and tricks in detaining and extracting information from the contemporary insubordinate Muslim body. Hence, the erection of the Guantanamo Bay detention center, a prison camp assembled of thousands of torture cells, rests comfortably on the margins of the textual and visual fields and in addition the Abu Ghraib detention facility, where thousands more photos of the torture and humiliation of the Muslim body

is held captive within an inaccessible archive.

Much like their French predecessors, the American system of justice—bound to the ideals of humanism—struggles within the controversy of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib to justify the use of torture, whether in the name of the war on terror or otherwise. In other words, these scenes of captivity pose, in Agamben's words, the juridical question of the "the significance of a sphere of action that is in itself extra-judicial."¹⁰⁹ The controversy ultimately rests in the problem of the law coinciding with the norm (humanism, justice, or the civilizing and democratizing mission) as well as exceeding the norm (detention and torture). As such, the law and jurisprudence scavenge the corpse of liberal-humanism for legal means to justify or to extend the reach of torture a little closer towards the normal reach of the law. Hence, for the French Algerian police force, who turned into a paramilitary force, torture supposedly saved lives. And hence, President Bush and his administration would echo his predecessors, affirming the importance of the critical intelligence uncovered from "enhanced interrogation."¹¹⁰

In brief, then, this chapter attempts to read through this endless controversy of Algeria, which always already conceals the settler-colonial reality and which has seeped into present day discourses around Israel and Palestine or America as well as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, but not with an intent to rehash old arguments on terrorism, revolutionary or otherwise. Instead, I wish to think through French Algeria as a mode of settler colonialism, which shares certain historical and discursive continuities with contemporary settler-colonial projects. To be sure, I am not seeking to uncover a universal nature about settler colonialism. As a structure (and not an event), its machinery and assemblages continue to shapeshift and morph. Nevertheless, I hope that, in describing the biopolitical logics behind French Algeria's mode of settler colonialism, I can not only draw attention to how settler colonialism is ultimately a project that hurts, that wounds, and that injures, but the ways in which settler colonialism is a project that works tirelessly to conceal its practices of maiming.

¹⁰⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *States of Exception*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005): 11.

¹¹⁰ "Senate Report on CIA Torture," Human Rights Watch. <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/senate-report-cia-torture/president-george-w-bush>

3.2 The Failure of French Algeria: a Brief History of French Settler Colonialism

In the sweltering month of June 1830, France landed on the shores of Algeria, bearing the gunpowder and brawn of 37,000 soldiers. In less than two weeks, the French defeated the Ottoman empires, and declared Algeria an extension of its national body. Along with the acquisition of Morocco and Tunisia, France believed that it had earned its rightful place as a colonial superpower. However, France's claim to Algerian soil did not go without controversy—both at home and abroad, foreshadowing the next 130 years of tenuous rule. The next decade in Algeria would unleash a series of Islamic revolts and the general dismay within the National Assembly as to why the empire was exhausting military resources where dysentery and the fear of Muslim uprisings broke troop confidence. Nevertheless, by 1850 both the right- and left-wing of the government arrived at the agreement that the colonization of Algeria would ultimately benefit France in addition to the colonized. After all, Algeria's vast stretches of fertile land, expanding over 7.7 million hectares, offered prime agricultural opportunities in the production of cash crops such as wine, cork, and alfalfa. Into the twentieth century, the *colons* had absorbed the majority of arable land, transforming Algeria into a vital economic powerhouse in France's empire.¹¹¹

Before the war for independence that would dismember Algeria from “French Algeria,” the population of European settlers had grown to nearly a million while the population of predominantly Arab and Berber descent grew to about 10 million.¹¹² However, that was 10 million voices that were denied French citizenship along with adequate political representation, education, and social welfare. Indeed, the settler colonial government controlled the Indigenous population under the Code de l'Indigénat, denying them the same privileges as the European colonizers.¹¹³ As the First World War approached, the government funneled all resources towards supporting the war effort,

¹¹¹ Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War*, 7-43.

¹¹² Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War*, xi.

¹¹³ Zohra Drif, *Inside the Battle of Algiers*. (Charlottesville: Just World Books, 2017), 41. As Drif explains, the Code de l'Indigénat defined the status of Indigenous persons across France's empire as French subjects under law. It is comparable to Canada's Indian Act of 1951.

leaving the Indigenous populations to the clutches of famine and poverty. By the Second World War, as Indigenous Algerians migrated into the urban centres, the cities transformed into segregated metropolises, separating the *colons* from the colonized, the settlers from the Indigenous, the French from the Arabs. As Fanon puts it, “The colonist’s sector is a white folks’ sector, a sector of foreigners. The colonized’s sector, or at least the “native” quarters, the shanty town, the Medina, the reservation [...] is a famished sector.”¹¹⁴ Yet, in the cafes, the shops, and the bakeries of the colonized sector, a nationalist fervour brewed, exploding quite literally by 1956 into the settler’s quarters.

Despite the eventual transition into an independent or postcolonial nation, I name French Algeria as a mode of settler colonialism. French Algeria, to be sure, was not unlike contemporary forms of settler colonialism such as Canada and the United States. These two settler states are scarcely afraid to deploy punitive and military force to curb what are perceived as national security threats. For example, during Canada’s “Oka Crisis” between July 11 and September 26, 1990, Canada declared a state of emergency to justify the use of its military against the Mohawk community who resisted the construction of a golf course on their land.¹¹⁵ Recently, in United States during the early months of 2016, the Lakota opposed the Iowa government’s plan to build an oil pipeline through their water source. The state responded with a police force equipped with military-grade gear and water cannons.¹¹⁶ Indeed, France utilized every military trick in the book—a book which perhaps France penned—in an attempt to quell the growing rebellion in Algeria, including massacre, torture, and bombs.¹¹⁷ The settler’s control of Algeria, however, eventually imploded beneath the nationalistic pressure of the FLN, which flourished throughout the Indigenous communities of Algeria.

While Canada recently celebrated 150 years of settler colonialism, it might at first appear difficult to categorize French Algeria as a mode of settler colonialism, considering it decolonized, expelling the majority of Europeans from its territory. As well, settler-

¹¹⁴ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 4.

¹¹⁵ Pauline Wakeham, “Reconciling ‘Terror’: Managing Indigenous Populations in the Age of Apology,” *American Indian Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2012): 14.

¹¹⁶ Kyle Powys Whyte, “The Dakota Access Pipeline, Environmental Injustice, and U.S. Colonialism,” *Red Ink* 19, no 1. (2017): 160.

¹¹⁷ See Dorothy Roberts’s “Torture and the Biopolitics of Race” (2008), where Roberts traces the development of torture and colonial warfare from Indochina to Algeria to America’s Abu Ghraib.

colonial scholarship traditionally investigates settler colonialism as an enduring and present structure. While French Algeria no longer exists as an obvious present structure, I will show that its structure persists as a *present-past*. Further, merely focusing on the event of decolonization writes French Algeria as an event belonging to the progression of history—a beloved narrative trick of settler colonial continuity—rather than recognizing French Algeria as belonging to a long-sustained and continuing structure of settler-coloniality, albeit not always in immediately recognizable forms.

The settlers of Algeria invested quite the emotional and historical attachment to Algeria. Though they considered themselves French first and foremost, they developed an identity rooted in the blue coasts and red hills of Algeria, calling themselves the *pied-noirs* or the black feet.¹¹⁸ Upon integration into France after the war for independence, the *pied-noirs* considered themselves the “guardians” of French Algerian memory, preserving a mythology that “by their sweat and blood, and through their superior technology, [they] succeeded in transforming the arid desert into fertile land.”¹¹⁹ However, as Evans notes, this mythology was hardly accurate. The majority of settlers lived in the coastal cities, enjoying a comfortable lifestyle as white-collar workers, small-trades people, and government officials.¹²⁰ And they hardly established a demographic majority, which required them to rely on the resources of the French government and military for the maintenance of French Algeria, especially during the war. Of course, when France agreed to a cease fire with the FLN, the *pied-noirs* felt betrayed by their government as they were condemned to choose, from their perspective, either “the coffin or the suitcase.”

French Algeria’s geographic proximity to the burgeoning Cold War between NATO and the Soviet Union did not lend itself well to support from the international community. Allies, including America and Britain, were concerned that France’s continued oppression of the Algerian people would push them towards communism as a

¹¹⁸ While this is a point suggested by both Farclay and Evans, there is debate as to whether the term “pied noir” was imposed or whether it was freely adopted. See Olivier Bertrand’s “De mémoire de pied-noirs” (March 2012) in *Libération*. http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2012/03/13/de-memoire-de-pieds-noirs_802503

¹¹⁹ Fiona Barclay, “Reporting on 1962: the Evolution of pied-noir Identity Across 50 Years of Print Media,” *Modern & Contemporary France* 23, no. 2 (2015): 204.

¹²⁰ Evans, *Algeria Undeclared*, 26.

solution to unchecked Western imperialism. Ironically, the United States was, at times, France's most outspoken opponent. For example, the young senator John F. Kennedy, on the floor of the senate, aired his concerns about France's continued imperial mission, declaring that "the present policy of the French Government in Algeria is bankrupt."¹²¹ For Kennedy, Western imperialism sanctioned the growth of Soviet imperialism—as such, much more was at stake in the battle of Algeria than political independence. In addition, Africa was undergoing a wave of decolonization post-World War Two, in which France had already surrendered Morocco and Tunisia. From the Indochina War, France had also lost Vietnam. As such, the quills on France's back raised at the thought that it would lose Algeria too.

The overall instability of the French government after World War Two had also destabilized the political spectrum and snuffed out any confidence in the government's ability to maintain a colony. During the war for independence, France exhausted three governments and weathered a military coup. With the fall of the authoritarianism and anti-Semitism of the Vichy regime in 1942, France's Fourth Republic emerged. However, it was short-lived. A few years into the war for independence, France hailed the fall of the Fourth Republic and the emergence of the populist military hero, General de Gaulle in 1958 after the closure of the government for three months.¹²² Although de Gaulle promised to find an equitable solution to the quickly expanding Algerian problem, de Gaulle realized the political and economic necessity of granting Algeria its independence. Unhappy with de Gaulle's apparent betrayal of the *pied-noirs* and relinquishing of the civilizing mission, a small section of the military attempted to take control of Algeria and then France, fracturing the relationship between the metropole and the colony, which further weakened "the French cause from the inside."¹²³ Formally known as the "week of the barricades," the attempted military coup did not last long, and de Gaulle committed to negotiating a ceasefire with the FLN.

¹²¹ John F. Kennedy, "Imperialism – The Enemy of Freedom," Washington D.C. (1957). For a full transcript of Kennedy's earnest (and sometimes misguided) criticism of both American and European imperialism, visit: https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/United-States-Senate-Imperialism_19570702.aspx

¹²² De Gaulle was adored by the Republic for defeating the Nazis, effectively restoring France's independence.

¹²³ Evans, *Algeria Undeclared*, 276

For as much as political strife and the international community fatigued French Algeria, it was ultimately because French Algeria could not endure the indigeneity of the people it colonized that it failed as a settler colony. To quote the freedom fighter, Zohra Drif, “settler colonialism [...] brought with it a massive presence of Europeans whose looks toward us were at best condescending and at worst downright contemptuous. Through my hard work and success, every day I refuted their prejudices.”¹²⁴ Following the work of Indigenous scholar J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, while settler colonialism builds itself upon the supposed elimination of Indigenous peoples—as bodies and as embodied practice—settler colonialism fails to accomplish the erasure of the indigeneity of the colonized. In other words, indigeneity does not endure settler colonialism but settler colonialism endures indigeneity and its commitment to active refusals to settler prejudices.¹²⁵ The Algerians refused the civilizing mission, rejected French nationalism, and resisted the slow violence of French colonial rule. As such on March 19, 1962, Algeria achieved its independence.

3.3 The Logic of Elimination: French Algeria as a Mode of Settler Colonialism

French Algeria is not readily regarded as a mode of settler colonialism—if only because it is not necessarily a present material structure. Scholars of French history and society have noted that settler colonial studies have typically neglected French Algeria as an exemplary case study. Fiona Barclay, Charlotte Ann Chopin, and Evans assert that “the bloody dénouement of French Algeria, where structures of settler colonial domination were ultimately disrupted by the uprising of Algerian nationalists and the departure of the European population, may not, moreover, offer a salutary example to politically engaged scholars who seek to resolve the tensions of present-day settler colonial situations.”¹²⁶ As such, my reading of French Algeria may seem to be an anachronistic exercise. However, I do not wish to think of this reading as entirely retrospective. Instead, situating French

¹²⁴ Drif, *Inside the Battle of Algiers*, 36.

¹²⁵ J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, “‘A Structure, Not an Event’: Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity,” *Lateral: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association* 5, no. 1 (2016): Par 4.

¹²⁶ Fiona Barclay, Charlotte Ann Chopin, and Martin Evans, “Introduction: settler colonialism and French Algeria,” *Settler Colonial Studies* (2017), 3.

Algeria as a mode of settler colonialism—one that did not survive the enduring indigeneity of the Algerian people and one that persists as a present-past—creates a dialogue that disrupts settler continuity. Indeed, positing French Algeria as simply the past rather than a present-past commits to the settler narrative of “the dustbins of history,” linear temporality, and master narratives of progression.¹²⁷ The French settler structures left behind in Algeria after formal decolonization persist, and France, like any settler state, has invested into projects of national memory making that erase their history of settler colonialism as well as building a bordered, national continuity.¹²⁸ The textuality of French Algeria’s settler colonialism continues to grow as more and more memoirs, narratives, and accounts are published and translated into English. Furthermore, positing French Algeria as a present-past contributes to the ongoing conversation in settler colonial studies that settler colonialism is a persistent structure and not an event. This can be seen in Patrick Wolfe’s contribution to the settler colonial turn in the humanities and social sciences: the observation that the invasion and elimination of the Indigenous population by Europeans is a structure and not an event, taking a wide array of forms. As Wolfe writes:

The logic of elimination can include officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilations. All these strategies, including frontier homicide, are characteristic of settler colonialism.¹²⁹

In other words, settler colonialism constitutes an ongoing structure of slow violence that erodes, erases, and eliminates both Indigenous cultures and bodies through a variety of

¹²⁷ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 108. Glen Coulthard offers a wonderful critique of how settler colonial governments elide their presence as settler colonies by relegating settler colonialism or colonialism to the past. See also Mark Rifkin’s *Beyond Settler Time* (2017).

¹²⁸ Mbembe, “Provincializing France,” 102. Mbembe refers to this phenomena as “border politics.”

¹²⁹ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 9, no. 4 (2006): 388.

settler tactics and technologies.¹³⁰ It is not always an easily recognizable nor documentable genocide.

Wolfe's identification of this "logic of elimination" comes from the necessity to think through settler colonialism outside the conceptual framework of genocide, which dominated the questions that arose with regard to settler colonialism's eliminatory practice. While settler colonialism engenders genocide, genocide and settler colonialism require theoretical distinction. As such, Wolfe works to uncover a logic of elimination embedded within settler colonialism that, on the one hand may manifest as genocide but, on the other manifests other forms of elimination. Indeed, in the purview of history, genocide as a conceptual framework is too often encumbered by the exceptional status of the Holocaust—a catastrophic event read over and over again with little recourse to the settler colonial structures that engendered its possibility. In other words, scholarship on the Holocaust sometimes elides the recognizability of elimination in other forms as well as the logic of the camp that finds its blueprints within settler colonialism. Critical black feminist Alexander Weheliye asserts, "A thick historical relation defines the rise of modern concentration camps in colonial contexts and their subsequent reconstitution as industrialized killing machines in Europe."¹³¹ For Wolfe, however, the relationship between genocide and settler colonialism cannot be merely defined as historical. That is, settler colonialism is not the precursor to the Holocaust, let alone genocide.¹³² Instead, genocide, elimination, and the biopolitics of the camp are immanent to the structure of settler colonialism itself, manifesting in a variety of forms.

The establishment of French Algerian as a settler colonial government relied on a logic of elimination. As such, I wish to think through the settler colonialism of French Algeria as an enduring structure and not an historical event, despite the eventual decolonization of French Algeria in 1962. As referenced earlier, the metropole denied Indigenous communities' access to citizenship, rendering these communities in the eyes of the state as merely subjects of French empire. This classification through legal

¹³⁰ Pauline Wakeham advanced this term of slow violence with respect to settler colonialism in a seminar on Key Concepts in Indigenous Theory during the winter of 2017. Wakeham nuances the term from Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and The Environmentalism of The Poor* for the settler colonial context.

¹³¹ Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 36.

¹³² Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 393.

structures alienated Indigenous Algerians from the rights of man that the French held dear in their civilizational identity. However, in contradiction, the colonial government operated on the assumption of assimilating the Arab and Berber majority demographic into this French system of values through the “civilizing mission.” Fraught with contradictions, the civilizing mission of French empire—and colonialism more broadly—which was established through education, the church, law, punitive measures, and medicine, ambivalently worked to humanize the colonized while simultaneously rendering them as not wholly human.¹³³ Disguised as emancipation, the civilizing mission in fact eliminated the possibility of accessing the universal rights afforded by humanism by virtue of being rendered as not wholly human.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon attends to how this process of elimination works in competing directions to “amputate” the colonized subject from his or her being in the world as a fully present human. In this sense, the civilizing mission attempts to eliminate an Indigenous person’s connections to her knowledge systems as well as her access to the privileges and/or full-humanity of whiteness. Elimination engenders the status of neither/nor that is felt as solely negating. Fanon writes, “Without a black past, without a black future, it was impossible for me to live my blackness. Not yet white, no longer completely black, I was damned.”¹³⁴ For Fanon, the existence of the colonized is barraged by a series of negations, of *nots*. To “civilize” Indigenous communities, the colonizer attempts to eliminate their indigeneity. To justify their mission, the colonizer negates their full humanity, abandoning the colonized into what Fanon calls a perpetual zone of non-being.¹³⁵ To put it another way, the civilizing missions eliminates the onto-epistemological possibilities of the colonized.

As Indigenous scholars have observed, settler colonialism accomplishes this double amputation most effectively through the displacement of Indigenous communities from their land, which often bears their history, knowledge, and identity. Leanne Simpson and Audra Simpson have argued that land is a fundamental source for

¹³³ Homi K. Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October* 28 (1984): 126.

¹³⁴ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 117.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

Indigenous onto-epistemological projects.¹³⁶ Indeed, France's settler colonial fantasies imagined an Algeria without Algerians. To realize this fantasy, France turned to the strategies of the Ottoman empire and other colonial encounters to resolve the problem of the enduring Indigenous populations. Avoiding outright extermination, France found it felicitous to expel Algerians into neighbouring countries or to forcefully migrate them into the Sahara Desert where they would be thought to perish. However, this posed the material problem of labour—or, who would then build the colony?¹³⁷ For the French then, Indigenous Algerians were quarantined to “native quarters” in the cities such as Algiers or restricted to the *bled* (countryside) to work the land, fueling the French economy and war efforts. Regardless, mass resettlement of Indigenous Algerians from their homeland to cities as well as unhospitable land was a common tactic utilized by the settler colonial government to secure settler dominancy.¹³⁸

Through mass displacement, the French government removed Indigenous Algerians from their history—however, France continues to foreclose if not eliminate Algeria's connection to its own history. The settler colonial government, of course, kept good records of the land and the people it dominated. While controversy in scholarship continues to stir over official numbers of Indigenous Algerians killed during France's occupation, France actively withholds this information. In the conclusion of her memoir, Drif draws attention to how she cannot access the archives of Algeria because they are geographically located in France and confined within bureaucratic walls:

I hope that with all my heart that our universities and architecture schools will one day teach the truth, the whole truth, about the willful erasure and perversion of our cultural and historical heritage. Only a perfect knowledge of those 132 long years of cultural genocide can prevent its reoccurrence. The archives exist, though they are in France. This is

¹³⁶ Here, I refer to Leanne Simpson's chapter “Land as Pedagogy,” published in *As We Have Always Done* (2017), where Simpson writes, “the academy must make a conscious decision to become a decolonizing force in the intellectual lives of Indigenous peoples by joining us in dismantling settler colonialism and actively protecting the source of our knowledge: Indigenousland” (172).

¹³⁷ Benjamin Claude Brower, “Rethinking Abolition in Algeria: Slavery and the ‘Indigenous Question,’” *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 195 (2009): par. 9 – 12.

¹³⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Algerians*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961): 121.

another battle to wage: reclaiming our archives to fill the gaps in our collective memory, which was severely pillaged, so that we can rebuild ourselves.¹³⁹

In other words, the struggle for decolonization—that of knowledge systems and collective memory—is hardly over. Indeed, there persists a settler colonial structure between Algeria and France, where history, knowledge, and memory is held in captivity.

Seeking a nuanced definition of settler colonialism, Lorenzo Veracini further distinguishes it from colonialism. Veracini offers three additional criteria that can be applied to French Algeria as a mode of settler colonialism. Using the metaphors of bacterial and viral infections, Veracini distinguishes colonialism, along with imperialism and empire, as an enterprise that utilizes its host's wealth and labour for its own reproduction like a virus.¹⁴⁰ For example, France's earlier colony, Santo Domingo, functioned to produce wealth for the growing colonial economy through the exploitation of predominantly slave labour. Of course, San Domingo underwent its own revolution and eventual war for independence under the tutelage of the ex-slave Toussaint Louverture while both Anglo and Franco interests waged diplomatic battles over the fate of Santo Domingo.¹⁴¹ Settler colonialism, however, constitutes settler collectives that “make and remake places and are simultaneously transformed by them.”¹⁴² Unlike Santo Domingo, then, French Algeria's long tenure radically reshaped Algerian land, social structures, and peoples. Indeed, the most prominent settler colonial collective that emerged in French Algeria was the *pied-noirs* who believed themselves to be a distinct people who were both French and Algerian. Echoing Evans' description of the *pied-noirs* earlier, this settler collective as pioneers of the Algerian frontier believed themselves to be molded by the land they terraformed.¹⁴³ In addition, this settler collective persists today as an identity rooted in memory and history.

This settler collective is Veracini's first criterion, which informs the second:

¹³⁹ Drif, *Inside the Battle of Algiers*, 334.

¹⁴⁰ Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 21.

¹⁴¹ See C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins* (1963).

¹⁴² Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present*, 23.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 14.

settler colonial experience. With the formation of the *pied-noirs* as a distinct group came the naturalization of the “right to belong,”¹⁴⁴ displacing this right to belong from both Indigenous Algerians—who were removed from their land—and other migrants who would call Algeria home. During the Vichy Regime, for example, French Algeria revoked the right to citizenship from all communities that were not French, such as the Jewish and Spanish communities. These policies instilled a demarcatable settler colonial collective of, on the one hand, desirable co-ethnics and assimilable indigenes, and on the other hand, undesirable exogenous others and unassimilable Indigenous others.¹⁴⁵ This road map leads to Veracini’s third criterion: that settler colonialism is a form of biopolitical control, a feature which is formative to understanding the (bio)politics of wounds.

3.4 Make Live and Make Die: Biopolitics in the Settler Colonial Context

In 2003, Achille Mbembe published an immensely influential article titled “Necropolitics,” which interjected a radically powerful reading of death and the formation of sovereignty into the ongoing conversation on biopolitics as it pertains to the (post)colonial situation. Perhaps Mbembe opened up the possibility in theoretical scholarship to think through biopolitics outside the immediate purview of Agamben and Foucault—especially in the context of the European colonial legacy. Indeed, Mbembe has been cited frequently in new radical theorizations of biopolitics. As such, I have chosen an array of thinkers that not only offer important contributions to biopolitics in the context of settler colonialism, and to an extent racialization, but can be traced back to Mbembe’s necropolitics in some way. That is not to suggest that these thinkers are derivative of necropolitics, but that they share a theoretical affiliation and commitment with Mbembe. In addition, these thinkers—Alexander Weheliye, Sherene Razack, and Jasbir Puar—highlight a very crucial fact of biopolitics: that there persists multiple “vectors” of control, management, and extermination that the settler colony has at its disposal to control and manage its body politic. In this chapter, I am specifically

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 40.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 5.

concerned with questions of the right to maim—or, the right to wound, injure, and debilitate other bodies as a vector of biopower.

Before I proceed with an unpacking of Mbembe's necropolitics, it is fruitful to begin with a brief overview of Agamben's and Foucault's contribution to biopolitics. To be sure, their respective projects are large, and it is not my aim here to trace every nuance of their work. Indeed, Foucault's lectures on biopolitics, published posthumously, are still hotly debated, and Agamben's *homo sacer* project is ongoing with over a dozen volumes. For our purposes here, it is important to attend to Agamben's "bare life" and "bios" as well as Foucault's formulation of "make life" and "let die" as they are taken up in a variety of ways in the critical literature to follow. One more consideration can be made between these two thinkers: biopolitics describes more than just the management and control of bodies as one-dimensional surfaces. In other words, as I elucidate later, the biopower of the sovereign extends its reach across multiple surfaces, including the infrastructural, bodily, and psycho-existential. Moreover, biopolitics describes what bodies are brought into the body politic (polis) and what bodies are excluded, which is an important consideration within the context of settler colonialism.¹⁴⁶

Often, scholars trace the birth of Agamben's biopolitics through his groundbreaking work in the "homo sacer trilogy," where Agamben theorizes how the law and the sovereign emerge in the political order. For Agamben, modern sovereignty depends on generating the ideal political body. Agamben writes, "It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power [...] placing biological life at the centre of its calculations."¹⁴⁷ This production of the ideal body requires the division of life into two distinct categories: bios and zoe. Bios depicts a body with political capacity. Zoe depicts a life (or body) outside the purview of politics, and hence becomes ascribed as "bare life." Bare life becomes that which is outside politics, and as such that which is outside the law; however, it is not outside the power and

¹⁴⁶ René Dietrich, "The Biopolitical Logics of Settler Colonialism and Disruptive Relationality," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 17, no. 1 (2017): 69. See also Scott Morgenson's "The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right here, Right now" (2011) and Mark Rifkin's "Indigenizing Agamben: Rethinking Sovereignty in Light of The 'Peculiar' Status of The Native" (2009).

¹⁴⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (California: Stanford University Press, 1998): 6.

violence of the sovereign. As the infamous adage goes, bare life is life that can be killed but not sacrificed. This relationship engenders, for Agamben, the concentration camp, the reservation, the interrogation centre, or the “native” quarters. These spaces create zones of exception insofar as the sovereign, who creates the law, can act outside the law in these zones. The most important theoretical point for Agamben here is that the law, paradoxically, sources its force or legitimacy through the exception. Only by producing and maintaining zones of exception is the “force” of the law possible.

For Foucault, biopolitics also describes the emergence of sovereign power. Although Foucault also arrives at his framework through a reading of Aristotle’s *bios* and *zoe*, Foucault nuances his vision in a different way.¹⁴⁸ *Bios*, or life, in Foucault’s rendition becomes subsumed into the political order of things where sovereign power acts on it. This power is focalized through the formula of “make live and let die.” As Weheliye expertly puts it, “this is the moment in which politics takes hold of the biological and the biological health of the national population defines the exercise of state power” over the life and mortality of its citizens.¹⁴⁹ It is within the institutions of care, of bureaucracy of public management, and the interrogation centre that the sovereign can execute its power through the vector of make life and let die—in other words, populations can be managed in such a way that some are allowed to live and some are excluded to perish. Foucault renders, then, a similar concept of the exception and exceptionalism that Agamben does with the camps, which Puar encapsulates, I think, rather poetically: “the interplay between exception and exceptionalism [is where] the deferred death of one population recedes as the securitization and valorization of the life over another population triumphs in its shadow.”¹⁵⁰ Despite critical contribution to the understanding of the paradigm of sovereignty within modernity, Foucault’s and Agamben’s theoretical work neglects the specificities of sovereign power in the colonial contexts. What does the politicization of life look like in the colony?

Mbembe finds the previous descriptions of biopolitics that emphasize the sovereign’s autonomy at the expense of interrogating those iterations of sovereignty, such

¹⁴⁸ Dietrich, “The Biopolitical Logics of Settler Colonialism,” 69.

¹⁴⁹ Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 57.

¹⁵⁰ Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 3.

as those found in the colonies that instrumentalised the exploitation and destruction of populations, to be problematic. As such, Mbembe recalibrates Foucault's formula from "make live and let die" to "who may live and who must die" in order to account for the sovereign power as it exists in the (post)colony.¹⁵¹ More than just the politicization of life, the sovereign often wields the power to make death through the vectors of calculation, instrumentalization, and extraction (which sum up to be additional manifestations of Wolfe's the logic of elimination). To quote Mbembe:

My concern is those figures of sovereignty whose central project is not the struggle for autonomy but the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations. Such figures of sovereignty are far from a piece of prodigious insanity or an expression of a rupture between the impulses and interests of the body and those of the mind. Indeed, they, like the death camps, are what constitute the nomos of the political space in which we still live. Furthermore, contemporary experiences of human destruction suggest that it is possible to develop a reading of politics, sovereignty, and the subject different from the one we inherited from the philosophical discourse of modernity. Instead of considering reason as the truth of the subject, we can look to other foundational categories that are less abstract and more tactile, such as life and death.¹⁵²

Already, Mbembe anticipates reading against or at least outside the inherited onto-epistemological project of the Enlightenment, whose knowledge production often cloaks "contemporary experiences" in abstract, philosophical language by either minoritizing or relegating to the margins of "valid" knowledge production voices outside the Enlightenment tradition. To echo Thobani's wisdom from chapter one, this political-philosophical project performs a kind of violence in its failure to engage with or discuss, as Mbembe points out, these contemporary experiences.

¹⁵¹ Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11.

¹⁵² Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 14.

In other words, for Mbembe, the challenge becomes to rethink biopolitics in the embattled zones of the colony—and by extension the settler state—which has been typically neglected by the biopolitical frames that privilege the absolute audacity and historical certainty that is modernity's Holocaust. Biopolitics, particularly the Agambian interpretation, is wrapped up in this “exceptional signifier” that is the Holocaust, obscuring the possibility of theorizing or recognizing other historical and contemporary moments of destruction and instrumentalization of human bodies (such as with settler colonialism) if only because the Holocaust is always evoked to describe the autonomy of the sovereign at its worst and as if the worst did not emerge before the Holocaust and continue in some capacity.¹⁵³ In other words, Mbembe's “necropolitics” thinks through and against this theoretical elision by returning the conversation back to the concepts of life and death outside what has been mischaracterized by Euro-American political and philosophical history as the “exceptional” that was the Nazi concentration (or death) camps. Reiterating Weheliye's critique of genocide and its economy of knowledge: “concentration camps shared an intimate history with different forms of colonialism and genocide before being transformed into the death camps of Nazi Germany.”¹⁵⁴ As such, for Mbembe, the political-philosophical knowledge production of Euro-American biopolitics, and theory at large, has committed itself to an “ailment of memory” and contemporary blind spots to the legacy of colonial instrumentalization and destruction of human bodies.¹⁵⁵ However, this is not all to suggest that scholars, activists, and artists have not been doing this critical work of excavating these histories. As Weheliye shrewdly, and somewhat sarcastically, points out, critical race theorists and writers have been writing about bare life, the camp, and state of exception long before Foucault and Agamben:

The [biopolitics] of Foucault and Agamben are deemed transposable to a variety of spatiotemporal contexts because the authors do not speak from an explicitly racialized view point (in contradistinction to non-white

¹⁵³ Mbembe, “Provincializing France,” 114.

¹⁵⁴ Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 35.

¹⁵⁵ Mbembe, “Provincializing France,” 113.

scholars [...]), which lends their credibility and, once against displaces minority discourses. If I didn't know any better, I would suppose that scholars not working in minority discourses seem thrilled they no longer have to consult the scholarship of non-white thinkers now that European master subjects have deigned to weigh in on these topics.¹⁵⁶

Yet, I take Pauline Wakeham's point that in rendering the sovereign's vectors of control against Indigenous communities in terms of exclusively death—or rendering them as *death making*—commits to the theoretical attitude that Indigenous communities are always already erased or erasable.¹⁵⁷ What does enduring indigeneity look like within biopolitical frameworks? As such, Mbembe's necropolitics risks naturalizing death as the ultimate condition or outcome of colonial biopolitical projects. That is, they risk naturalizing the logic that Indigenous communities endure colonialism when, in fact, the opposite is true. Indeed, this is an important nuance to think through because settler colonial biopolitical logics, following Wolfe and Scott Morgenson, even if eliminatory, function to (re)produce Indigenous bodies as part of the settler colonial body politic.¹⁵⁸ Settler colonial vectors of control, then, are often cloaked as progressive, natural, and fail to appear as extraordinarily violent. Hence, settler colonial vectors of control might be more accurately described as a form of slow violence that debilitates, injures, and wounds over time.

3.5 The Right to Maim: Coloniality, Biopower, and Violence

If the biopolitical logics of settler colonialism are not exclusively death-making, then in what other ways can we frame these vectors of control? To be sure, they are still

¹⁵⁶ Wheleiyi, *Habeas Viscus*, 6.

¹⁵⁷ Pauline Wakeham, "Truth and Reconciliation in a Post-Truth Age: Settler Colonial Fictions and the Limits of the Sayable in Contemporary Canada" (presentation, 20th Annual Graduate Student Conference – Comparative Literature, Hispanic Studies, and Theory & Criticism, London, Western University, ON, March 16, 2018). I am making a reference to a talk Pauline Wakeham delivered at a graduate conference, addressing in one moment of her lecture the language of slow death versus slow violence with respect to Indigenous knowledge.

¹⁵⁸ Scott Morgenson, "The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now," *Settler Colonial Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011): 56.

eliminary. Nevertheless, I name settler colonialism's vectors of biopower and violence together as *coloniality*. In the settler and post-colonial contexts, I think it is necessary to read violence and biopower together but as separate vectors of control that, I argue, converge through the vector of coloniality. I derive this concept of coloniality from Mbembe's seminal English text, *On the Postcolony* where Mbembe uncovers the founding violence of the colony that cements the biopower inherent to the settler's right to rule. From there, I attend to Jasbir Puar's concept of the settler colony's right to maim—synonymous with injury, wounds, and vulnerability—which Puar identifies as the distinguishing biopolitical feature of settler colonial rule. Indeed, I read the right to maim (biopower) and the right to rule (founding violence) together as the condition of possibility for settler colonialism termed here as its coloniality. I find that coloniality operates through the camouflage of humanitarianism to conceal its vectors of biopower and violence, which is a violence unto itself.

Before his widely influential article on necropolitics, Mbembe began thinking through the sovereignty of the colonial archetype in terms of *commandement*. “The colonial enterprise,” writes Mbembe, “was, first, the assertion of a right (not negotiated but simply arrogated) over persons and things [...] In this regard, such sovereignty rather resembles the supposed “state of nature,” allowing itself to do whatever it wishes. It can possess, make use of, and enjoy whatever it pleases since it alone is competent to judge what is good and truly useful to itself, and since there is no abuse in whatever it may do against the native. In this sense, it exercises an absolute dominion over the native.”¹⁵⁹ Mbembe names this state of nature or right as commandement wherein the land, the Indigenous, and other life forms serve as the “raw materials” for the settler colony's sovereignty. In other words, the sovereign derives its right to rule (and later right to maim) from the denigration of the land and bodies it occupies. Indeed, commandement outlines the formulation of “make life” and “make death” that describes necropolitics. For my purposes, however, I am interested in the moment or moments of the assertion of a right a priori. That is, a right to hurt, injure, scold, and wound persons derived through the very act of injuring.

¹⁵⁹ Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001): 34.

Commandement describes two concrete things for Mbembe. On the one hand, it describes the foundational violence of colonialism that authorizes its unfettered right to rule. To put it another way, much like Agamben's identification of the paradox of sovereignty establishing law outside the force of the law, the sovereignty of (settler) colonialism founds its right to rule within a zone of exception. This zone emerges between the frontier and the colonizer where political-philosophical knowledge renders the land in terms of *terra nullius*, justifying the right to occupation. Further, and to put it another way, the imagined risk of the land always returning to the "dark ages," that is, a land void of law and knowledge, if the European colonizer abandoned its manifest destiny, legitimizes "the right" to a host of verbs to maintain control of the land and its inhabitants.¹⁶⁰ Hence, the encroachment of civilization into the "frontier" by whatever means is justified as it illuminates against the opposing dark ages that have, in the settler colonial narrative, swallowed the land. And hence, colonial expeditions are always already exempt from their own values of civilization. As Mbembe writes, "Commandement scarcely raised questions of its ends; it was the very instance that justified them."¹⁶¹ From the outset, then, colonialism was a *regime d'exception*, rendering the colony as one, seemingly endless zone of exception to the rule of law and of the politicization of life and its capacities.

This logic beckons Mbembe's second point: commandement produces the conquerable, punishable, and contingent category of "the native" (or Indigenous). For the colonizers, the Indigenous body was a canvas for violence legitimized through the boundaries of captivity such as the labour camp, the interrogation centre, and the jailhouse. Mbembe writes, "whatever the forms and quality of the penal rituals, they shared the feature of doing something to the body of the colonized. [...] he/she was in effect marked, broken in, compelled to provide forced labor, obliged to attend ceremonies, the aim being not only to tame and bring him/her to heel but also to extract from him/her the maximum possible use."¹⁶² Nevertheless, the category of unassimilable Indigenous others, to borrow Veracini's terms, founds the scaffolding for the settler

¹⁶⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched*, 15.

¹⁶¹ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 26.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 28

state's biopower—the surface or body in which the state can establish itself as the sole sovereign of the realm. However, for Mbembe, this exercise of biopower operates through “micro-actions,” occurring in “what might be called the details. It tended to erupt at any time, on whatever pretext and anywhere.”¹⁶³ Indeed, these thousand small details inflicted over bodies in captivity, bodies under interrogation, or bodies excluded from the rights of the white hetero man percolated as a slow violence. Here, I borrow the parlance of Lauren Berlant: the collective living of the colonized, or more accurately Indigenous collectives, in the context of settler colonies became the scenes “of administration, discipline, and recalibration”—or, in other words, the scenes of captivity.¹⁶⁴ Commandement, as a regime of (slow) biopower and violence, makes and enforces life, rather than makes death insofar as the colony requires the life of these Indigenous collectives as its source of sovereignty. Its violence and biopower—as the vectors of coloniality—are slow because they merely inflict nicks and bruise as well as administer toxins and poisons over time that have been naturalized by coloniality as fundamental properties of the unassimilable Indigenous others. They are unassimilable, or they cannot be saved because they are fundamentally wounded. Meanwhile, the settler colony regards itself as the curator of the cure, the institution of care, and the only thinkable bastion of civilizational progress. Its biopower and violence, in other words, are regarded as humanitarian.

Indeed, the very right to injure or maim locates its *raison d'être* as the common good, civilizational progress, and humanitarianism. For Puar, the capacity of the settler to deliberately maim “triangulates the hierarchies of living and dying that are standardly deployed in theorizations of biopolitics.”¹⁶⁵ Whereas the biopolitical formula commonly tends to suggest biopower operates on the logic of “make live” or “let die,” Puar rewrites the equation as “will not let die” and “will not make die.” In this way, Puar accounts for how coloniality conceals itself as humanitarian. The settler colonial state controls Indigenous collectives through debilitation, maiming, and injuring rather than exclusively

¹⁶³ Ibid., 28

¹⁶⁴ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*. (London: Duke University Press, 2011): 95-99

¹⁶⁵ Jasbir Puar, *The Right to Maim: debility, capacity, disability*. (London: Duke University Press, 2017): 137.

death-making. To be sure, the settler colony prefers to uphold its image as a progressive or utopian state, which is difficult to maintain if it openly discloses its logics of elimination. As such, maiming is a targeted and tactical endeavour with the intended purpose of either slowly removing a population or assimilating a population into the body politic.¹⁶⁶

Debilitation and maiming of Indigenous populations is enacted through a variety of means that, through their slow process, naturalize their occurrence or geneticize their outcomes. On the one hand, debilitation includes the targeting of caloric intake, access to useable water, and access to appropriate long term medical care. It can also include inhibition of infrastructural development or the destruction of infrastructure. All in all, these tactics, more than reducing life to bare life, impose the question, for Puar, of how much can bare life bear?¹⁶⁷ For example, in the context of French Algeria, the settler government restricted Indigenous Algerians' access to nutrition and calories, inducing an epidemic of starvation and malnutrition.¹⁶⁸ The broader medical institutions of colonial France as well, which I will touch on later in this chapter, neglected to properly care for the colonized, writing off most illness or diseases as the natural condition of the colonized, which was at times referred to as "North African Syndrome." Finally, the benevolent bourgeoisie believed that paying below minimum wages was doing Indigenous employees a favour: it kept them steadily employed.¹⁶⁹ Careful calculation links all these instances of maiming.

Sherene Razack offers a fruitful way of thinking through Puar's "not let die" and "not make die" with the phrase, "dying from improvement." While investigating Indigenous death within settler state custody, Razack poses an important question: how is it that Indigenous persons end up dying while under the care of the state?¹⁷⁰ Settler colonialism since its origin has been a project of improvement—both of the land and Indigenous bodies. As such, dying in this case can be material—that is, the inevitable

¹⁶⁶ Puar, *The Right to Maim*, 139.

¹⁶⁷ Puar, *The Right to Maim*, 139.

¹⁶⁸ Evans, *Algeria Undeclared*, 36-37.

¹⁶⁹ Ted Morgan, *My Battle of Algiers: A Memoir*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2005): 179.

¹⁷⁰ Sherene Razack, *Dying From Improvement: Inquests and Inquiries into Indigenous Deaths in Custody*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015): 59.

elimination of Indigenous bodies in the name of improvement—or it can be metaphorical insofar as dying denotes the erasure and extinguishing of Indigenous culture and access to land. Improvement masks the dying. With French Algeria, of course, the French believed wholeheartedly that they were improving the land, improving the Indigenous peoples, and improving their own civilization through amassing wealth. All the while, Indigenous Algerians were debilitated, injured, and wounded by the institutions, technologies, and apparatus of the settler state. The settler state has a habit of posing itself as caring about the Indigenous populations it works so hard to harm.

I find Razack's formulation of dying from improvement to be synonymous with coloniality as it implies coloniality's vectors of violence and biopower. Further, as Razack points out, the coloniality of dying from improvement works to conceal its operations: "settler colonialism [...] produces settlers as caring, civilized, and modern, persons with the moral authority and knowledge to save Indigenous peoples."¹⁷¹ While the settlers are committed to the task of saving the Indigenous in earnest—often through assimilation—settlers continue to injure Indigenous bodies as a mode of control. "Indigenous bodies," writes Razack, "become violable as damaged bodies which can only be managed through force. It is possible to kick, punch, and drag Indigenous bodies without impunity."¹⁷² All the force utilized against Indigenous bodies is in the name of improvement, but not necessarily the improvement of Indigenous bodies, land, and culture. As such, the coloniality is both the act of concealment and the act of kicking, punching, and dragging. Coloniality constructs the zone of exception through its founding violence, holding the unassimilable Indigenous other in captivity where it can then write injury over the body of this other.

Razack contextualizes this formulation by interrogating the case of an Indigenous man, Paul Alphonse, who was wounded and eventually killed while in the custody of the Canadian RCMP. After resisting arrest, after resisting being held captive by the officer, a police officer marks Alphonse's body with a boot print. Here, Alphonse's body is narrativized as the frontier, that is, where the colonizer leaves his mark on the frontier in

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 59.

¹⁷² Razack, *Dying From Improvement*, 87.

the moment of founding violence. And yet, this act of police brutality hides itself. That is to say, bureaucracy, jurisprudence, and that claim that, ultimately, the RCMP is an institution of care holds the scene of Alphonse's hurt captive. Indeed, Alphonse was held captive until the moment that beget his death. In this grueling story that Razack uncovers through an examination of court records, personal accounts, and shrewd observation, Razack not only reveals the vectors of biopower and violence concealed by settler colonial narratives of care but reveals the fundamental need of settler colonial punitive forces to detain, capture, withhold, and incarcerate Indigenous, black, and brown bodies. And it is in these spaces, which persist on the margins of everyday sight, where racialized and Indigenous bodies are injured and interrogated for the improvement of settler society. To be sure, the withholding of Alphonse and the kick to his abdomen was enacted in the name of preserving, protecting, and improving the broader settler colonial body politic.

In the context of French Algeria settler society, I find the same structure. During the climax of the war for independence, French Algerian police and military force, which eventually mutated into the para, deployed torture as the ultimate means of extracting information about the FLN and other "suspects." Here, I argue that torture was indeed an extreme material rendering of coloniality. To be sure, torture within these interrogation centres utilized the right to maim or to not let their captives die until all information was extracted. As ex-French soldier Ted Morgan recounts the words of a torturer in his memoir on the battle of Algiers:

We're told we're saving lives. It's always done at night. A guy is brought in. We make him take his clothes off. Being naked is a terrible humiliation for an Arab. We have various methods. Pouring water down their throat with a funnel, or using a soldering iron on the soles of their feet, or a lit cigarette on a nipple. The gègne works best, with one of our boys turning the handles faster to turn up the juice. There's no risk of electrocution.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ Morgan, *My Battle of Algiers*, 170.

Indeed, the conversation begins with the suggestion that torture, ultimately, saves lives. It ends with the humanitarian suggestion that it does not kill lives either. As such, torture is framed as the right to maim vectors of not let die and not make die.

Nevertheless, torture, as Dorothy Roberts asserts, served a specific political function to render bodies as subjectable, disposable, injurable, and inferior.¹⁷⁴ Roberts writes, “positioning racialized captives in total subjection makes the torture appear to be defending civilization, law, and order; the injured captive becomes the wrongdoer deserving of punishment.”¹⁷⁵ Much like the detainment of Paul Alphonse and the police brutality he experienced, torture naturalizes the status of vulnerability and inferiority of the Indigenous body by wounding the body, debilitating the body, and scarring the body.

3.6 Scenes of Captivity: Epidermalization and Knowledge Production

Up until now I have seemingly delimited the category of the body, including in chapter one, as a vulnerable object that is perhaps distinct from the experience of vulnerability and resilience. Bodies sometimes emerge in this discourses of biopolitics, settler colonialism, and torture as single-dimensional surfaces where injury, hurt, or wounds are written across the body’s skin. In part, I think this is a limit engendered by the discourse of biopolitics generally where the body tends to stand in for life or bios. Here, I am inspired by Rene Dietrich’s centring of *geos* as the other half of *bios* that western political-philosophical knowledge production divorces from its field of inquiry. As Dietrich writes, “such a logic ultimately rests on a European tradition of thought (which is universalized in settler colonial contexts).”¹⁷⁶ However, this final section is not interested in reading *geos* as the other half of *bios*. Rather, I use this disruption by Dietrich to simply decenter the body as the central object of knowledge within a biopolitical framework. In other words, biopolitics has yet to resolve, I think, the mind-body split that has troubled feminist and Indigenous scholars and their critiques of the

¹⁷⁴ Dorothy Roberts, “Torture and the Biopolitics of Race,” *University of Miami Law Review* 62 (2007): 239

¹⁷⁵ Roberts, “Torture and the Biopolitics of Race,” 243.

¹⁷⁶ Dietrich, “The Biopolitical Logics of Settler Colonialism,” 67.

Euro-American philosophical tradition. Indeed, Puar invites us to think through this question. “Through the practice of maiming, stunting, and debilitation,” writes Puar in the context of Israel’s occupation of Gaza, “Palestinians are further literalized and lateralized as surfaces, as bodies, without souls, as sheer biology, thus rendered as non-human.”¹⁷⁷ Euro-American political-philosophical knowledge production has both rendered the body as inherently vulnerable, abject, and injurable, as well as divorced it from “the mind” or experience. A body rendered in terms of sheer biology does not necessarily possess the capacity to experience. It is an animalized body, a dehumanized body, a body bound to zoological discourses, as Fanon would say.¹⁷⁸ In this final section, then, I think through how the right to maim operates across multiple surfaces, including the experiential and the bodily. As such, I suggest that the right to maim not only debilitates bodily surfaces but also psycho-existential “surfaces.”

To accomplish this, I turn to Fanon who is not generally regarded as a thinker in the realm of the biopolitical. Nevertheless, I believe that Fanon offers quite a few insights into the everyday reach of coloniality’s vectors of control, biopower and violence. Of course, Fanon’s later works deeply concern themselves with revolutionary praxis. His earlier publications, however, offer a rich source of political commentary on race, settler colonialism, and political-philosophical knowledge production that seed his later work. Where Fanon has recently been resuscitated, so to speak, across a broad range of critical race and postcolonial conversations, Nigel Gibson importantly remarks, “why begin a contemporary engagement with Fanon assuming a priori the limits of his thought.”¹⁷⁹ In part, Gibson is responding to a body of scholarship that quarantines Fanon to his time and place, producing Fanon as a controversial voice in two distinct ways. On the one hand, Fanon is sometimes mistaken as a sympathizer of terrorism, and that his philosophy of violence as an existential cleansing force is merely a dangerous means to an end.¹⁸⁰ The debate continues, on the other hand, as to whether Fanon can be appropriately read and

¹⁷⁷ Puar, *The Right to Maim*, 150.

¹⁷⁸ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 7.

¹⁷⁹ Nigel Gibson, “The New North African Syndrome: A Fanonian Commemoration,” *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* XIX, no. 1 (2011): 24.

¹⁸⁰ Michael Sonnleitner, “Of Logic and Liberation: Frantz Fanon on Terrorism,” *Journal of Black Studies* 17, no. 3 (1987): 288.

“applied” outside his time and place.¹⁸¹ Though many scholars continue to argue that it is impossible to utilize Fanon to think through contemporary problems, many recognize, as Max Silverman notes, that “the power in [Fanon’s work] resides in its ability to travel across the frontiers of place, history, and politics and speak in different voices to different readers.”¹⁸² It is from this vantage point I wish to read Fanon, rejecting any a priori judgement of Fanon. Though I do not intend to read Fanon strictly as a thinker of the biopolitical, his critiques of racism and medical knowledge production with regard to “North African Syndrome” reveal how the right to maim in fact works across multiple surfaces. More importantly, as I am reading settler colonialism as a structure, the work of Fanon, which finds itself engaged within these settler colonial structures, becomes an invaluable tool in interrogating them.

Fanon’s political thinking emerged within the context of the settler colonial institution of care, the hospital. While Fanon is most well-known as a philosopher and revolutionary, he was in fact a trained medical doctor, graduating from Université de Lyon in 1952. Even though Fanon studied the medical sciences, he remained a voracious reader of literature and continental philosophy, studying the canonical works such as Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. In addition, he studied under the influential Négritude poet, Aimé Césaire, where Fanon developed his unique, poetic voice. His doctoral dissertation, which was originally rejected by the university as well as a variety of publishers, was eventually published as *Black Skin, White Masks*. Part psychoanalytic study, part black philosophy, and part poetry, *Black Skin, White Masks* continues to be one of the most influential works on black ontology, racism, and colonialism. In 1953, Fanon accepted a post at the Hôpital Psychiatrique de Blida-Joinville to practice psychiatry, which was situated within the town of Blida, Algeria. By treating the existential wounds of both French soldiers and Algerians, Fanon quickly developed his political praxis, recognizing the long-term impact colonialism had on the colonized’s

¹⁸¹ Peter Hudis, *Frantz Fanon: Philosopher of the Barricades*. (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 3.

¹⁸² Max Silverman, “Introduction” in *Frantz Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks: New Interdisciplinary Essays*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005) 3.

sense of self as object in the world.¹⁸³ “Because it is a systemized negation of the other, a frenzied determination to deny the other any attribute of humanity,” writes Fanon, “colonialism forces the colonized to ask the question: ‘who am I in reality?’”¹⁸⁴ For Fanon, coloniality was a diagnosable pathology. The corrective treatment, then, that Fanon pondered was a deeply political one.

In his first published essay, “The ‘North African Syndrome’,” Fanon addresses the pathology of coloniality, which offers a subtle critique of its vectors of biopower and violence. Describing the encounter between a racialized patient and a European doctor, Fanon illuminates how knowledge production commits to the elision of coloniality as the precursor for many of the colonized’s psychosomatic wounds that manifest seemingly without lesions, bruises, or scars. In turn, these wounds are interpreted by the Euro-American ethnoepisteme as the simulations of a lying North African or Arab:

In the face of this pain without lesion, this illness distributed in and over the whole body, this continuous suffering, the easiest attitude, to which one comes more or less rapidly, is the negation of any morbidity. When you come down to it, the North African is a simulator, a liar, a malingerer, a sluggard, a thief.¹⁸⁵

Here, in this encounter, the patient is reduced to sheer biology or a one-dimensional surface through the misdiagnosis of his or her abstract pain. Conventional medical discourse ordains, Fanon points out, that every symptom supposes its wound—or every symptom follows a mappable pathology.¹⁸⁶ However, in finding no open wounds, bruises, or lesions on the body of the patient, the doctor diagnoses his or her condition as simply “North African Syndrome,” denying the colonial reality of hurt experienced by the patient. Either the patient is a fraud, feigning injury to get out of work, or his or her skin colour is the wound itself.

Two points become clear from this encounter. The first point is that the patient’s

¹⁸³ Christopher Lee, *Frantz Fanon: Toward a Revolutionary Humanism*. (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2015): 60 – 65.

¹⁸⁴ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 182.

¹⁸⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*. (New York: Grove Press, 1994): 4.

¹⁸⁶ Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, 8.

experience of pain and suffering from bearing psychosomatic wounds is foreclosed—if only because the patient is reduced to sheer biology. Trauma and other psychosomatic wounds, which are products of coloniality, are refused in place of the racist categorizations of North Africans as lazy and lying, rather than as experiencing “pain” and “suffering” from the system itself. As Mazi Allen observes in his reading of the institutional culture Fanon was in dialogue with, “the racist construct of the ‘Arab’ in that cultural imaginary and the real, institutional, forces (precisely in the form of the state racism referred to by Foucault) [...] combined to ‘break’ real North Africans into conforming to the [...] stereotypes imposed upon them by the French.”¹⁸⁷ This vector of biopower—named as breaking—maims the patient’s experience of his or her body in reality, inflicting (further) psychosomatic wounds, through the refusal of proper care and diagnosis of the patient’s ailment. By debilitating, wounding, and injuring the colonized—by breaking them into their stereotypes—the European doctor affirms the ethnoepisteme that arrives a priori to the diagnosis. The second point relates to the first, which I name as the racializing process of epidermalization, which, as a founding violence, founds this ethnoepisteme.

Epidermalization refers to the phenomena where the white gaze—or more broadly, Euro-American knowledge production—assembles the flesh of the other in the visual and textual fields in such a way that it (re)produces the euro-ethnoepisteme. This continual process of re-iteration of knowledge is always already a founding violence, much like Mbembe describes with commandement. In other words, I read epidermalization alongside the right to maim as co-extensive processes that upholds and conceals coloniality as a form of knowledge production. That is to say, *epi* stands in for epistemology and *dermis* stands in for the skin or the flesh of the body which is imbued with knowledge as if it were a priori, that is, it naturalizes the dominant Euro-American ethnoepisteme about bodies. It is a double process, in other words, of producing knowledge of bodies and bodies as knowledge. Further, by producing the Euro-American ethnoepisteme as naturalized or a priori during encounters with the other, coloniality,

¹⁸⁷ Mazi Allen, “A Statement of Conscious: Frantz Fanon’s *Le Sydrôme Nord-Africain*,” *Human Architecture: Journal of Sociology and Self-Knowledge* (2007): 87.

which finds its engines within this episteme, conceals itself. The colonized or racialized, then, is a maligner not because of a long-enduring structure but because of sheer biology.

Elsewhere, Sara Mameni describes epidermalization in terms of dermopolitics, rooting the term within the work of Hortense J. Spiller, Sylvia Wynter, and Simone Browne.¹⁸⁸ For Mameni, epidermalization describes “captive bodies,” such as in the case of Abu Ghraib, wherein race as a form of knowledge is imposed on the body in these scenes of captivity. Indeed, we have witnessed this with the example of Paul Alphonse who, with the very act of being injured, his “indigeneity” is imposed on him or the thousands of Algerians stripped naked and tortured. Indeed, it seems that the Muslim Algerian, for the Frenchmen, only becomes a North African Muslim once stripped, humiliated, and electrocuted. Nevertheless, Mameni’s dermopolitics offers an important insight that can already be seen in Fanon’s critique of the North African Syndrome: “[I use] Dermopolitics not merely as a corrective to how bodies are managed—or dealt life and death based on the shapes and colors of their skins—but as a feminist and queer of color analytic that upholds the specificity of the body as the site of political knowledge.”¹⁸⁹ As such, I think through epidermalization as not only a process of racialization, but a process of knowledge production to hold the bodies of the other captive for interrogation and wounding. In this way, I take epidermalization beyond obvious scenes of captivity such as the interrogation centre or the prison. For Fanon, the white gaze imposes a prison of whiteness. As Fanon asserts in reference to Euro-American knowledge production about his body and being, “I am a prisoner of the vicious circle.”¹⁹⁰ With this in mind, I use the term “scenes of captivity” rather than Hartman’s “scenes of subjection” because these scenes are in fact often foreclosed from view. Captivity is a mode of concealing bodies while producing knowledge about those bodies.

¹⁸⁸ See Sylvia Wynter’s “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument” (2003), Hortense J. Spiller’s “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book” (1987), and Simone Browne’s *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (2015).

¹⁸⁹ Sara Mameni, “Dermopolitics and the erotics of the Muslim body in pain,” *Women and Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 27, no 1. (2017): 97.

¹⁹⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 96. Indeed, for Fanon, the white gaze posed a double problem of ontology and epistemology insofar as the black subject or colonized subject was denied the self-determination of both.

In the introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon introduces epidermalization as the two-pronged process that engenders the inferiority complex in the racialized. Fanon writes, “The inferiority complex can be ascribed to a double process. First, economic. Then, internalization or rather epidermalization of this inferiority.”¹⁹¹ For the purposes of this discussion, I will leave aside the economic forces to which Fanon refers. Throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon takes to task historical materialism, finding that Marxism must always be stretched when it comes to the onto-epistemological projects of the racialized and/or colonized subject if only because the history that Marxism supposes rejects those histories seemingly belonging to “primitive accumulation”—or the dustbins of history as Coulthard would put it. Most important for the conversation here is that Fanon recognizes that the inferiority complex engendered by coloniality cannot simply be internalization of this inferiority. Rather, it is the epidermalization of inferiority—the inscribing of inferiority onto the skin. This insight for Fanon emerges out of his unforgiving dialogue with Jean-Paul Sartre. Critiquing Sartre’s ‘Black Orpheus’ and dialectical supposition that Négritude (or blackness) is merely a stepping stone towards a transcendent universalism, Fanon writes, “Jean-Paul Sartre forgets that the black man suffers in his body quite differently from the white man.”¹⁹² The black body for Fanon is overdetermined from both the inside and the outside; the black subject cannot accessibly escape the captivity of these overdetermining forces of knowledge production.¹⁹³ As such, the internalization/epidermalization of the white gaze forces a perpetual self-interrogation that Fanon describes earlier: who am I in reality?

It is at this point that I wish to point out that epidermalization describes the maiming of the racialized subject’s subjectivity in certain scenes of captivity, where the question or exclamation not only captures the body of the other, but also amputates his or her being. It is here where epidermalization hints at the vectors of biopower and founding violence within knowledge production. Indeed, the language Fanon deploys to describe this psycho-existential maiming is quite violent, borrowing, interestingly enough, the

¹⁹¹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, xv.

¹⁹² Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 117.

¹⁹³ Throughout his body of work, Fanon draws attention to quite forces of overdetermination from “North African Syndrome,” philosophical assumptions by Sartre, Hegel, and Marx, and the racial stereotyping in everyday media by Y a bon banana.

imagery of medicine. As Fanon recounts: “The white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me. I am fixed. Once the microtomes are sharpened, the Whites objectively cut sections of my reality.”¹⁹⁴ Every question cuts. Every interrogation unmakes the world of the black subject, yet not always as a will to “make die” because it is a slow violence of a scalpel that cuts away, negates, and etches a series of nots into the subject’s being. Fanon continues:

I couldn’t take it any longer, for I already knew there were legends, stories, history, and especially the historicity that Jaspers had taught me. As a result, the body scheme, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema.¹⁹⁵

The scene of captivity, then, works to first found the epidermal racial schema—to unearth an ethnoepisteme from the flesh of the other—which then functions to debilitate, paralyze, and partition off the racialized subject’s capacity to live both their reality and their future.¹⁹⁶ In other words, both their future and their reality is held captive within the question who am I in reality? The right to maim, then, can in fact wound the onto-epistemological prospects of the colonized subject. Finally, I want to return briefly to a scene of captivity discussed in the conclusion of chapter one: the interrogation that begins Fanon’s reflection on the lived experience of the black subject.

The chapter begins with the founding violence of a presumably white man, exclaiming “Look! A negro!” It is at this moment in which the body of the subject that Fanon narrates is captured by the ethno-episteme. Throughout the chapter, the exclamation is reiterated by different voices and in different contexts—all of which (re)produce this ethno-episteme of the “negro” and the history, legends, and myths the categorization bears within it. It is in the citation, I wish to suggest, that the vector of biopower exerts its force across multiple surfaces of the body—the right to capture and maim the body and subject into a closed object amongst other objects. Fanon writes, “my

¹⁹⁴ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 95.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁹⁶ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 119. I am thinking this through, also, in the context of the question that critical race theorist raises: can the future be Muslim? Can the future be indigenous? For Fanon, the question is more often, can the future be otherwise?

body was returned to me spread-eagled, disjointed, redone, draped in mourning on this white winter's day."¹⁹⁷ For Fanon, the ethnoepisteme controls how he and his body move through the world (made up of whiteness) insofar as his body is always already debilitated by virtue of his the ethnoepisteme that is affixed, injected, written, or etched into the epidermis and its relation to the white gaze. In other words, the subject in question can rarely escape the scenes of captivity that engender interrogatives such as "who am I in reality" (internalized inferiority complex), "who are you," and "what are you"? Interrogatives that sever the reality of the subject in captivity.

Finally, returning to the scene of the doctor and the patient, the patient is captured by the ethnoepisteme of the North African Syndrome. Finding no identifiable wounds on the body of the patient who hurts, the doctor sources the patient's body, their skin, and their flesh as the wound. This moment, I argue, is the moment of the epidermalization of wounds—a moment which not only wounds but conceals the very act of wounding. Again, there persists the founding violence in diagnosing the other through "North African Syndrome," an ethno/medical-episteme that fixes the subject in question as either a liar or lazy. Then, the vector of biopower denies their reality. The patient is not sick, the patient is not in pain, the patient is North African. Fanon narrates an encounter with a misdiagnosed patient:

And he tells about his pain. Which becomes increasingly his own. He talks about it volubly. He takes hold of it in space and puts it before the doctor's nose. He takes it, touches it with his ten fingers, develops it, exposes it. It grows as one watches it. He gathers it over the whole surface of his body.¹⁹⁸

Here, Fanon begins to uncover the pathology of coloniality and the psychosomatic and bodily wounds it inflicts on the colonized. Rather than assume the physical presence of wounds on the body—lesions, bruises, cuts, or boils—Fanon turns to an examination of the social situation. "Threatened in his affectivity, threatened in his membership in the

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 93.

¹⁹⁸ Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution*, 5.

community,” Fanon observes, “the North African combines all the conditions that make a sick man.”¹⁹⁹ In other words, the pathology of coloniality is diagnosed as the continued commitment of the settler colonizer’s ability to segregate, hold captive, and alienate the bodies it colonizes. This ongoing hurt finds its origin in the slow violence of coloniality, in the thousands of psychosomatic wounds it inflicts daily.

3.7 Conclusion: The American Dream of In/Definite Detention

Throughout this chapter I have emphasized two observations that are relevant for thinking through contemporary crises, particularly related to the so-called “crisis” at the American borders. Indeed, Euro-American countries and their conservative pundits have geographically misplaced the crisis as one that has erupted at the borders of these nations. In other words, they have effectively appropriated the “crisis” from its origins, as if it were a festering wound, to explain its own social and economic hurt and dissatisfaction. In effect, this misplacing of the crisis erases the settler colonial history of population displacement, extraction of wealth, and the continued erosion of social welfare in non-Euro-American nations through a variety of NGOs and humanitarian aids that come with a plethora of strings attached. These are a horde of processes that have engendered the contemporary migration crisis. Euro-American nations argue, nevertheless, that they must close their borders because they are vulnerable to both terrorist infiltration (recall Mellamphy’s notion of *larval terror* from Chapter One) as well as im/migrant bodies stealing and consuming the “prosperity” of the predominantly white body politic. At the same time, Euro-American conservatives and right wingers suggest that the benevolence of their nation has been taken advantage of by the world at large. Another crisis might be, however, the solution to the crisis that has been exacerbated since President Trump’s administration has taken over the United States’ White House; that is the normalization of detaining im/migrant bodies.

The first observation, which is that settler colonialism is a structure and not an event, readily describes the building of mass detainment camps in America. Under

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 13.

Trump's toxic influence, the United States' government has committed punitive and juridical resources to containing what they call "illegal" aliens or migrants. As an influx of persons and families traverse American borderlines, due to violence, prosecution, climate change, and civil war, the United States has responded with mass incarceration. And in many instances, this incarceration is for profit.²⁰⁰ These camps, as well as abandoned Wal-Marts that have been remodeled to contain human beings in cages, belong to the structure of settler colonialism.²⁰¹ As such, these detainment centres, whatever insidious form they take, are not new. Instead, we can regard them as permutations of the settler colonial structure.

More importantly, these centres of detainment, which I have called "scenes of captivity," foreclose from immediate view the vectors of biopower and (founding) violence that are enacted across the bodily surface of detainees. Hence, the value of reading Algeria's war for independence against the French as a formative example of the lengths settler colonialism will go to protect and retain its right to maim, rule, and occupy. In the last decade and a half, more and more accounts of France's interrogation centres have been published. This includes what I have examined in this chapter in addition to Paul Aussaresses' *The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, and the translations of Assia Djebar's oeuvre into English. Yet, I do not find this to be a coincidence. It is no secret that the United States military has also utilized the example of the battle for Algiers as a "counter-terrorism" method.²⁰² Nevertheless, since the detention of so many im/migrant bodies within the United States, reports of physical assault—sexual and otherwise—has surfaced as a normal and legitimated aspect of im/migrant mass incarceration.²⁰³

This brings me to my second observation: epidermalization. In this case, epidermalization describes the process of marking and naturalizing certain bodies as

²⁰⁰ Livia Luan, "Profiting from Enforcement: The Role of Private Prisons in U.S. Immigration Detention," *Migration Policy Institute*, (May 2, 2018).

²⁰¹ Michael E. Miller, Emma Brown, & Aaron C. Davis, "Inside Casa Padre, the Converted Walmart where the U.S. is holding nearly 1,500 immigration children," *The Washington Post*, (June 14, 2018). If there ever has been a metaphor for late stage capitalism, it is the repurposing of defunct Wal-Marts for the purpose of detaining people.

²⁰² Major Lou H. Royer, "Battle of Algiers: Counter Insurgency Success," Master's Thesis, United States Marine Corps., April 2011.

²⁰³ Alice Speri, "Detained, Then Violated," *The Intercept*, (April 11, 2018).

im/migrant or illegal. Currently a surplus of knowledge accumulates, perhaps at an unprecedented rate, about im/migrant, black, Indigenous, and brown bodies as always already a terrorist, a threat, and illegal. Indeed, this knowledge, which is rendered on the surface of racialized and Indigenous bodies as if it were a priori, has justified the false detainment, abuse, and police shootings of racialized and Indigenous bodies.

Finally, I believe that it is important in this ongoing dialogue on police brutality as well as mass incarceration of black, Indigenous, and brown bodies—that is not to exclude queer bodies—to put critical pressure on how knowledge about these bodies is produced within these scenes of captivity. Indeed, one of the most frightening aspects about Abu Ghraib is the fact that the archive is hidden. Or that the clarity of Paul Alphonse's wounding and eventual death is mired in bureaucracy, opposing testimony, and the court system. Not only must we attest to the ways in which violence by settler colonial state apparati and actors is inscribed across the surface of racialized bodies, but we must also attend to the ways in which knowledge-production of these events attempts to erase any trace of its occurrence.

4 Conclusion - The Contingencies of Healing

Violence, like Achilles' spear, can heal the wounds it's inflicted.

-Jean-Paul Sartre, Preface to the Wretched of the Earth

In writing this thesis, I have sought to think through how wounds enter politics. While my research focused on two disparate geographical-temporal contexts—French Algeria and post-9/11 United States—I have shed light on the historical and discursive continuities shared between these two contexts. Indeed, both sovereignties persist as settler colonies, at least in some form or at some time with respect to France, that have utilized knowledge production and extrajudicial measures to detain and maim both unassimilable Indigenous others and undesirable exogenous others. On the one hand, these ventures are framed as the necessary measures to protect, guard, and toughen a nation's borders. On the other hand, they are framed as a civilizing or humanitarian mission. Regardless, in both instances these others are hurt, injured, and wounded as well as produced as inherently vulnerable subjects to the whims and wills of paranoid empires that mask this production—either through the discursive practices of humanitarianism or by centering themselves as the wounded subject.

Chapter One uncovered a pernicious contradiction in the discourse of settler colonial nations such as the United States and Canada. That is, these settler colonial nations speak in terms of their wounded body politic while simultaneously projecting their body politic as hard, stoic, and, at times, invulnerable. Upon further investigation, it is apparent that whiteness embodies this contradiction both in its politics as well as its textual and visual representations. As such, I contend that, most strikingly within the context after 9/11, whiteness has crafted a wounded or woundable identity, shaping its embodiment and as well as crafting its futures as anticipatory, fearful, apocalyptic, and full of future hurt. In short, whiteness commonly narrates itself as always already under attack, wounded by terrorists, and amidst a white genocide.

In Chapter Two, my argument is twofold. Firstly, I posit that French Algeria is a present-past mode of settler colonialism. To be sure, France no longer occupies Algeria formally through the material structures that a typical settler colonial society might. However, the legacy of French Algeria continues to animate conversations and struggles

between France and Algeria. For example, France actively subdues its history as a settler colonial sovereignty in addition to a continued withholding of an archive of memory, data, and truth from Algerians. Secondly, I argue that French Algeria depended on—particularly at the close of its tenure—the biopolitical logics of captivity such as the interrogation centre. Within these spaces, the French colonizer produced an ethnoepisteme, which I have described as a product of epidermalization, about the unassimilable Indigenous others. This ethnoepisteme rendered the Muslim, Arab, and other Indigenous persons as wounded, broken, and humiliated while at the same time wounding, breaking, and humiliating their body and spirit. It is important to understand that both the act of torture and the act of knowledge production share a space within these scenes of captivity.

While I predominantly focus on settler colonial contexts throughout this thesis, my analysis is not limited to these modes of critique. We live in a political moment where far-right populism, proto-fascism, and white supremacy fetishizes victimhood. These politically charged groups are finding strategies to raise the volume of their voice as if they have been silenced. To be sure, the intent of my thesis has not been to judge or render the politics of wounds as necessarily negative or unproductive. Indeed, critical race, Indigenous, feminist, and queer scholarship often go to great lengths to show that pain and suffering can be productive. It is from this perspective that I hold some caution with regards to Brown's pessimistic reading of how wounds are deployed in political discourses. However, the politics of wounds within white supremacy and patriarchy has become increasingly and disturbingly volatile. The perceived hurt of Incel members, KKK members, or Sons of Odin members, for example, has engendered real hurt in the form of mass shootings and grotesque hate crimes. Of course, these reactions share the same logic that justifies drone strikes across the Middle East as restorative of or restoring the natural order of things. Yet, democratic crusades in the name of peace and freedom have yet to prove they are productive. I want to begin thinking through how certain politics of wounds can in fact engender a productive praxis of healing.

What other capacities are a part of pain and hurt outside of the hegemonic discursive assemblages discussed throughout this thesis? I would like the final words of this thesis, then, to gesture towards a politics of healing that has been vital to a number of

Indigenous and postcolonial thinkers, activists, and writers. The conversation becomes risky when it centres on wounded subjectivities without also thinking through how wounds, in fact, generate modes of healing such as refusal, resistance, and resilience. In other words, wounds need not always be interpreted as negative. Hurt, pain, and injury can be a powerful force for forming new collectives, practices, and expression. As Evans notes, and which many postcolonial and Indigenous thinkers identify in their own contexts, many Indigenous Algerians turned towards their own poetry, metaphors, and music to subvert settler colonial knowledge production as well as to generate their own knowledge: “They sang of pain. They sang of suffering. They sang of exclusion. Shared emotions that pointed to the way in which popular music and theatre [...] became a measure of Muslim anger.”²⁰⁴ I take this anger, however, not to mean what Brown and Ahmed have described in terms of negative ressentiment. Rather, these collectives that hinge upon active refusals of settler colonialisms nurture a resilient fecundity that engender optimistic futures.

Yet, as Ahmed points out, “the question of who is doing healing and who is being healed is a troubling one.”²⁰⁵ Indeed, as I pointed out in Chapter One, settler colonial discourses, in an attempt to mask their coloniality, adopt the wounds and injuries of their subjects, healing on their behalf. As such, healing as a practice begins as a refusal of the discursive and material structures. Refusal, to be sure, can take many different forms. For Fanon, refusal was embedded within a material violence that literally worked to tear down the colonial system. “Deep down the colonized subject acknowledges no authority,” Fanon writes, “He is dominated but not domesticated [...] He patiently waits for the colonist to let his guard down and then jumps on him.”²⁰⁶ Fanon’s interlocutor, Sartre, regarded this material violence as mode of healing. Fanon’s violence, however, is not compatible with every context. Coulthard, an Indigenous scholar who draws from Fanon’s politics, thinks through healing in terms of active refusal, yet a refusal which is embedded within an Indigenous anger that affirms fecund futures. As Coulthard writes, “the emergence of reactive emotions like anger and resentment can indicate a breakdown

²⁰⁴ Evans, *Algeria Undeclared*, 41.

²⁰⁵ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 35.

²⁰⁶ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 16.

of colonial subjection and thus open up a possibility of developing alternative subjectivities and anticolonial practices.”²⁰⁷ Crucial to both thinkers, who share similar settler colonial circumstances, is a concern with who is being healed and who is doing the healing, if only because certain modes of healing work to regenerate and conceal the very practice of maiming or wounding that this healing is contingent upon.

²⁰⁷ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 115.

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