

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository

---

5-28-2020 10:30 AM

## com-posing abolitionist≠posthumanism: notes on incommensurability, incomputability and incognita syn-aesthetics

Michelle Liu, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Biswas Mellamphy, N., *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in  
Theory and Criticism

© Michelle Liu 2020

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Liu, Michelle, "com-posing abolitionist≠posthumanism: notes on incommensurability, incomputability and incognita syn-aesthetics" (2020). *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*. 7016.  
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/7016>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact [wlsadmin@uwo.ca](mailto:wlsadmin@uwo.ca).

# com-posing abolitionist≠posthumanism: notes on incommensurability, incomputability and incognita syn-aesthetics

## abstract

This thesis is an exercise in theoretical com-position, an arrangement in genre/generic speculation on the figure abolitionist≠posthumanism. Working para-critically to consider textures, postulations and challenges posed by decolonial thought, Indigenous critical theories, Black studies, critical race feminisms, non-philosophy and theories on digitality, i pose incommensurability, incomputability and incognita syn-aesthetics as moments for desedimenting “the Human” as a genre of being in which the logics of recognition, legibility, exposure and transparency circumscribe a carceral worlding. Attending to the structural antagonisms underlying this figure and its afterlife—one predicated on racial capitalism, slavery and settler-colonialism as its conditions of possibility—i trouble liberal relationality as a procedure which functions with the cut of Difference to write this “World” as standard. i install abolitionist oneirology—dreaming—as a practice of immanent revolt in the *outside* and *without* of civil society, staying extendedly with the World-destroying mandates of the *non-* of non-human and non-relation.

## keywords

relation, difference, recognition, para-, non-, tactics-without-program, fugitivity, incommensurability, incomputability, non-standard procedure, incommunicability, mu, racial capitalism, settler colonialism, abolition, exposure, opacity, spill.

## summary for general audience

This thesis engages in an exercise of abolitionist com-position (a non- and para- disciplinary theoretical installation) implicating questions of the Human, the posthuman and nonhuman in the ongoing violence of racial capitalism, the afterlife of slavery and settler colonial worlding. Drawing textures, postures, and challenges from decolonial thought, Black studies, Indigenous critical theory, critical race feminisms, non-philosophy and theories on digitality, i place “abolitionist” with “posthumanism” in inequality ( $\neq$ ), to hold in tension an image of incongruence in this construction, refusing resolution, equation, incorporation and overcoming to attend to what might be possible in the not-directly-related or the absence of obligatory relation. i pose relationality in the Western philosophical tradition (moment of thought of and for the “West” as imperial formation) as a procedure of philosophical violence, performing a logic of Difference (Laruelle) predicated on cuts, incisions and distinctions that underwrite a figure of the Human as standard—one genre of being (Wynter) consolidated in what is here described as a carceral worlding. The three chapters on incommensurability, incomputability and incognita remain with the *non-* and the *para-* to trouble the logics of recognition, legibility, exposure and transparency as well as sensibility, exchangeability and availability (to thought and to appropriation) in standard procedure. Moving para-critically by means of a placement of “images” (prose, moments, provocations, poetics, accents, visual forms, indications of sound), i consider non-relation and non-human as points of a generic philosophical insurrection given in an account of immanent revolt according to an *outside* and *without* of civil society, dreaming not only the end of this genre of the Human, but the end of a world in which its logics are possible.

## acknowledgments

*for incarcerated beings and abolitionists everywhere.*

*for defenders of land and water everywhere.*

*for revenants and ghosts, revolutionary fighters in kaleidoscopic vision—artists, practitioners, workers, teachers, healers, maroons, theory junkies, pick-pocket writers, queers and butterflies—who refuse “things as they are.”*

*for wayward worlds that already exist—outside, alongside and not yet. for loved ones, familiar and unknown that compose social movements—you teach me life.*

*i wish to thank my mentors and fellow students at the Centre for Theory and Criticism, the department of Women studies and Feminist Research and the faculty of Visual Arts. i am grateful to have learned from you. thank you giving me the time to move unhurriedly in what sometimes feels like physical and conceptual foreclosure. thank you for the much-needed friction and support. i want to express appreciation for Melanie Caldwell who has been wonderfully helpful. thank you Christine Sprengler for modeling so many dimensions of a great teacher; Chris Roulston, Mireya Folch Serra, Erica Lawson, Pauline Wakeham for teaching me the numerous ways theory and politics can be made in communities, inside and outside of the university. my deep gratitude to Nandita Biswas Mellamphy for supervising and inspiring this project. thank you so much for your encouragement and for sharing your patience, kindness, and intelligence. many thanks to Nick Dyer-Witford for your conversations and generous reading of early drafts and for allowing me the pleasure of researching uprisings and digital platforms.*

*to the regulars and “custodians” of the “university” of Asmara Coffee House where i wrote much of this document, thank you keeping a wonderful space of community, laughter and learning. your kindness and openness permitted me a retreat when the University proper grew tiring. thanks Misgna for your craft, wit and hospitality.*

*to Deshkan Ziibing and the grassroots assemblies in the communities surrounding this river dreaming and fighting for economic, social and environmental justice for everyone, thank you for teaching commitment. to Action Beats Collective for sharing the uneasy but fulfilling work of building horizontality with me; for potlucks, meetings, marches and drumming in prefigurative practice. thanks for reminding me of the fullness of a break—a break not only interrupts, it brings about a new time. to the shifting and inspiring anarchist projects, however short lived, that try over and over to*

*make collective spaces more reflective of their radical principles: Empowerment Info Shop, Eat Up, Food not Bombs, Black Rose, EVAC—these projects helped me grow and taught me to take risks. to Bread and Roses for keeping a beautiful and inviting space dedicated to a more beautiful future. to Forrest City Zinefiends who always welcomed, inspired, and encouraged me, you allowed me to unfold and release tension, even if i only show up once in a while. thank you for lending me joy in a piece of paper and a pair of scissors. to Interaction Collective for the space to laugh and vent. to Safe Space and Idle No More London for more making this city more livable. to friends and comrades of No One is illegal Deshkan Ziibing and all the folks who make up the constellation of migrant justice, anti-racist and anti-prison work on Turtle Island. you are all my teachers. you are all brilliance. you helped me survive.*

*to my kickboxing friends and teachers, thank you for teaching me how to throw a straight punch, and the poetics and utility of “taking an angle” in seemingly exhausted situations. you taught me to respect what a body, including my own, can do. much gratitude to Jaime, Nick, Jason, Myka, Sage, Avia, Alex and Matt for taking the time to read my drafts. thank you for your thoughtfulness and care. to friends who made London home for two and half years, thank you for sharing meals and drinks and for making me laugh. to friends who keep time, who remain with me even when i fall out of touch, thank you for growing with me and for being stars. to Bonnie Briggs and your tiny house dreams—homelessness will end, we fight to win!*

*to Matt, thank you for making our home a playful and artful place. thank you for always trying and for being there to keep things on the ground during both periods of sadness and exuberance. i’m grateful for your love and care. to Luna, for teaching me to appreciate the combined power of ferocity and cuteness.*

*to Diane, you inspire me to be a better teacher and student in and out of the classroom.*

*to my grandmothers 嫲嫲, 婆婆. to Lily Auntie who passed away as i began to see an end to this project. Your kindness is everything.*

*to my mom, dad and brother, thank you for continuing to raise me.*

## table of contents

abstract.....	ii
summary for general audience.....	iii
acknowledgments.....	iv
table of contents.....	vi
image list.....	vii
introduction: annotations for dreaming the end of this World.....	1
incommensurability.....	16
incomputability.....	60
incognita.....	93
conclusion: or abolitionist conspiracy.....	135
works cited.....	141

## image list

<i>flash 1. place</i> .....	16
<i>flash 2. name</i> .....	29
<i>flash 3. Aimé</i> .....	30
<i>flash 4. Kamau</i> .....	30
<i>flash 5. notanda</i> .....	30
<i>flash 6. wake</i> .....	32
<i>flash 7. ruination</i> .....	42
<i>flash 8. ▽ḅΔḗ Ḅḅḗḗḗḗ</i> .....	48
<i>flash 9. #ReconciliationIsDead</i> .....	52
<i>flash 10. yes</i> .....	59
<i>flash 11. stats</i> .....	62
<i>flash 12. compute</i> .....	72
<i>flash 13. threshold</i> .....	79
<i>flash 14. retina</i> .....	79
<i>flash 15. lacuna</i> .....	85
<i>flash 16. flesh</i> .....	85
<i>flash 17. air</i> .....	93
<i>flash 18. life</i> .....	101
<i>flash 19. machinima</i> .....	107
<i>flash 20. newlandia:debaabaminaagwad</i> .....	112
<i>flash 21. shapes</i> .....	115
<i>flash 22. Billie and Glenn</i> .....	119
<i>flash 23. mu</i> .....	119
<i>flash 24. Alan</i> .....	122
<i>flash 25. elegy</i> .....	123
<i>flash 26. —</i> .....	133

## introduction: annotations for dreaming the end of this World

“... for those held captive by Man  
it is always already after the end of the world ... don't you know that yet?”  
—Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*

“How to describe the task? What is the Black Poethic Intention?  
Is it an ethics which instead of the betterment of the World as we know it aims at its end?”  
—Denis Ferreira da Silva, “Toward a Black Feminist Poethics”

“Let's start with the end of the world, why don't we?”  
—N. K. Jemisin, *The Fifth Season*

“Contemporary violence is the response societies make to the immediacy of contacts and is  
exacerbated by the brutality of the flash agents of Communication.”  
—Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*

Let's begin with incongruence as a starting point for rearranging a standard order of recognition. Can the cries of bones be seen? Why do the murmurs of bones go unheard? Translating the questions about bones to the ethical realm of the “human” subject of liberal modernity, one might respond “bones have no vocal cords” or “they are already dead.” The bones and the question of bones are displaced in assimilation, put to “rest” in the place of the non-living, non-human and non-problem. This concern with bones contains questions about visibility, recognition, relation, equation, commensurability, communication and intelligibility which inform other questions about decoloniality and abolition, and thus questions regarding the “Human”, criminality, flesh, value and land. Beginning with bones we move *in* and *of* fugitivity<sup>1</sup>—in com-positional tribute to dreaming the end of this World,

<sup>1</sup> Fugitivity refers to the theories and practices that have emerged from the refusal of and resistance to chattel slavery and the plantation system. The fugitive or runaway slave is colonial America's first criminal. Fugitivity also refers to modalities of finding ways to move in circumstances of absolute terror and oppression. It is as a concept has been taken up by Black studies scholars to think and mobilize with



an abolitionist<sup>2</sup> installation of thought in genres of freedom struggle and decolonial mobility in the afterlife of slavery, *within* and *against* the afterword of ongoing settler colonialism, empire and the figure of the Human.<sup>3</sup> It is with these bones in mind that i ask, recalling Sylvia Wynter's provocation: what does it mean to be *seen* in conditions of non-sovereignty? What is it that this *genre* of the Human cannot do without?

Our response will be oblique, tactical, and dreamy—a partial address at a slant. Bones compose the material substratum of this World<sup>4</sup>; they defy obliteration even when the *who* attached to them are repeatedly removed from registration, keeping in view the terror Denise Ferreira da Silva has described as a “calculated total violence” (“Black Feminist Poethic” 83). In an inexplicit yet riotous way, they inhabit the textual materials that inspire this project, as the unnamed and uncounted of the “position of the unthought” always already overturning the footings of this World (Hartman and Wilderson 185). At the edges of a presiding “grammar of suffering” in which bones allegedly cannot suffer, i contest the grounds of universal intersubjective exchange as a property and entry point of “understanding” and resist the economics of making captive for the sake of prehension (Wilderson, *Red, White and Black* 6). As such, the questions about bones are really about being and what is implicated in the “non-” of being, its closures and availabilities in relation

attention to the runaway and the forms of sociality made possible in refusal. Fugitive also shares meaning on some register with “deserter.”

2 i am referring to an abolitionist tradition of working to dismantle the carceral society, plantation economy, capitalism and the prison industrial complex (i would add settler-colonialism). i do not mean the abolition of sex work in the “rescue missions” of “radical feminist programs” but instead, i mean an abolition of the systems that criminalize, detain, and incarcerate sex workers. See S&F online special issue “Unravelling Criminalizing Webs: Building Police Free Futures”, <http://sfoonline.barnard.edu/unraveling-criminalizing-webs-building-police-free-futures/>, Critical Resistance, <http://criticalresistance.org/>, The Prisoners Correspondence Project, <https://prisoner Correspondence Project.com/>, Pang, Jun. “Hong Kong Protests: Imagining the end of the Police” <https://popula.com/2019/08/13/hong-kong-protests-imagining-the-end-of-the-police/>

3 i write Human with a capital H to indicate its status as a proper noun, a particular formation derived from European humanism. i understand this figure of the Human as a historical paradigm and a form of power carried in other formations of “humanity” and concepts of human life, even as the capitalization is rarely used today. i use quotations around “Human” when foregrounding the situatedness of this term.

4 i use “World” in a similar way to the usage of “Human” and capitalize it to emphasize its specificity as a proper noun formed from a particular framework of relationality and set of social relations that sustain its continuation. The capitalization also refers to the historicity of this paradigm and points to the undercutting of other worlds that are possible and *do* exist anterior, posterior and alongside this World.

to thought, in a roundabout way to Robin Kelley's question in *Freedom Dreams*, "what shall we build on the ashes of a nightmare?" (196).

Because ontology is assembled on fracturing and eliminative grounds, we continually find ourselves in gaps and perforations, within radial field of the phrase "the end of this World."<sup>5</sup> Given that this World begins and consolidates in apocalypse—shattering worlds for 500 years and counting—"the end of this World" is conversely unapocalyptic. As Grace Dillion<sup>6</sup> (Anishinaabe) wrote, noting Afrofuturist and Indigenous futurist insights, "the Native Apocalypse, if contemplated seriously, has already taken place" (8). The "end" in this instance is one starting point in speculative visioning, articulated amidst immanent horizons *without* teleological time, noting the acute implications of im/possibility in being *in* and *against* this World. In this thesis, i engage in an exercise of abolitionist com-position as a genre of thought drawn from textures and postulations provided by decolonial thought, Indigenous critical theory, Black studies, critical race feminisms, theories of the digital and non-philosophy. i insert a critique of relationality in the ongoing afterlife and aftermath of slavery and settler-colonial worlding as a fundamental function of the Human of liberal modernity—a carceral paradigm<sup>7</sup> affixed by structural logics predicated on violence against the *non-*. Hinting towards im/possible grammars in the registers of the unspeakable, uncountable and unseen, i maintain that *within* the terms of civil society—this World—the

<sup>5</sup> Afrofuturism and Indigenous futurism begin with this premise that the apocalypse has already occurred with the middle passage and the colonization of the Americas and speculate on possible futures in the aftermath of the present.

<sup>6</sup> i try to include an Indigenous author or artist's self-identified nation or community, if publicly known, in recognition of vastly different sovereign belongings that are irreducible to the designations of the colonial state.

<sup>7</sup> i use carceral in an extended sense, referring broadly to multiple systems of order, exchange and production; forms of generating worlds (worlding) according to logics of capture, distinction, containment and elimination. Studies of the carceral in Canada and the US invariably concern racial slavery, the plantation system and the prison industrial complex and as such also considers systems of border control, detention, ghettoization, reserve, environmental racism, the denial of health care, housing, education and the targeted over-policing of communities pushed to the margins. This expression stands in contrast to liberal assumptions about the public, the commons and the political, since carceral violence is seen as a condition of possibility for liberal social life, buttressing notions of freedom, property, rights and subjectivity. Additionally, carcerality is an extractive framework tied to the expropriation and production of value (economic and cultural) in the formation of racial capitalism. In the context of this project, it is also discussed in terms of philosophical violence, namely as the logics of the figure of the Human of Euro-Western modernity which relies of the captivity of the non-Human.

demands of the non-Human (and other configurations in the non-) cannot be met; and instead demand—oneirologically—a generic dis-order, a *non-place* at the no longer and the not yet where the logics of the present no longer hold.<sup>8</sup>

Ruth Wilson Gilmore wrote of abolition as concerning not only the end of the prison itself, but the carceral geographies which unfold in “the processes of hierarchy, dispossession, and exclusion that congeal in and as group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death” (227). Noting Alexis Pauline Gumbs’s point that settler colonial spatial order is a carceral edict entangled with the logics and economics of race, slavery, precarity, reserves, borders, state “care”, prisons, detention centres, gender and sexual violence and the police, i understand abolitionist dreaming to be incriminated in the activity of obstructing the structural logics of (this)World (Imarisha et al). An abolition of relationality formed in and for carceral sociality; an abolition of thought-worlds in which slavery, settler colonialism, dispossession, captivity and exchanges in death are possible; an abolition of the figure of the Human around which the violence of modernity/coloniality<sup>9</sup> unfolds; an ending of what allows *this* particular worlding to pass itself off as the World. i situate relationality in the context of colonization, empire, racial capitalism and enslavement and consider its woundings in orders of calculation, transparency and recognition to amplify the decolonial assertion for the “epistemological right to perceive through [one’s] own categories” (Million 319).

i set com-position as a variation on “theoretical installation”—an exercise in making generic and making genres of thought (borrowing from François Laruelle and Sylvia Wynter) to configure an abolitionist posture in the posthuman,<sup>10</sup> posed through a

<sup>8</sup> As Franz Fanon wrote “decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is clearly an agenda for total disorder. But it cannot be accomplished by the wave of a magic wand, a natural cataclysm, or a gentleman’s agreement” (*The Wretched of the Earth* 2). Non-place as will be discussed in the third chapter is an image (material and real) of place according to the *non-*, not strictly and wholly engaged in oppositional stance, approximating an outside and without of the “World.”

<sup>9</sup> Modernity/coloniality is a term developed by Anibal Quijano and later Walter D. Mignolo to describe the janus-faced inextricability of modernity and coloniality in the history of the Modern world.

<sup>10</sup> Posthumanism is an umbrella term indicating a broad array of thought which considers futures and presents “after” or “beyond” the human, in critique of humanism’s distinction between human and non-human forms. Typically interested in the agency of forces, entities and beings that exceed human control,

desedimentation of the “Human”, its afterlife, and the orders of difference, relation, communicability, commensurability and computability that hold it in circulation as an enduring paradigm. The figure abolitionist≠posthumanism contains a tension, proximity and incompatibility suggesting an underlying im/possibility that is both grounded and speculative. Where abolitionist thought elicits an end of a carceral paradigm which the posthuman may also inhabit, posthumanism may leave intact the “structural antagonisms” (racial, sexual, colonial, ontological) underpinning the Human (Wilderson, *Red, White and Black* 36). Posthumanist discourses committed to the Western philosophical tradition<sup>11</sup> have tended to be indifferent, if not hostile to abolitionist praxis, seeing abolitionist commitments with getting free as an unprogressive stay with vestiges of a human that is otherwise all but passé.<sup>12</sup> Yet abolitionist thought’s (para)critical imaginations are in many respects radically posthuman and would invariably change the parameters of posthuman possibility. And posthumanism, likewise, may provide generative impressions of departure from the limits of an existing moment. The two postures, though separate, express an inhabitation of alternative futures, presents and pasts that are co-incidentally here and nowhere, requiring a shift in time. Their conjuncture does not straightforwardly result in exchange, but rather in a superpositional image that may not be delivered in sharp resolution. Carrying both equivalence and asymmetry, the “≠” connotes a troubling of agreement, exactitude and resolution. It indicates a concern that is less preoccupied with moving *between* to blur the distinction between the human and the non-human than with incapacitating the structure of relation that makes distinction’s procedure possible.

Around this uneasy thinking together of the construction “abolitionist≠posthumanism”, this non-standard exercise in genre thinks com-position with theories and materials typically given little account or considered non-essential to posthumanism—philosophical,

including A.I., bacteria, networked systems, ecology, non-human life, animals and more. It includes speculative posthumanism (See David Roden) and critical posthumanisms (See Haraway, Braidotti, Barad) and other camps and is often considered distinct from transhumanism.

<sup>11</sup> i use the term the Western Philosophical Tradition for its generalizing capacity and as an indication of what gets perpetually unnamed. For the same reason, i retain the terms “Human” and “World” to stress their imbrications in relations of domination and their formation through philosophical decision—formally they may have shapeshifted, but they haven’t “gone away.”

<sup>12</sup> See Tiffany Lethabo King, Zoe Todd, Michalinos Zembylas, Juanita Sundberg, and Sebastian De Line.

intellectual, artistic practices that have always been in ways *outside* and *without* and also resistant to the Human and its iterative afterlives, rather than in relation to it as its descendants, newly included or transcendent “post-”formations. Because i am interested in contesting the conceivability of subjectivity, agency and communicability in the current relational arrangement Robin Kelley has described as a “nightmare”—i have decided to sidestep engaging or placing stakes directly with posthumanist discourses. Instead, i compose impressions of a non-standard posthuman stance by way of abolitionist dreaming, beginning from another starting point, with another set of texts and images that would thwart the settling of a “new” posthumanism. The constraints and possibilities raised here undoubtedly implicate the posthuman, given that an end of the Human would be nothing less than abolitionist. Rather than recuperating abolitionist and decolonial thought for a standard posthumanism, i open this study amidst a cluster of discrepant priorities inspired by and conspiring with the postures of the *non-* and the *para-*.

Attending to the *outside*, *beneath* and *without*, this project stresses the continuing damage of the Human as an invention of the Western philosophical tradition, suggesting that its orders of transcendence, overcoming and resolution proceed in *philosophies of relation*<sup>13</sup> and *difference* that lacerate into rivenness and vanish by equivalency a structural violence that is at once constitutive and irreparable. i argue that the Human is a transcendental formation cut into Being through procedures of an injurious and enduring philosophical violence, whose ontological contours lay their foundations in the “originary violences” of colonization and the middle passage that have also marked the inventions that correlate in equivalency Blackness with the non-Human and Indigeneity with the non-sovereign. Underlying liberal orders of consensus and being-in-common are structures of relations that constitute a carceral thought-world<sup>14</sup>—a historical edifice and correlation assuming

13 This refers to relations as a structure of power and onto-epistemic framework in the Western Philosophical Tradition—philosophies that work to uphold the domination of the “West” in thought and the material, economic, psychic organization of social life and social death. The “West” is understood as an invention of power rather than an objective description of cultural, regional and national status. This is an interpretation of Laruelle’s philosophies of difference which sees philosophy in a relation of domination over the world. See *Philosophies of Difference*.

14 i use thought-world in both the sense of a given set of ideas and assumptions about the “World” (composite material) and a relation of thought and world in an assumed correlation between philosophy and the real that is representable by an idea of “the World itself.” This usage borrows and departs from François

reciprocity between thought and the world that holds captive what can be recognized and made equal, what lives can be made exchangeable, communicable and knowable.

Relationality as approached in this project is a procedure of philosophical Difference (Laruelle) implicated in the cutting function of distinction, assimilation and expropriation. This is the incision passed down by inheritance and shaped into acquisition by reproduction, the means by which “difference” and “unity” cast the subject of thought as (van)guard and agent of the non-subject being thought. I pose commensurability, computability and sensibility (aesthetics) as functions of philosophies of relation where the syntax of distinction (the philosophical cut) moves perpetually in conversion and exchange to make the real commensurable to this World. Mandating access, obligating exposition and exposure, it grasps and unveils towards “understanding” to pull into relation with the Human/this World otherwise discrepant worlds, prescribing and policing not only *who* and *what* are in relation, but the imaginative perimeters of relational thought. Generating the “between” while designating the boundaries of the now/here, subject/object, settler/native, master/slave, private/public, citizen/alien, difference/identity, life/death, self/other, body/flesh in oppositional relationality, this cut is a transcendental formulation which repeatedly re-inscribes the distinction between the Human/non-Human. The cuts compose sets of binaries that form the basis of computation—the counting and processing of recognition in relation. Computability is thus a form of communicability, requiring particular sets of conversions Weheliye and McKittrick have called a “wicked mathematics” in the attempts to render particular bodies and beings searchable and capturable (33). In this situation, the different is always already in relation to sameness; it can only be alterity. As it turns out intersubjective exchange has a catch. To qualify for the status of Subject, one must first meet the basic conditions for recognition. One must be a “one.” One must not be object, one must not be abject, one cannot be *non-*. This splintering condition

Laruelle, who writes “philosophy is the pure and general form of the World and the World is the immanent object of philosophy” (*Dictionary* 87). He uses the phrase to describe a generality wherein “thought-world” is the very identity of a mixture in the sense of *noema*, in contrast to “philosophy” or “World” which function as exchangeable nominations, denoting the “Authority of Authorities” rather than a theoretical image of the world (87). Whereas thought-world in a non-philosophical sense formulates a different relation, here I primarily use it descriptively and impressionistically, not guaranteeing a non-philosophy or non-relation to the World as “right to the World” (89).

administers the relational terms of civil society and is distributed such that it is always the same “not/one” who “fails” social registration; always the same non-Human, non-citizen, non-white, non-cisgender, non-male, non-settler whose life becomes fungible; the same *non-* without which the figure of the Human cannot exist. That is, the enslaved had no place in civil society—they were never “one.” The position of the never been “one” is where the count does not count, where the account slips in double extension of capture and disappearance. It is for this reason that Wilderson and others have argued that Black freedom cannot be met on the terms of civil society, whose privileged subject depends upon its oppositional relation to the non-subject as exteriority.

These procedures of making equal, calculable and knowable are articulated in processes of converting worlds into the grammars of the Human, into the function of racial capitalism where difference is made solid. They are cuts of flesh, belonging, time and land that sustain the expropriated and accumulated wealth of this World. The eliminative logic of settler colonialism as Indigenous Critical Theory scholars have argued, is an epistemic violence with material stakes in assimilation, incorporation, incarceration, sexual violence, letting die, dispossession, surveillance and containment—genocidal motions that overexpose to invisibility an underlying antagonism of the colonial condition, rendering inconceivable and unrecognizable (to the colonial paradigm) Indigenous cosmologies, frameworks of relationality and sovereign claims to land. Recognition and legibility (vision) in this binding situation impose a steep levy; the impossibility of being (seen) on one’s own terms is a structural matter that involves everything and everyone who has been pulled into relation with this genre of the Human and its worlding. Approaching this generically, the cuts of race, colonization, dispossession and gendered violence—the cuts of flesh—can be seen as general to philosophies of relation (in the paradigm of modernity/coloniality), even as its material and somatic terror cuts some bodies and some possibilities in the absolute. While the compressive weight of the Western philosophical tradition or “standard philosophy”<sup>15</sup> seems to forbid movement by means of its relational bind, it also produces

<sup>15</sup> For François Laruelle “standard philosophy” refers to the structure of dyads in the Greco-occidental philosophy in which the One and Being undergo procedures of division and identity and posits unity with the world, according to its own principle of philosophical sufficiency to claim to know the real. Standard philosophy or philosophy is the object of non-philosophy.

its own fractures, providing an impression of the terrain upon which we may navigate the “inadequacy of existing concepts” to pose questions on the “after” or “outdoors” of white supremacy and post-Enlightenment thought (Hartman and Moten, “The Black Outdoors”). It is also in this position of the *non-*, in fugitivity and in confrontation with the violence that “underwrites the modern world’s capacity to think, act, and exist spatially and temporally” that disturbances to ontology and the Human may be pronounced (Wilderson, *Red, White and Black 2*). As Joy Harjo (Mvskoke Nation) and Audre Lorde both wrote, “we were never meant to survive<sup>16</sup>.”

The visual priorities of this work move in non-aesthetic and syn-aesthetic tension, calibrating recognition in thickness and opacity. They are written as intervention and provocation, a nod to fugitive traditions of “slipping under” a given paradigm, adjusting to trouble the authority of givenness and the mandates of relationality in the contemporary that move habitually to make commensurate, make proximate and make available to the proper (property, propriety, properly). I consider incommensurability, incomputability and incognita (as adjective and noun) as moments of upheaval and contend that the “standard procedures” of this Worlding that ends worlds every day, is always already troubled by an unassimilable incongruence, an irreconcilability that is always already in wayward shuffle. These moments interrupt liberal motions of resolving, healing, clearing away “difference” in the name of “unity” or “overcoming” (i.e. extradition or incorporation) that are themselves imbricated in the logic of distinction. They underscore the precarity of this World’s footings, threatening its economies of conquest and regimes of philosophical determination that constitute what Elizabeth Povinelli has called the “we-horizons” of universal reason and consensus (326).

This document concerns philosophical violence and consists of attempts to displace and thwart its procedure. It is an exercise in abolitionist dreaming training in the disciplinary breach of critique’s proper to desediment the grounds of liberal relationality and its associate paradigm of being and becoming “Human.” Its critique of the common is a kind

<sup>16</sup> See Audre Lorde, “A Litany for Survival” and Joy Harjo (Mvskoke Nation)’s “Anchorage” dedicated to Audre Lorde.



of rumination on community that holds the communal close in practicing an ending of this World. There have been bodies of work that have articulated these aims at multiple and divergent junctures of this problem, namely in decolonial thought, Indigenous resurgence theory, Indigenous Critical Theory<sup>17</sup>, Afro-pessimism (and Black studies more broadly) and the feminisms that mobilize from those axes. These disciplines are transnational, traversing multiple geographies that overlap and complicate one another yet remain specific in their own ways. There are also works in (non-)philosophy, media studies, and posthumanism that offer intriguing challenges to (Euro-western) thought and its figure of the “human”, yet do not theorize race or the structural conditions of coloniality/modernity as anything more than an incidental difference. There are poetic works and visual art works that push at those limits formally and conceptually. i have largely selected to leave alone the disagreements and contradictions in the literature and instead make use of these discrepant concentrations of thought typically kept apart as collected materials for reframing the problem of relation, because strictly speaking, it is all theory.

Without trying to contain one within another, i have tried to respect their theoretical autonomies and radicality in relation to this World, placing them sometimes at distance and sometimes in proximity to adjust the intensities of their incommensurabilities. i follow Sylvia Wynter’s prompt to take “Europe as an object of study, rather than a center of thought” (King 166) and exercise non-philosophy’s generic reduction of philosophy to thought material that can be arranged, just as materials in the generic sense can be arranged in art as thought practice. What i refer to as the Western philosophical tradition is also considered as a genre. i take up Laruelle’s invitation to use non-philosophy and philosophy

<sup>17</sup>Resurgence theory refers to the generative philosophical and land-based practices of Indigenous nations and peoples on Turtle Island. Indigenous Critical Theory is a term used by Jodi Byrd in *Transit of Empire* to describe the Indigenous thought and practices that “... centers itself within indigenous epistemologies and the specificities of the communities and cultures from which it emerges and then looks outward to engage European philosophical, legal, and cultural traditions...”(xxx). Decolonial theory typically refers to the broad milieu of thought currents collected in Third-world decolonization projects, focusing on de-linking and the undoing of coloniality. Anti-colonial traditions refer to thought practices that emerge from struggles against colonialism. Indigenous theoretical considerations on settler colonialism often also fit the frameworks of decolonial and anti-colonial thought. i use Indigenous Critical Theory to describe a range of intellectual practices and scholarship centered in Indigenous epistemologies in multiple settler colonial contexts that engage directly with the Western philosophical tradition. It often overlaps with critical Indigenous studies and Indigenous resurgence theories and practices.

as someone who is not a philosopher, by way of a making a genre of abolitionist dreaming. My primary motivation is not with rehearsing non-philosophy but to make use of its instrumentality, albeit in an oblique and “insufficient” way. From these tense grounds, i gather clusters of thought as a composition and installation in the generic, cultivating postures and positions that may resonate and “mutate” at discrepant instances towards incapacitating the procedures of this World (Laruelle, “Degrowth” 333). i approach the prefix “non-” (in non-philosophy, non-human, non-being, non-relation) para-practically, that is, as a *hue* in compositional exercise, resembling what Nathaniel Mackey has called “discrepant engagements” (*Paracritical* 15). Com-position does not produce a field upon which multiple philosophies can proliferate in difference, but is oriented in a *super-*positional, suppositional and co-incident tone for instances of dissonant concentrations in which the logic of Difference cancels out.

These theoretical materials are intended to facilitate a practice of thought made like art, something resembling art-fiction or a non-aesthetic pivot on philosophy. This i steal again from non-philosophy—“a so-called ‘generic’ extension of art to aesthetics; the moment when thought in its turn becomes a form of art”—by not performing non-philosophy properly (Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction* 2), so that i can find this practice again in Dionne Brand’s phrase “radiant moments of ordinariness made like art”, because abolitionist dreaming is full of art (19). What we have is neither art nor philosophy; not quite theory nor poetics. Since i am writing out of the afterlife of slavery from a settler colonial structure in which we are all in some way implicated, i make the assumption that art is always already a practice of politics, albeit here as a para-practice in an oblique and disarticulating posture to this World’s politics of the subject and the Human. As such, this work is closer to (but not quite) a practice in a politics of philosophy than a philosophy of politics—a relay of tactics-without-program that is always tied to flesh and body.

i am drawn to tactics because they are responses to the heterogenous circumstances of a given present with no direct relation to a new proper, resembling Nathaniel Mackey’s point in the phrase “improvisation’s insistence that the given is only the beginning” (*Paracritical* 7). i see abolition as a project in dreaming, related to tactics; like generalized activity

converging at frequencies of radicality; like making genres of refusal; like Dian Million (Tanana Athabascan)'s "intense dreaming" which does not require a waiting for an elsewhere to "realign imagination at the parameters of the ways 'things' are thought" (321). Following Million, i see dreaming as a practice of non-acquisitive understanding where knowing is placed at distance from accumulation and exchange, opaque to expropriations of imagination (321). These tactics are without program because dreaming is messy and tactile; involving material and insurrectionary activity that are situationally determined and disruptive to thought. i think of this document as a leaking repository of tactics-without-program, one amongst others with which to speculate in complicity with what i want to call practices of generic philosophical insurrection or non-standard procedures. Abolitionist oneirology is to change a paradigm.

The insurrectionary in this sense involves practices of dreaming, fighting, slipping, thinking, hacking, delinking, practices in making-practice in the non-standard, in the opacity and extemporality (improvisation) of the irreconcilable outside, beneath and without—abolitionist strike where collective demands permit a shift on the very grounds of revolt. In immanent revolt, "revolting against concrete occurrences of subjugation and violence" we may find tactical extensions for what is speculative and material in this undertaking (Kolozova, *Radical Metaphysics* 21). Assembled like collective(s) of dreaming in the spaces of incommensurable, incomputable, incognita negativity, in the slow intensity of the spill where the common is not so easily posed, this is an ode to riotous practices inspired by migratory dreams thwarting displacement, Indigenous water and land defense, queer and trans Bash Back!<sup>18</sup> cells of direct action and community care, Black fugitive traditions whose emancipatory inventions unsettle and make impossible and incoherent liberalism's claims to freedom. Where abolitionist dreaming figures as generic philosophical insurrection, we practice organizing—in an activist manner—genres of thinking and making which obfuscate philosophy proper's possessive hold on thought, deferring the prescriptive motions of the ordering of what is legible, knowable and nameable in standard procedure. The intention of this project is not to posit a new "theory

<sup>18</sup> See <https://itsgoingdown.org/reflections-bash-back-2007-2010-interview/> for more on Bash Back!

of relation.” Instead, the task has been to practice in com-position—making images in non-relational postures—with affectionate inflections for worlds in which autonomy and self-determination are possibilities. As such, the sketches of horizon that appear here are like flashes taking place in moments of immanence and dreaming; they are suppositional and super-positional because speculative practice is useful in circumstances of foreclosure not only as incendiary device but also as generic subterranean activity.

The problem-solving prospects of this work are sparse because the tenor of this has more to do with a confidence in the problem-causing effectiveness of broad based *non-* and *para-*disciplinary refusal. Some of the writing is experimental, having more to do with syn-aesthetic evocation of sound than explication. Though not always named, paracriticism (a device i borrow from Nathaniel Mackey) is used through this engagement as an oblique stance towards dominant modes of criticism and theory writing, where “para-” is an outside and alongside to theory, occupying a non-relational stance to relationality, harking to the decolonial posture of the non-aligned. The method (if there must be one), is perhaps manoeuvres in slipping as non-standard procedure—thought and writing as refusal, sidestepping, fugitive modulation, in a repeated turn to poetics and speculation to maintain distance from the solely representational function of writing. It involves a deliberate shift from the impetus to report and make known, muddling transparency and appeals to recognition while contending with the limits of a slip. As Trinh T. Minh-Ha noted, “clarity is a means of subjection” requiring that “one must incessantly, prune, eliminate, forbid, purge, purify” (45). Further, it is because this structure of relationality requires incommunicability for its own coherence that we are caught here. We must contend with that. To say *still* we must participate in correlation, concede to difference and communicability to think—properly, however judicious, would perhaps miss the point. Because we are caught here, we are already here in its detritus. So, i hold off on attempts to wrap things up neatly again to “fill the void” or to answer to the mandates of resolve, in avoidance of the clarity of an anti-philosophical position.

This project does not contain a collection of findings nor does it present any investigatory propositions as documents of this kind would typically accomplish. Throughout this

document are “flashes” or “images” composed of quotations, inflections, documentations of artwork, interruptions, accents(ed) notes and breaks in transitory refrain. The flashes run parallel to the text like a para-critical image list—interjectural in form. In non-relation to the text, the “images” are not placed as objects of analysis but as objects that speak for themselves, to give an additional sense of the stakes of the problem as themselves a kind of theory writing. i hope portions of this document may be generative as an additional push for abolitionist and posthuman possibility, one more entry point for lingering in incommensurability, incomputability, incognita visions and their sustained notes; not seeking resolution for a better liberal society, but com-posing images according to immanent horizons in the spaces of the *non-* and *para-*, outside and without civil society.

In the chapters: “incommensurability”, “incomputability” and “incognita” i move through three concentrations of relational problematics. The first chapter, incommensurability, poses a critique of relationality along the terms of making commensurate and attempts to set incommensurability as starting place of desedimentation in the situated grounds of anti-blackness and settler colonial violence. i look to Black studies theorizations on Black social life and social death as well as Indigenous struggles against liberal/settler recognition to underscore a deep philosophical violence in relationality, in civil society’s procedures of making “common” that obscure underlying structures of relation-in-domination—where the terms of the Human’s outside, underside and without (position in the non-) cannot be met. i consider what non-relationality might mean in the context of incommensurability.

The second chapter incomputability, discusses the relationship between digitality, data and the flesh and draws continuity between the procedures of distinction that establishes the cut of the non/Human and the digital cuts of bodies and flesh. i argue that the digital is raced, gendered and colonial, invariably bound to the violences which constitute liberal modernity and theorise computability as a function of distinction and registration that is biometric and ontological. i consider exposure, measurement, count, access and legibility as properties of the transparent subject of liberal modernity and, pose incomputability as the insufficient, disproportionate and asymmetrical, as that which already exists in, but

exceeds the parameters of an algorithm's existing syntactical command in consideration of Black feminist formulations of the spill and exorbitant flesh.

The third chapter engages in a textured and textural account of a tactics-without-program through the image of incognita: a calibration of an unknown condition of the no-place and no-where of mis/non-recognition—"mu" generated in the rivenness of the Human's ontological transit across geographies to stand for "life" in the present. The chapter contains considerations on syn-aesthetics, non-aesthetic, sound, ocean, opacity, ecology, and anthropocenic thought as experimental exercises in com-posing in an abolitionist genre with saturations of mu.

## incommensurability

“In the face of incommensurability—i call this entire ‘thing’, long before the beating itself and yet to come, the disaster—in the face of such, we cannot speak...”

—Nahum D. Chandler

"We're bored with Canada. We are bored with the ongoing attempts to make Canada right. We are bored with scholarly and intellectual exercises meant to bring nuance to the violences that institute Canada as a formation. We are bored with the crime that Canada is and represents. But yet, we keep returning to a particular scene of the crime. The crime is the founding of the nation-state we now call Canada. The scene in question is that of how Black people and blackness is revealed and simultaneously erased in the unfolding violent drama called contemporary Canada."

—Rinaldo Walcott and Idil Abdillahi

*flash 1:place*

*the land on which i wrote this are the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and the Attawandaron who continue to care and fight for this place as Indigenous peoples. this is the land this university occupies. nearby are Chippewas of the Thames Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames and Munsee Delaware Nation.*

### **horizon**

Horizon is a line cutting the sky and the earth in two—an instrument of cartographic and photographic divide transmitted and cultivated in the conquest and traversal of the spatial field. This is an image of horizon repeatedly reproduced in contemporary procedures of empire mediating both arrival and departure, inheritance and loss. Foregrounding conditions of visibility, horizon folds the distance between land and sea into an

approaching resolution in view. The colonial image, assuming a correlation between horizon and sovereignty, perspective and personhood, visibility and property, extends an assurance in mastery from the “emptied” landscape painting, from aboard the slave ship, from the aerial photograph, from the plan drawings of infrastructural projects, from the U.S. military’s ground-control station onto an imagined “openness” imaging dis/possession-to-come—horizon as “the World” in capture.

What is this horizon for the unsovereign, the dispossessed deemed to be *without* sovereignty? What might horizon implicate *without* arrival, *without* transcendence, *without* connection to coloniality’s claims to resolve and closure? What might it intimate to think horizon *in* incommensurability, in the irresolution of the image of horizon? Might we make an attempt at radical reduction in resolution as tactical dreaming, to disarticulate in the place where we are—to suspend indefinitely the closure, enclosure, or foreclosure promised in arrival? Might we pose horizon as immanence, as *real*, like fleshly ground always already suffused, yet never available for acquisition?

i begin with an image of “horizon” to sketch out the stakes dis/articulated by incommensurability—the impossibility of equivalent exchange between a colonial paradigm and decolonial horizon/tality, between a carceral resolution and abolitionist dreaming. In this chapter, i consider what anti-colonial, anti-racist, feminist and decolonial thinkers have called the Western Philosophical Tradition<sup>19</sup> vis-à-vis a para-critical deformation of the figure of the “Human” (the sovereign being of coloniality and supremacy which also substitutes for the free, rational, moral subject of liberal modernity) and the structures of relationality that keep it alive.<sup>20</sup> My reflections concern recognition and

19 Western Philosophical Tradition is a political term referring to the philosophies and practices of world making mobilized towards the on-going re-production of the “West” as a figure and an entity. It describes the imbrication of philosophy with systems of colonization, empire, enslavement, heteropatriarchy to produce the “West.”

20 Although it is not discussed explicitly, this work is in part a response to the late liberal techno-capitalist terrain which demands total communicative participation as a mode of accumulation. i think of the work of Franco Berardi, Eugene Thacker, and Elizabeth Povinelli from whom the term late liberalism is borrowed. For Povinelli, late liberalism describes an understanding of the present which considers the formal contours of liberal governmentality as its responds to anti-colonial, anti-capitalist movements that challenge the legitimacy of liberal democracy, neoliberalism, and other variations on a liberal present



commensuration—what/who can be registered, what/what can be understood in equation—to keep open the question: what suffering can be seen and at what cost? What injury is reproduced in the vexed announcement of “i am Human... *therefore* my suffering matters”<sup>21</sup> in the face of a “humanity” whose very terms of membership are indexed according to the aftermath of chattel slavery and ongoing systems of genocides? What happens in the procedures of making commensurate or in the making standard of common measure? Whose “common” is being made?

This is a question of value and how commensuration (the work of equivalency) provides a basis for the institutionalization of profound inequality and devaluation, which in succession presents a crushing stratification as an economics of the real. It is a repetitious procedure of severing that regularizes a trade in injury, guaranteeing in itself its own mode and product as evidence of realism in standard view. i refuse the commensuration of the unsovereign and the commensurability principle’s standard function to “make radical worlds unremarkable” (Povinelli 320). Where commensurability proceeds by the production of rivenness set in and as “common place”, we move with incommensurability as a starting point, as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have prompted (29)—an immanent horizon in the work of configuring radical pasts, presents and futures worth fighting for (29).

Remaining with incommensurability may help overturn the stakes at the sites of multiple wounds and at the same time assert the imaginative shuffle articulated as decolonization’s “tangible unknowns” (Sium, Desai and Ritskes xii). Puerto Rican “reluctant academic” Mariolga Reyes Cruz describes this as “moving towards a different and tangible place, somewhere out there, where no one has really ever been...they might not know exactly how it will be, but they know what they are after” (153). Slipping by the neoliberal colonial

(Economies of Abandonment 25). i use this term to note that the World is not simply installed, there are always ways in which refusal and resistance moves.

<sup>21</sup> i am thinking of the demand for access to basic needs and the duress of having to enunciate as Human in the model of the Western Philosophical Tradition in order to have a chance at meeting those needs, i.e. “Water is a Human Right!”, “Trans rights are Human Rights!” The fact that these demands remain unmet (that there are over 100 drinking water advisories across Indigenous communities in Canada, for example) reveals a precarity and insufficiency of the Human as a status and a relation.

assurance that there is no outside to its global capitalist order of the World,<sup>22</sup> i posit exteriority and immanence as a basis of insurrectionary genres, indifferent to contradiction, because the outside and underside are already a constitutive dimension of the (colonial) inside as its condition of possibility. This tangible unknown “somewhere out there” is expressed here in the no-where and everywhere of incommensurability’s immanent horizon, on the unstable grounds in the excess of liberal modernity’s sham “participatory” equilibrium. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, the decolonial theorist, fighter and physician Franz Fanon described the motions of colonial compartmentalization as “a world divided in two”, in which the reification of the one and two (the colonizer and the “native”) produces an incommensurability that *is* not and *cannot* be reconcilable (3). In the lived spaces of colonial divide, “there is no conciliation possible, one of them is superfluous” (Fanon 4). i read incommensurability as that which has no common measure, that which cannot be made commensurate without conversion; without formatting, incorporation or coercion. Maintaining the inaccessibility and unavailability of a relation, incommensurably expresses a recantation of captivity and forced exchange posed as reciprocity.

Commensurability, by contrast, is the rule and process of translation, a procedure of relation in the carceral-colonial world of liberalism and empire actuated in the circuits of capital, identity, difference and accumulation. Its economy of distorting equivalency renders land, time, body, work, being, knowing into ownable and reproducible value and surplus appropriate to this World. As Elizabeth Povinelli argues, commensuration not only translates to distort worlds, but also moves by means of distortions produced by social relations or social power to generate translations (324). It is a standard of producing equality by means of total division and a discretization of parts, transforming collectivity into aggregation, connection into contract. It cuts to make “whole” and amalgamates to disappear, equalizes to stratify and diversifies to nullify divergence in forms of being and knowing. Foregrounded by a cutting-works, commensurability subtends a structure of

<sup>22</sup> Mark Fisher used the phrase “capitalist realism” to describe this condition. In this context, we can read this as philosophy’s claim to know the real and produce realism in its stead.

philosophical violence forged in, of and for modernity/coloniality,<sup>23</sup> simultaneously marking “difference” while subsuming it in a procedure of making-commensurate, falsifying “equals” by a relational inscription of the *different* and *same*. Jaleh Mansoor calls it “the immense system of equivalence posing as equality” where a cruel calculus unfolds and displaces the very conceivability of equality (2). It is the “maximization of agreement” that has preoccupied anthropologists and linguists in Western research about the non-West<sup>24</sup>—a means and ends of normative translation and an organization of power “at the heart of liberal hopes for a nonviolent democratic form of governmentality” practiced and consolidated on the grounds of acquisitive and acquisitive relations (326). The likelihood of being “submit[ed] to forcible transformation in the translation process”, as Talal Asad noted, depends largely on one’s location within a relation and one’s position relative to the relational framework of liberal modernity (qtd. in Povinelli 324).

Seeing as “the ability to commensurate two textual (and thus social) fields without distortion or the ability to decide between these two translations on the basis of truth and accuracy puts more than metaphysics at risk”, commensurability would necessarily contain a “risk” of the incommensurable (Povinelli 321). The caveat “without distortion” is important; where it applies, the two are incommensurate. This is to say, incommensurability opens up possibility around the terms of its own impossibility. Its radical capacity is precisely its inability to proceed according to relationality’s proper without “serious distortions” (319). Incommensurability connotes a structural discord which cannot be brought to equation, because the grounds of evaluation of which we speak

23 This is used by Aníbal Quijano and Walter D. Mignolo to name coloniality as a condition of possibility of modernity’s emergence in the 16th century and modernity as an extension of coloniality — one necessarily implicates the other. The two are mutually constitutive, rather than accidental or unintended effects of one another, both understood in relation to global capitalism. Coloniality refers to the broader dimensions of colonialism’s logic and its repercussive social, sexual and epistemological fields, and is not identical to colonialism which denotes a formal economic and political system. With Catherine E. Walsh, Mignolo also includes decoloniality to form a conceptual triad of the contemporary matrix of power (*On Decoloniality*).

24 Following Sunera Thobani’s usage of the term “Westernizing”, I understand the West as an ongoing and contested project in epistemic and ontological production, and philosophy as a critical site for remaking the signification of the “West”. It is important to continue to invoke the language of “West” to draw attention on the historical content which formalizes and structures the present, particularly as concepts such as networked society, digital commons, etc. allow for a convenient erasure through the evocation of a flattened “connected world.”

are constitutively riven in asymmetry, containing a discrepancy in common measure, an interruption of the presumed agreement to be in relation. It is without resolve and without repair.

Rather than posing resistance from a position of difference or the occupation of philosophy's inside as subversive subjects, i take a cue from Sylvia Wynter to attend to coincidence—the at once already and im/possible inhabitation of a radical outside and underside from which to take the Western Philosophical Tradition as an object of study, as *one* genre of thought. The “West” as Sunera Thobani has argued, is not a fixed category, but an inheritance and mode of war, a violence born out of slavery, colonialism and imperialism that is re-forged in the continuation of those structures of violence (716). Geonpuls scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson has addressed the West's acquisitive hold on thought as a form of epistemic displacement which continually pushes aside Indigenous worldviews, knowledge frameworks and theories into the category of “difference” in relation to Western thought (xv). “Difference” is expressed, produced and accumulated in the commensuration of the cultural and the racial, that is also conflated with the biological and natural, posing the non-West as an attribute and property of the West, simultaneously dissimilar yet available and obtainable to the latter in the form of the “World.” Mobilizing Indigenous studies as a tool for denying coloniality its philosophical authority, Moreton-Robinson follows Métis scholar Chris Andersen in staging “density”—the complex articulation of the lived positions of Indigenous peoples within modernity *and* outside colonial discourse—against the reified assessment of “cultural difference.” Refusing the appraisal of difference and value in relation to the Western thought, Moreton-Robinson argues that it is the Western subject (the Human) that is always already racialized, requiring confirmation of its *own* difference from an invented racialized other for its coherence (xvi). i use the term Western Philosophical Tradition as a proper noun in part because of its reductive effect, to more sharply pronounce the splitting determinacy of philosophical violence unrolled with and through the generalized extension of modernity/coloniality. My interest is not in admonishing individual philosophers, but to bring abolitionist notes to a discipline's acquisitive repercussions, to pronounce out-of-time a dis-arrangement in

response to the self-appointed status of authority given to “philosophy” in a tradition of nonconsent.

The “World” which i sometimes refer to across valences as modernity/coloniality, the problem, civil society, carceral-colonial liberal modernity, settler colonial racial capitalism, anti-Blackness or the Human, marks a constellation of nominations used to interrogate the philosophical and material parameters of contemporary empire. In attending to 500 years of this genre<sup>25</sup> of worlding, i refuse the linear, progressive genealogical linking of Greco-occidental civilization to the modern world, as well as the periodization of modernity to emergence in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to resist the erasure of the crucial character of 16<sup>th</sup> century colonial expansion and capitalist World formation (Mignolo, “Geopolitics” 61). These valences of circumstances have been referred to in Sylvia Wynter’s work as “the struggle of our times” (“Unsettling” 262). For Howard Winant it is the “immense historical rupture” which necessitates a critical theory of race appropriate to the changing character of racial formation (187). For Aníbal Quijano, this struggle concerns the “coloniality of power” that has culminated into the term “globalization” and the spatialization of capitalist and imperial circuits (553). For Mignolo, this World is one constituted by colonial difference—distinctions between groups of people, their epistemologies and locations in developmentalist time formulated and refined during the processes of formal European colonization and consolidated in the geopolitical linking of capitalism and epistemology (60). Fred Moten has called it the “problem” (“Case of Blackness” 188). i sometimes use “the whole thing”, referencing Nahum Chandler’s “thing” as material and structural ordinance, a point of reference for the descriptive difficulty entailed in the “x” (refracted in the “non-”), the unnameable “thing” and what is “para-” to it.

25 Sylvia Wynter provides *genre* as a device for considering commensuration and the relational paradigm which subtends the figure of the “Human”, describing the particularity of the European Enlightenment articulation of “Man” as an “overrepresented” way of thinking, knowing, being—a self-authorization that has unfolded in a profound relation of domination that is both outward extending and incorporative—instituting its own “descriptive statement and governing master-code” as generality (“Unsettling” 260; 271).

Between the logic of “the Human” of liberal modernity (its racial economy and its psychic, spatial, somatic, ontological dominion) and its “other” there can be no commensurable relation outside of domination. There can be no “making-common” between decolonized life and settler colonial social life predicated upon the continuation of the elimination of Indigenous pasts, presents and futures. There can be no give and take where commensurability is the co-optation procedure by which the radicality of non-standard—discordant, dissensus, non-colonial, non-carceral—worlds are cut off. For the sake of putting metaphysics at risk, this project works to orient incommensurability’s posture and postulation as that which carries the capacity *within its terms* to invite the end of this World—that is to say, the end of what Walter Mignolo has diagnosed as modernity/coloniality (“Epistemic” 74). Given that the task is to “change the order of the world”, our goal is not solely to refuse the making common of what is otherwise different (homogenization), but to extend a refusal to the framework of relational violence performed in procedures of difference (Fanon 2).

For Sylvia Wynter, the “Human” as *genre* is historical, a relatively recent invention formulated through a “passage” from a theological Christian genre (defined by a relation of submission of man to God) to Man as the post-Enlightenment subject of philosophy, science, reason, civility, and freedom (“Unsettling” 264). Nature (which had previously been located in the realm of the divine) is ordered in subordination to Man. Whereas Nature became the object of empirical study and management (observable, capturable and tameable), Man emerged as the subject of knowing and morality who possesses (275). This *generic shift* proceeded to produce a perspectival view of the “New” world as Nature—uninhabitable and unimaginable geographies to be overcome, dominated and appropriated by Man. Man is the *he* in identity with the privileged being of rationality, the juridical subject of Whiteness and freedom, maleness and ownership, ontologically against and superior to what it is not—the figures of the savage, the heathen, the native, the not-Man. This genre of being human is rearticulated in the carceral-colonial present where the use of “human” as a generalized descriptor continues to substitute for the racialized, gendered and colonial figure of “Man.” In this process, the Christian schema of “Spirit/Flesh” encoding the exalted/fallen, life/death, good/evil, habitable/inhabitable is

transmitted secularly to “Man as Rational Self and the political subject of the state” with the binary structure of its onto-epistemic code intact (279-281). As Wynter writes, “all other modes of being human would instead have to be seen not as the alternative modes of being human that they are “out there”, but adaptively, as the *lack* of the West’s ontologically absolute self-description” (282). It is in this context that Winant stressed “the continuing significance and changing meaning of race” (182).

In and with philosophical difference—the principle of distinction François Laruelle has studied as a general structure of philosophy, an “invariant” that maintains the form of the one and the two (i.e. identity and difference)—relationality performs the grounds that split and order what is between the state and its subjects, the Human and nature, the rational and the uncivilized, productive and idle and so on (2). In a tone in obstruction of philosophical authority, i borrow and recast non-philosophy’s task and method to reduce, mutate and make generic philosophy—not replacing or disposing of it but implicating it as something that can be transformed *without* the principle of sufficient philosophy.<sup>26</sup> Taking its postulation of the radical equality of thought as tools for disarticulating and mispronouncing philosophy’s assumed sufficiency and claims to possession and exchange, i move to the side of non-philosophy to pose philosophical authority as the praxis of carceral-colonial Worlding that critical race feminisms, Black studies, Indigenous critical theory, critical race feminisms and decolonial thought have challenged in their respective and overlapping ways.

i describe as *philosophies of relation* a specific genre of thought generated *in* and *for* the relational terms of this World, *in* and *for* the Western Philosophical Tradition, proceeding

<sup>26</sup> Non-philosophy refers to the interventions and methods developed around the work of François Laruelle, who formulated non-philosophy as a discipline in science and philosophy as identity, rather than mixture or difference. Distinct from philosophy but not meta-philosophy, non-philosophy takes philosophy as its object and considers philosophy’s relational claims to the World, or philosophy’s identity in and as thought-world. In reducing the status of philosophical authority and philosophy’s domination over other fields, non-philosophy views science and philosophy (as well as other disciplines) as material for thought (*Dictionary* 44). As Rocco Gangle explains it is “a real generalisation of philosophical thought, it is strictly ‘other than’ philosophical” (6). i see this shifting towards a *without* of philosophical authority as a possible instance of abolitionist thought.

in tandem with *philosophies of difference*<sup>27</sup> by means of an order of assumed and imposed connectivity we can call a *commensurability principle*. Reflected in the formal logic of liberal consensus and civil society, commensurability is a relational paradigm wherein difference and identity have a rudimentary function, generating authority—sovereignty of the subject and the nation—from incisive erasure ordered in accordance to what constitutes property and the proper, or an “agreement” to what is of value and what forms of devaluation are permissible. It points to broader sets of structural commitments assembled via a notion of relation that sustains European humanism’s transcendent images of consensus, order, contract, consent, free will, and the transparent rational subject of positive becoming. In other words, the subordination of the Other to the One occurs in relation, in a structure that is always figured hierarchically, taking place on the basis of unequal exchange in the name of making equal. Underpinned by mechanisms of disappearance, extradition, and assimilation that make-commensurate, philosophies of relation as a genre of relationality cannot and do not adequately address relational paradigms exterior to the Western philosophical tradition. Incommensurability means that relationality in radical autonomy to the economics of conquest that continue to produce the idea of the “West” cannot be thought in the terminological grounds of civil society and the Human. Philosophies of relation, therefore, do not account for all instances of relation nor a general idea of relation as such but are rather representative of the situated ways in which a particular formation of relationality is deployed as relation in general and as an indispensable *given* in a universal account of all things.

Relation (*Relationem*) deriving from the Latin *relatus*, means to “recount or tell”, a “bringing back, restoring,” and in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, “connection, correspondence” (*Etymonline*). Relation in the occidental tradition is a constitutive principle of civil society, mediating civic life and the public realm of free and equal citizenship, carrying Athenian

<sup>27</sup> Laruelle describes the relation that binds the one and the two as “empirico-transcendental parallelism” and argues that although different philosophies have various approaches to the world, this formal correlation between things is always considered real. While for Laruelle, the point has more to do with analysis than an adversarial break with the existing paradigm, for us, we read in philosophies of relation a tremendous violence that persists through structural antagonisms—we are already in a fight whether we like it or not (*Philosophies of Difference*, xv).



designations of distinct social and political space, free and unfree status that condition contemporary orders of liberal sociality. It is articulated as the grounds of intersubjective reason and judgement—the constitutive basis of the entanglement (between a subject and its relation) that underwrites the very possibility of politics (Kant 155 sec.38; Rancière 27). The relation between the subject and its outside is where political subjectivity as property of the subject-citizen is performed, and where for the non-subject “political agency” is both inaccessible and impossible.<sup>28</sup> Politics in this sense, is the field of the free, rational, citizen-subject defined by self-possession underwritten by both dispossession and the possibility of becoming the dispossessed. The figuration of correlation as imperative renders relationality itself inconspicuous, presenting Difference and commensurability not as procedures, but as properties of a given that can be continually restored and reconnected.

Further, “bringing back” implies the restoration of an assumed prior state of unity, a prior existence of a shared political field—one in which the colonizer and the colonized, the subject and the non-subject were somehow always already related. Correspondence: “congruence, resemblance, harmony, agreement” likewise presumes a basis of equilibrium (between subjects of politics) and a notion of “common good” that is given coherence by means of fractures and erasures that underly relation. As such, consensus (*consentio*; to feel together) does not necessarily exist on neutral grounds. Within the terms of a structural arrangement of domination, “feeling” and “together” in obligatory “agreement” performs the work of the police, safeguarding the reconstitution of a violent consensus to violation and dispossession. In the confines and limits of civil society’s cruel and contentious order, consensus constitutes the familiar and terrible grounds of the double-sided configuration of inclusion/exclusion and coloniality/modernity (Dua 448). Consensus defined by “the idea of the proper and the distribution of the places of the proper and the improper” is thus a function of commensuration, determining what subjects and what relations are permissible or agreeable and what can be made identical between a sensing-subject and a

<sup>28</sup> i speak to the impossibility of subjectivity for the non-subject not to affirm the Euro-Western view that non-(Western) subjects “lack” the qualifying characteristics to be a subject in the Western Philosophical Tradition. i am pointing to a limit to occupy the border structures of philosophies of relation’s own incomprehension, its inability and/or reluctance to accept worlds in non-relation to its own ontological parameters.

sensing-subject (Rancière 213). While consensus assumes and requires the participation of a sensing-subject who *can* give consent, it also operates in ways that conceal structures of nonconsent. Aristotle's description of common sense demonstrates this unilateral incorporation and contradictory "participation" of the figure of the slave, recognizing in "natural slavery" a "community of interest and friendship between master and slave", even while the slave remains without agency, citizenship, or subjectivity, positioned structurally exterior to the community of "sense" (xvi). Saidiya Hartman lays out this problem clearly: "the opportunity for nonconsent is required to establish consent, for consent is meaningless if refusal is not an option" (*Scenes* 111).

In other words, relation commensurates. It is the management body of contradiction, synthesis, propositions, and the articulation and negotiation of what is *in between*. Subjectivity's "between" is perhaps both the most devastating and the most allegedly emancipating dimension of liberal thought, marking both the connective and communicative capacity of the modern, rational, individual, thinking subject, and the subject's incapacitated outside and underside. Nahum Chandler made note of the word *between* as the first word in W.E.B. Dubois' *Souls of Black Folk*: "Between me and the other world there is..." (Dubois qtd in Chandler 3). For Chandler "the word 'between' could present itself, recalling certain semantic sedimentations, as both defining and defined by an opposition, as producing and produced by an oppositional logic" (3). *Between* inscribes both what it is connecting and what it is keeping apart, what it has put into relation, and what it has disappeared by relation. It is operative in the logic of relation as both a designation of a control of movement and a technique of distinction which "fixes" categorical coordinates. *Between* functions as a "stable solid structure... authoriz[ing] the movement of an oppositional logic and a reading of it as radical"(4). *Between* is the formal character of modernity/coloniality's philosophies of relation, the housing for the splitting conduits of this World.

The commensurability principle proceeds in the maintenance of *between*, in relations of colonial ingestion that "solve" differences through the appropriative and expropriative devouring of lands, nationhood, and knowledge systems to form the collected material

wealth of colonial formations. Its genocidal incisions have an accumulative and incorporative dimension—a double movement of assimilation/elimination overlaying taxonomic markings of culture, difference, and plurality on an assumed common “Human” ground. This is the point made by Jenny Burman in her critique of multiculturalism as a liberal colonial ethical paradigm which both “ignores Indigenous life” and “paves over structural inequalities that harm racialized people in Canada” (362). Making commensurate is also seen in the murder of Andrew Loku<sup>29</sup> for which no one was held accountable, because the police officer who shot and killed him “feared for his life” while trespassing into Loku’s apartment building (Perkel). Commensuration is practiced in the deployment of mechanisms of de-humanization when oppressed and abjected peoples rise up and refute the fantasy of accord and unity, as was the case when Black Lives Matter Toronto halted the corporatized Pride parade in 2016 to reject Pride Toronto’s disregard for the over-policing, killing and letting die of Black and Brown queer and trans people and sex workers. Their interruption was cast in the White supremacist tradition of writing off Black demands as unreasonable, uncivil, too much—they “overplayed their hand” (Gollom). It is the RCMP’s militarized invasion of Wet’suwet’en lands to make way for the Coastal GasLink pipeline, making equivalent then subsuming Indigenous territorial rights to the legal claims of energy corporations (Pasternak).

Commensurability is enacted in the suggestion that civil society as a negotiable terrain, *can* deliver justice *if* only the plaintiff exercised the correct display of patience and civility. Sium, Desai and Ritskes remind us that solidarity and alliance too can be imposed (iii). Sites of common struggle can also be sites for reinstalling established relational structures *between* the subject and the “non-”, since the interests, aspirations and theoretical ambitions of social struggles differently positioned in relation to colonialism and empire can be complex, complicitous and contradictory. The unevenness of the category “womanhood” for instance has long been noted by Indigenous, Black, Women of Colour feminisms.<sup>30</sup> Where race, class, sexuality, Indigeneity, gender non-conformity, and abled-

<sup>30</sup> See the volume *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, edited by Joyce Green. “Women of Colour” refers to a political project which emerged in the development of second wave feminism in the 1960s and does not necessarily pertain to racial identity. This cluster of work has also been called Third World

bodiness are complicated in a matrix of severing, incommensurability is a matter of form rather than of degree.<sup>31</sup> As Angela Davis noted “the slave system defined Black people as chattel. Since women, no less than men, were viewed as profitable labor-units, they might as well have been genderless as far as the slaveholders were concerned” (9). Yet, despite the overdetermination of race in the Antebellum United States, enslaved Black women were exposed to gendered forms of violence *because* they were women (11). Compromises forged in a commensuration between gender-based violence and liberal sociality that fail to examine capitalism, colonialism and the prison industrial complex, provide another example of how women (cis and trans) and non-binary persons are disappeared into the spaces of “deserving” containment, detention, dispossession and extraction along racial and class lines (Kim 220). Commensurability or equivocation is what Tuck and Yang have called a “colonizing trick” which mobilizes inclusion/exclusion, common struggle and post-coloniality to sustain an existing colonial structure, obfuscating the crucial and still-present problem of occupied land (18).<sup>32</sup> As Tuck and Yang have argued, decolonization is unsettling—“the answers will not emerge from friendly understanding, and indeed require a dangerous understanding of uncommonality that un-coalesces coalition politics” (35). Cutting the World into standard, commensuration makes one forget.

*flash 2 : name*

*i always forget that i have several names and liu yen kai is one them.*

*Consequently, i sometimes fail to respond when called. i am a second-*

feminisms, transnational feminisms and women of colour feminisms, which can also be complicit in upholding settler colonialism and violence against Indigenous women, girls, trans, non-binary and two-spirit people. See Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes” in which Mohanty provides a critique of western feminisms’ role in producing an idea of a monolithic “third world.” Also see Kimberlé Crenshaw.

<sup>31</sup> This rivenness is documented in historian Stephanie Jones-Rogers’s recent account of White women’s deep economic investments in the Southern slave economy and how gendered assumptions about White women’s lack of agency left their role as common holders of legal title to the ownership of enslaved persons largely unexamined (xv). By the same token, the sexual, physical and ontological violence endured by Black, Indigenous and migrant women in a settler colonial condition are often left unthought in domain of White feminist struggles posing as feminism in general. i capitalize White, because Whiteness is not a physical attribute like white the colour, but a question of power and cultural formation.

<sup>32</sup> Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) has used the term “arrivants”, borrowed from poet Kamau Brathwaite to describe people who have arrived to the settler colonial condition by force as a consequence of the violence of Euro and Anglo-American empire and colonialism. Settler colonialism and arrivant colonialism can coalesce in ways that imbricate war, invasion, detention, and national inclusion/exclusion towards the ongoing assaults on Indigenous nationhood. See *Transit of Empire*.

*generation settler/alien residing on Turtle Island steps away from Deshkan Ziibiing or Antler River. i am of a diaspora and am made of what remains of migratory dreams that settled in Dish with One Spoon territory. Surrounding this place and my account of it are images connected to the sea by way of rivers, rain and errant transmission, even though it is 3468 kilometers to the Pacific and the most direct way to the Atlantic is 857 kilometers and the two oceans are supposed to never mix. Except in the wake as Christina Sharpe tells us, denoting the disturbance of a body in water, the interference of the ship as it drags across the surface of the ocean. the wake, the making of the present, a “state of wakefulness”, “the wake of the unfinished project of emancipation” (5).*

*flash 3: Aimé*

*“the only thing in the world that’s worth the effort of starting: the end of the world, by God!”*

*—Fanon quoting Aimé Césaire, Black Skin White Mask*

### **desedimentation**

*flash 4: Kamau*

*“... memory of cabins of mal-de-mac & wanting to throw up  
& having to run compulsively somewhere to scuttle it down the  
hatch*

*& where there're was like nothing we cd do about anything now  
that we was there in the dream of the ship waiting as i say for  
these*

*‘Haitian Refugees’  
in a strange land...”*

*— excerpt from “Dream Haiti”, Kamau Brathwaite*

*flash 5: notanda*

*“There is no telling this story; it must be told”*

—“Notanda”, *Zong!*, M. NourbeSe Philip

What we know of the story comes from what remains of legal records from the case *Gregson Vs. Gilbert* which concerned an insurance claim filed by The Gregson Slave Trading Syndicate for profit losses incurred on the slave ship *Zong*. The claim was initially rejected, and the rest of the story would be written in the procedural space of the court room. As it was revealed during the trial, the captain of the slave ship Luke Collingwood had prolonged the duration of the journey due to navigational incompetence, resulting in the deaths of the over 60 enslaved persons by dehydration, illness and abuse. To prevent the further loss of profits in uninsured deaths, approximately 150 enslaved Africans were thrown overboard. In order to claim insurance on their “property loss”, Collingwood orchestrated a narrative re-telling: the insured slaves—all of the insured slaves—had died of “natural causes”, making the owners of the *Zong* legally entitled to financial reimbursement from the insurance company. In an account of an im/possible record, M. NourbeSe Philip’s *Zong!* attends to a document that was never meant to record any “thing” other than evidence for an insurance claim, disarticulating its text to conjure the non-linear, re-membered screams, chants, utterances, words, and cries of the enslaved persons thrown overboard and drowned by the orders of captain Luke Collingwood, whose only concern was the company’s bottom-line.

The story with no telling, that must be told, is the story of the normative production of Black death for capital circulation, the racial inscription of Human and cargo, living and undead found in gaps and spacing made by words that can no longer be pronounced, in a document—itsself distorted—underwritten by unnamed and unaccounted loss. In both the narrative account of the *Zong* and on the page, the words are cut up and pulled apart, unsettling and opening the temporality of the lawsuit and the spatiality of the text, hinting at the absolute terror that is slavery—unspeakable and without image. Between the severed syllables and the suspended gaps, the rests and that which cannot be said, the weight of the unseen, unheard and unaccounted are reinscribed in a text that widens and decelerates

wounds, keeping time for the inaudible outcries and strained chords of the *might have been*, the syllabic unintelligibly in the absolute linguistic severing occasioned in the afterword of absolute abjection. The words, like muffled inaudible “overheard” secrets, are the foreign and unfamiliar words of the Whites deliberating the claim collected by Philip into a “Glossary” of “phrases and words overheard aboard the Zong”, invoking both authority and estrangement, a ledger indicating the obstruction of clarity in both the legal proceedings and the story of the Zong (183). The defamiliarization of the “overheard” words permits a syllabic shuffle, marking air gaps in the compressed earth upon which this “whole thing” rests; cutting, stretching and pulling to make immediate the turbulent and sandy foundations (literally composed of bodies and bones) upon which the subsequent structural antagonisms would be scaffolded and guarded. Atemporal and recursive, the work *Zong!* occurs in the wake of the massive launch that set ships like Zong in motion.

*flash 6: wake*

*“In the wake, the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present.”*

—Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Being and Nothingness*

The (non-)words or not quite or no longer words tear through the surface of the encounter and the document, threatening to announce the great lengths and legal-philosophical contortions conducted to conceal the slave, to hide away the social death which makes possible White/Settler social life, shifting the whole World, the whole problem. Breaking (through) themselves, in time and in form, the non-words compose an ante-/anti-<sup>33</sup> vocabulary—a before and against of the words that recorded the Zong in time, the anteriority of communication, against the definitional contouring of subjectivity, the grammatical rules of the Human and its figuration as *the* self-determining, free, moral subject.<sup>34</sup> In *Zong!* there is no demand for the slave to *become* communicative, keeping in

<sup>33</sup> Ante- and anti- is used in Jared Sexton’s 2012 article “Ante-Anti-Blackness: Afterthoughts”, and in 2013 elaborated by Fred Moten to describe Black non/ontology in “Being and Nothingness.”

<sup>34</sup> *Sensus communis* or common sense was discussed in Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* as a precondition for judgements of taste (160, s. 294). Sensing in common is understood to be a dimension of the transcendental subject of reason and judgement.

mind the structural incommunicability of the slave in relation to the transcendental subject. There is no subject, there is no object, there is no shared terrain of commensuration. There is no “rescue” program for the slave or initiation into civil society. There is no reveal, no showcase, no auction, no postcard, no spectacle, no consumable image of black suffering. There is no teleological afterword.

Desedimentation is an image of the radical unsettling of the very grounds upon which questions of liberation, justice, and commons are approach, in which “ground” also references the grammatical underground, the structural antagonism between non-being and Human(human)-being which underwrites presence, communicability and knowing. Such grounds have already been desedimenting in Black<sup>35</sup> radical praxis, in the non-compliance always already spilling over the edges of this World. Nahum Chandler describes desedimentation as the world fracturing mandate of blackness as a *problem for thought*, “a black hole in the whiteness of being, in the being of ‘whiteness’” dis/articulating ontology in the very pronunciation of non/ontology’s grammar (2). A mis/pronunciation by means of a rippling in the grammatical, Black-being for Chandler is a figure of theoretical disfiguration constructed in the “non”, who in “lack” articulates the destruction of the very World which produces blackness as negativity and as problem. For Fred Moten, “blackness is the anoriginal displacement of ontology [...] it is ontology’s anti- and ante-foundation, ontology’s underground, the irreparable disturbance of ontology’s time and space” (“Blackness” 739). For the captor, the jailer, the prosecutor, the plantation owner and the carceral order, blackness and being agitate and preoccupy thought, even as they make habitual the casting overboard of Black lives and the thought-worlds that haunt at the perforations of their racial order. Against what Zora Neale Hurston has called “a sharp white background”, blackness always already makes a problematic of any attempt to make commensurable freedom and slavery (“How it feels...” qtd in Rankine 27). Jared Sexton

35 i capitalize Black as proper noun when referencing a people and cultural group tied to but not reducible to specificity of life and death in and after racial slavery and racial capitalism. In 1926, W.E.B. Du Bois argued for the capitalization of “Negro”, concerned with the implicit naturalization in usage of the lower case, which sets blackness as descriptive feature and objective attribute rather than the product of historical production and cultural struggle. i use the lowercase “blackness” when discussing a concept or inscription in relation to anti-blackness. See Lori L. Tharps, “The Case for Black with a Capital B”, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/19/opinion/the-case-for-black-with-a-capital-b.html>



writes, “captivity is always an unsettled condition, open to an outside about which it will not know anything and about which it cannot stop thinking, a nervous system always in pursuit of the fugitive movement it cannot afford to lose and cannot live without, if it is to go on existing in and as a mode of capturing” (“Social Life” 9-10). In other words, the logic of capture drives the state, the master, the citizen-subject, white civil society, the police, the catcher of runaways, whose ontological grounds are hinged upon possible upheaval.

Christina Sharpe writes of Black non/being as being in the wake—the environmental circumscription of anti-blackness generated in the afterlife of slavery, the continuing aftershock of a still persisting disaster affixed as onto-epistemic and value-producing structure. Turning on “the problem”, Sharpe poses “the wake as a problem of and for thought” and specifically “care in the wake [...as a] problem for thinking and of and for Black non/being in the world” (5), announcing a profound desedimentation resembling what the Combahee River Collective called an “adversary stance” (1). Care in the wake as care of and for Black life and rebellion thus implicates care for the abolition of a World which cultivates anti-blackness to fertilize its grounds. By repositioning the “problem”, Sharpe situates thought in blackness—“thought and care need to stay in the wake”—making all thought Black thought (5), recalling Sexton’s point that “Blackness is theory itself, anti-blackness the resistance to theory” (“Ante-Anti-”). To think desedimentation in the wake, we consider a cluster of thought surrounding questions of Black life/death.<sup>36</sup> That is, thought concerning the unsettling of the ontological parameters that enfold and make possible both being and nothingness—thought oriented towards the unworlding of this World. Because philosophy *is* the “World” (thought-world), it is imperative to read blackness as a philosophical invention, wherein living people, beings, ghosts, the dead and

<sup>36</sup> For the purposes of my notations, the “debates” between “Black optimism” and “Afro-pessimism”, which none of the thinkers associated with the labels adopt, are not of major concern. Rather than opposing the two diametrically, I see the various interrogations as clusters of thought in antagonistic and oblique stance to Whiteness, slavery, carcerality and empire. Sexton and Moten have both articulated the “problem” and the ways in which social death must also be the site of social life, and social life’s limit condition is social death. See Sexton, “Social Life in Social Death” and Moten “Being and Nothingness.”

the disappeared moving in the “non-” dis/articulate insurrection in excess of philosophical procedure.

While divergent and irreducible, the theoretical concerns gathered here in one manner or another supplement Black freedom and the posture that Blackness<sup>37</sup> *is* resistance, refusing the archival mandate to remember in order to forget, to stay in the wake of colonization, racialization and chattel slavery. Although blackness as non-/ontology and the experiences, identities and cultural formation of Black persons overlap, they are not identical. Since our concern here is with the relational paradigm which writes the Human into Being, i do not engage with identity or conversations between the various authors; that work has been undertaken by other writers and is beyond the scope of this project. The intention of this work is not to fetishize Black suffering nor to appeal to some naturalized notion of racial or cultural essence, but to attend to the terrain that “was not made by choice but dictated by historical inheritance” (Robinson 308). The point is that everything and everyone pulled into relation with this genre of the Human (which no person can actually be) has a stake in seeing to the destruction of a world in which Black death, enslavement and settler colonization constitute the material and immaterial base of Human social life.

Black theory is thus a theory of the Human. It *is* ontology and a starting and ending point for modernity/coloniality, inextricable from the genocidal Trans-Atlantic economics of trade in flesh and dispossession that made possible the consolidation of this genre of the Human.<sup>38</sup> Alexander Weheliye writes, “the functioning of blackness as both inside and

<sup>37</sup> This is capitalized to distinguish Blackness as a theory and practice of refusal and blackness as a naturalized property in racialized worlding. The question of self-making and self-transcendence in the context of slave economics in Canada and the U.S. is always vexed, where the notion of overcoming adversity mapped onto self-actualization is perpetually disturbed by the condition of object without self-possession. This includes practices, tactics, art forms, inventions, thought and struggles by Black people and communities for the proliferation and love of Blackness itself irreducible to the violence of anti-Black humanism.

<sup>38</sup> In noting this entanglement, i also want to resist viewing Indigenous dispossession as a backdrop on which anti-Black violence occurs. As Eve Tuck and Rinaldo Walcott have pointed out, although slavery and Indigenous dispossession and genocide are not one in the same, anti-Blackness and settler-colonialism constitute a system of World making which structures the continuation of the violence of this Worlding in the present (The Henceforward Ep. 13). Further, Black and Indigenous people have resisted in ways that are also imbricated in collaborative struggle.

outside modernity sets the stage for a *general theory* of the human, not its particular exception” (*Habeas Viscus* 19; emphasis added). Despite its fundamentality, blackness and race are rarely addressed by philosophy-for-the-West. Jean Paul Sartre’s “transitional” characterization of Black struggle in *Black Orpheus* for example (“Negritude appears as the weak stage of a dialectical progression...”), demonstrates Western progressive thought’s persistent failure and structural limit to think Blackness and Black resistance in their radicality (qtd in Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 112). Cedric Robinson’s task in *Black Marxism* aimed to address this disciplinary and epistemic non-account. Arguing that racial order was well established in Europe *before* the encounter between the West and “the rest” that was widely understood to have set the procedures of racial distinction into motion, Robinson traces the early formation European civilization as a bounded concept to a co-emergence of racism, capitalism and colonization, attributing it not to a revolutionary break from feudal to capitalist society, but an adjustment to a structure of social exclusion and expropriation that was already in place (10).

The 15<sup>th</sup> century proliferation of racialized slave economics in the “beyond” of Europe’s borders, likewise, marked a consolidation of a distinction between barbarian and civilian that had been operative in the legal and cultural orders of slavery and freedom in the Greco-Roman world (12). From Aristotle to Marx, the slave (along with women and labourers) was at best, unaccounted, outside and indifferent to the subjective world of virtue, development, ethics, politics. Aristotle’s correlation between the “natural order” of classes—the ruler and the ruled (free over the slave, the male over the female, man over the child)—and “natural” differences saw agreement in “Nature” as formative of the “common good” and “common sense” regarded as property of the citizen. Accordingly, the slave (who is genderless) lacking the deliberative part of the soul, can only approximate virtue in relation to the virtue of the master, whereas for “the female”, the soul is incomplete and without full authority (63). Distinguishing the soul from the body, the human being from the lower animal, the Aristotelian argument claimed that “those whose function is the use of the body” were “by nature slaves, for whom to be governed by this kind of authority is advantageous...for he is by nature a slave who is capable of belonging to another” (23). In the same order, “the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and

the female subject. And the same must also necessarily apply in the case of mankind generally” (21). This inferiorization Robinson argues, constituted the basis of Aristotle’s Natural Law and provided the template for subsequent articulations of racialism, whether in liberalism, philosophical critique, or dialectics (Robinson xxxi).

In the entanglement of freedom and slavery, it is unvaryingly the labour, bodies and non-status of women, children, the poor, and the enslaved upon which the citizen-subject finds his security, capacity, will, and faculties of higher thought. The slave’s unfree status (and therefore the slave’s unfree labour) and inability to give consent defines the very meaning of free labour, the fungibility of the non-human which gives authority to the Human. Just as the status of the citizen is given by (taken from) the slave, the status of civilization is conceptually and materially generated by the plunder, dispossession, inferiorization and enslavement of other worlds, solidifying markets, governance structures and surplus value from Difference. Robinson writes, “the tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into "racial" ones” (26). Additionally, Denise Ferreira da Silva defined racial slavery as both an economic relation and a property relation concerning ownership, challenging the idea that the Transatlantic trade in enslaved African bodies is somehow prior and exterior to the capitalist world system:

“Beginning with slavery is crucial precisely because a most profitable effect of the tools of scientific reason, which produce the Category of Blackness, is precisely the occlusion of the relationship between the enslaved labor and the owners as a sort of juridic arrangement that does not belong in capitalist relations, which are mediated by contract – and which it does capture through the juridic concept of property” (“Black Feminist Poethic” 83).

As economic relation, racial slavery is not incidental to capitalism. Rather, slavery formed a decisive dimension of capitalist development and its relations of production. The value extracted and produced by the labour of the enslaved body continues to sustain global capitalism, race and coloniality in the present (“Poethic” 85). To put bluntly Robinson and Ferreira da Silva’s point: *capitalism is always racial capitalism*. Race is not a deviation from, nor an attribute of one form of Western thought (thought *for* the “West”), but a

structure of relationality present in every iteration of the Western philosophical tradition as a genre and its techniques of worlding. Racial capitalism thus runs through orders of law, rights, communication, expression, and contract as a juridical, subjective, and economic relation of exchange—and not only as a registry of skin colour, “human difference” or identity, but as a system of World production.

Along these lines, blackness and anti-blackness are perpetually adapted and reproduced, each time adjusted to meet the material assaults of racial capitalism. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this unrolled in the form of Jim Crow, legal and social inventions which re-inscribed both racial distinction and enslavement-based economic relations after Black Reconstruction and the legal end of plantation slavery. Its logics continue in the present in the form of mass incarceration (the criminalization, policing and holding captive) of “free” Black bodies, as one of the features of slavery’s afterlife.<sup>39</sup> Although the logics of racial distinction themselves preceded the Middle Passage, its means of philosophical and somatic violence accumulated in Euro-western conquest and its trade in persons originating from the African continent, imposing an identity between slaveness and blackness as a legal, ontological and scientific designation. The provinciality of anti-blackness must be emphasized, even as the “wake” has been globalized by means of imperial mobility and a capitalist world system (mode of managing the world). As Weheliye stresses, “the very category ‘black’ is an invention of Western modernity, which does not mean that it can be reduced to a mere colonialist imposition on empirically verifiable black beings that pre-exist this classification, but that this arrangement defies any sort of quasi comprehensibility, if it does so at all, outside the modern West” (“Phonographies” 5). Anti-blackness in other words, is a foundational characteristic of the West’s formation of the “Human” and is pervasive through its forms of legal, aesthetic, political and philosophical expression. The incorporation and commensuration of blackness into an anti-black formation is thus always

<sup>39</sup> One of such mechanisms is the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the U.S. constitution passed by Congress on January 31, 1865 to formally abolish slavery in the United States of America. However, it reserved the legal means to extract Black labour as criminal labour: Slavery shall no longer exist “except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.” As many have pointed out the logics and economies of slavery continued in a number of different forms, particularly in the development of the prison industrial complex, ghettoization, and disenfranchisement. See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*.

a violent procedure marked by impossibility. The deadly motions of the carceral World demonstrate the genocidal logics of this relation. Its continued investments in institutionalizing anti-blackness reveals the often unavowed fact that such a commensuration would indeed tremble the very grounds upon which the privileged figure of carceral-modernity makes its claims to humanity.

Frank B. Wilderson writes that blackness is “a structural position of noncommunicability in the face of all other positions” in which no recuperation, no redemption is possible (*Red, White and Black* 58). In Wilderson’s afro-pessimist communiqué,<sup>40</sup> the position in the “non-” (as in non-identity, non-being, non-subject) “implies a scandal” for both liberal and radical politics (“Gramsci’s Black Marx” 225). Carrying overtones from Robinson, he argues that the Gramscian notion of civil society as a radical terrain of hegemonic struggle in which “*all* positionalities [can] emerge” has no place for the slave who is structurally positioned *outside* and *without* civil society (225). Hegemony’s radical possibility is *within* and *for* civil society, where the slave as both commodity and means of accumulation can have no demands and no revolutionary future. Anti-blackness as a paradigmatic structural antagonism means the grammars of Black suffering and of articulating Black freedom are non-identical with articulation of suffering and emancipation for subject of the Western philosophical tradition. Because Black suffering is “predicated on modalities of accumulation and fungibility, not exploitation and alienation”, the overcoming of alienation and exploitation through which the subaltern (assumed subject of consent) gains liberation, always leaves the position of the slave unthought and the structures of accumulation and fungibility unturned (*Red, White and Black* 58). Although “the emergence of the slave...marks the emergence of capitalism itself”, the terms of subaltern struggle—“work, progress production, exploitation, hegemony and historical self-awareness”—still do not register the basic demand of the slave: the destruction of civil society as slave society (“Gramsci’s Black Marx” 225). Again, capitalism’s extractive relation to labour depends on the fungibility of the enslaved; it is the meaning of free labour

40 Contrary to the critique of afro-pessimist thinking as immaterial (Lewis Gordon; Annie Olaloku-Teriba), i read afro-pessimist theory as an orientation deeply imbricated with material life and most decidedly Black life. Correspondingly, its interest in ontology is formed around the material, structural conditions which define the grammars of contemporary anti-Black violence.

given by unfree labour which legitimates the domination of the worker, whose alienability and exploitability is bound to concepts of free will, self-possession, subjectivity and choice—the idea that the worker freely “sells” her own labour for a wage. Although the multiple formations of subjection are imbricated in the racial capitalist triad “settler-native-slave”, they are non-analogous. As it is a matter of form rather than of scale, comparative moves to posit one experience of oppression in relation to another in terms of severity not only displace incommensurability, they also discount the radicality of Black ontology as “a problem for thought” (Chandler 2).

For the subaltern revolutionary subject to gain freedom from capitalism, the slave does not have to be emancipated but instead disappeared. Thus, civil society as the terrain of intersubjective and hegemonic struggle is also the site of social death where race and slavery are perpetually reinstated. It is where blackness is continually figured in abjection in the absolute, as exteriority to thought and the World. Joy James and João Costa Vargas calls this the “graveyard of democracy” where “black death [is] a predictable and constitutive aspect” (193). Wilderson describes the severity of this relation in the following way: “black death is the modern bourgeois-state’s recreational pastime, but the hunting season is not confined to the time (and place) of political society; blacks are fair game as a result of a progressively expanding civil society as well” (“Gramsci’s Black Marx” 229). Anti-black violence is thus not incidental but *constitutive* of the very meaning of Human being—the transcendental thinking and feeling subject of history who comes to know himself through that which he is *not*. In this order of being Human, the abjection of the slave is absolute. The slave has no legible aesthetic, no capacity to subjective agreement, no right, no council, no property, no propriety, troubling the coherence of the subject as a within and without, an interiorized opposite and exteriorized abject non-being which carries the irresolution of the incision that produces the *between*. It is a reminder that the bounded privilege of the Citizen-Human is always unstable, always dependent upon a violence which produces not only opposition, but opposition’s unthinkable exteriority. The slave is both the foundation and desedimenting force of ontology (being-Human), always present, though out of frame in “the impossible time, and therefore impossible space, of blackness in an anti-black world” (James and Vargas 197).

Rejecting the dialectical “passage” from Black non-being to the progressive subject of history, afro-pessimism refuses recuperation into the grammar of the Human and resists incorporation into what Warren calls ontology’s “murderous operation” (407). As Hortense Spillers explained, blackness requires a different “semantic field” (qtd in Warren 408). In other words, unless the incommensurability posed by the slave can frame the terms of struggle—that is, to destroy the world in which slavery is possible—even if capitalism is abolished, anti-blackness remains; even with emancipation, the freedom dreams of the slave remain unthought. In recognition of the crushing parameters of colonization and anti-blackness, Fanon professed: “a feeling of inferiority? No, a feeling of not existing” (*Black Skin, White Masks* 118). This exteriority, according to Moten, is “unmappable within the cosmological grid of the transcendental subject” (“Blackness and Nothingness” 740). Calvin Warren, borrowing Eric Stanley’s term “overkill”, links this exteriority with a matrix of gratuitous anti-queer and anti-black violence, writing “overkill is the violence that sustains society, and without it, liberal democracy and its institutions would cease to exist” (402). Describing the unthinkability transferred between metaphysics and gratuitous violence against black bodies, Warren writes, “in a word, ontology is made possible by the death of blackness—onticide” (407). This violence has no equivalence, no commensurability with any other positions of social-structural formulations within civil society (*Red, White and Black* 10). It is violence exacted in gratuity, without reason, without function; violence in the excess, exceeding calculable cost and effect, “ontological and gratuitous as opposed to merely ideological and contingent” (“Gramsci’s Black Marx” 229). It is the violence of the “without” in relation to the subject of self-possession and self-actualization, where Black being is always figured as non-being, because within this paradigm “the black” has never been “one.”

To contend with the im/possibility posed by incommensurability, a move in the non-grammatical might occasion a syn-tactical (syntax and tactic) shift from “politics” and “ethics” for articulating the demands and relations unintelligible *within* civil society, positioned *outside* the field of the political. Chandler asked, “how could a slave, whose status as supposed nonbeing and as proprietary object that is understood as determined by



an exchange between two others (men, “white” men, owners of slaves), engage “legitimately” in the exchange of property?” (162). Or, how can one who is *not*-one verify self-possession in intersubjective exchange? What “politics” can the slave achieve in civil society? Does the very inconceivability of a “politics of the slave” usher a desedimentation of the political capacity of the Human? Wilderson’s response: “politics not in the content of the demand (a cry for autonomy), but in the *context* of its enunciation: the structural violence of a life positioned, paradigmatically, as an object in a world of subjects—a Blackened life” (“Grammar and Ghosts”123).

*flash 7: ruination*

*Beverly Buchanan (1940-2015), Marsh Ruins, concrete and tabby, 1981. (Marshes of Glynn, Brunswick, GA).*

See [www.rhizomes.net/issue29/campbell/index.html](http://www.rhizomes.net/issue29/campbell/index.html) and [www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/beverly\\_buchanan\\_ruins\\_rituals](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/beverly_buchanan_ruins_rituals)

### **“non-”**

*Non-* is the story that cannot be told and the story that must be told. A consideration of the prefix “non-” is always troubled by failed recognition and unavailability, inevitably risking the performance of yet again the terrible violence of capture which binds it too easily to strict definitions of “exclusion”, “absence”, “negation”, “failure.” *Non-* resists description, recuperation and incorporation, standing in for a radical unknowability. Its procedure is non-standard and can only be approached in approximation and in acknowledgement of the radicality of inaccessibility and fugitive withdrawal. As Harney and Moten tell us, “fugitivity escapes even the fugitive” (50). Any account of the *non-* therefore takes place in the im/possibility of description, along the indefinite perimeters of an im/possible grammar of non-being. More so than explicate, we shuffle around the difficult edges of the *non-* to plot an image, taking seriously the challenges announced by its im/possibility, to keep space for what cannot be known in recognition and what cannot be written, while trying still, to think “without filling the void” (Hartman and Wilderson 185). The prefix *non-* concerns the not-quite-resolved— “things” irreconcilable as simply contrapuntal; “things” incommensurate and internally troubling. It also refers to what we cannot grasp

and cannot hold, “things” that shift the earth beneath the assurance of terms like human, ontology, being, communication or performance, where agency is a troubling operation relaying a violence of its own; where activity is always already frequented by an unnamed refusal to be productive.

The *non-* in proximity to nothingness, designates both unknowability and vulnerability to being made known—a descriptor for irrecoverable loss without a grammar, a placeholder for postures and positions in the outside and underside of civil society which at the same time denote a radicality and foreclosure to thought. As anteriority and unthinkable exteriority, the *non-* expresses the very state and status of “without”—a being-*without* the relational mandates of coloniality/modernity or being in non-relation *without* the logics of the Human. Of nothing *and* of exorbitance, *non-* is less paradoxical than exterior—entirely outside and without. The hyphenated *non-* is connective, simultaneously anticipatory and reductive—“not in accordance with”, from the Old Latin *noenum* or “not one.” *Non-* precedes several formations we have been attempting to problematize—non-Human, non-relation, non-standard. In non-philosophy, the “non-” is not equivalent to the “anti-.” It does not designate an “against” in an oppositional relation but registers a formal posture in the outside. *Non-* is a “mutation” from the authority of the word it precedes, changing its meaning *without* the pressure of synthesis (A. Smith 25). As such, a grammar of non-being is an im/possible grammar according to the *non-* and *without*—a grammar in disarticulation, composed of syllables and non-words (non-, para-) that transform the significance of the given, while remaining unavailable for extractive usage.

*Non-* as the condition of possibility for philosophies of relation, a “problem for thought” as Chandler theorized, is related to blackness but non-identical to it. It is both a method of posing questions regarding the logics of difference and relation and an (para)ontological dimension overdetermined by the logic of race. Theorizations on the *non-* are as such invariably implicated into the fold of racial terror and the terrors of gender violence, capitalism and colonialism that are coterminous with its philosophical register. Non-being situated in structural antagonism also contains a *not*, indicating refusal and the para-ontological status of the “not/one.” In (para-)legal terms, non is represented as non-Citizen,

non-Subject, non-Proprietor and non-Human—possessing no agency, no property, no subjecthood, no image, no rights, lacking even the capacity to possess.

The *non-* as a problematic is perhaps most legible in the slave relation. *Non* is the para-ontological position of the enslaved, the non-representational figure of absolute abjection who is simultaneously hyper-represented and unrepresented. The position of the *non-* is one in which the relational connector “between” (distinguishing the space between one subject and another) is deemed inapplicable, if not entirely inconceivable. The denial of the “between” makes *community in the non-* structurally incomprehensible and is rendered “non-existent” in the relational paradigm of the subject of freedom. In this relation, subjectivity, agency, communication and performance are constructions of irredeemable domination. On the terror of performance, Saidiya Hartman writes that the subjection of the slave does not only occur at the moments most recognizable as the violence codified as the historical “event” of chattel slavery (56). It is most insidious in the relational field of recognition and performance, in moments when the “slaveness” of the enslaved is made indiscernible, when the enslaved is granted a momentary semblance of subject status in communication and performance, appearing as though within a relation of absolute subordination, free will, volunteerism and enjoyment are possible. The “scenes of subjection” occur in the non-slave’s viewing of the enslaved in the (non-) performance of song and dance, in the spectacle of “black contentment and abjection” where blackness and slaveness are continually re-codified in identity (56). These curated moments of the momentary “inclusion” of the slave, pulled into recognition as something other than the slave are moments of extreme terror in which the *non-* as the constitutive ground of chattel slavery is vanished from sight. In this disappearance, the master is temporarily evacuated from the relation of domination, observing only as spectator. These forms of “entertainment” enable the master or the non-slave to move towards innocence and/or redemption, reaffirming the existing relation of domination while staging the slave as the “self-possessed and rights-bearing individual of freedom” (283).

Given that the slave relation cannot do *without* the figure of the slave, her body, her work and her subjection, the invisibilization of the *non-* in slave performances can only ever be

temporary. Without the clarity of a racial code to distinguish the free and the enslaved or the imagined unintelligibility and incivility of the slave, the economy of being-Human, being-White and being-Master would lose its coherence. As such, (non-)performance operates as the procedure of commensuration through which the real undergoes multiple distortions, where communicability is restricted, withheld and reconstrued to confirm the slave relation. The categories of agency and performativity that typically underwrite subjective freedom are means by which slave status is re-inscribed, where the reproduction of existence in the *non-* exteriorizes the real suffering and oppression of the enslaved to a paradigm “beyond” subjective recognition. A position in the *non* is thus a figuration in im/possibility where subjective affirmation runs against absolute incommensurability. *There can be no telling of the slave.* Recuperation, redemption, representation or translation it seems, can only write the slave out of being or again into conditions of slavery. In Hartman’s words, “how does one discern “enabling conditions” when the very constitution of the subject renders him socially dead or subversively redeploys an identity determined by violent domination, dishonour, and natal alienation?” (56) Pushing liberal orders of empathy and communication to their capacity, the *non-* interrupts the very possibility of identification with exteriority and indexes a procedure of displacement that is fundamental to relation—more specially, the relational paradigm of the Human i have been calling philosophies of relation. Within this paradigm, the slave’s legibility is always dependent upon the subject’s empathic will and the utility of commensurating the slave to an instrumental function. As Hartman writes,

“every attempt to emplot the slave in a narrative ultimately resulted in his or her obliteration, regardless of whether it was a leftist narrative of political agency—the slave stepping into someone else’s shoes and then becoming a political agent—or whether it was about being able to unveil the slave’s humanity by actually finding oneself in that position” (Hartman and Wilderson 184).

Performance is therefore firstly that of the slaveholder’s performative enactment of mastery and freedom, where empathy and recognition constitute the subjective dimensions of the material relations of chattel slavery. Performance in this context is always preceded by and always in relation with the *non-*. The *non-* has a fugitive dimension which thwarts the total violence of the relation and remains foreclosed to the demands of performativity.

(Non-)performance is also where the enslaved articulated refusal, sidestepping the perimeters of subjectivity, recognition, communication as they are typically deployed in the World of slaveholding subjects to generate moments of fugitive movement. Enslaved persons in the Antebellum United States, according to Hartman, used the mandatory performance requiring representations of blackness and slaveness as non-sensical, illegible and incommunicable, as non-performative sites of subterfuge, masquerade and subversion (*Scenes of Subjection* 8). Non-performance enabled practices of defiance in opacity through which enslaved persons exercised fugitivity in the *non-* and where aspects of their lives, however constrained, could be made unavailable to the slaveholder in moments of self-determination.

These non-performances were moments of “community” in the *non-*, of affiliation in fugitive dreaming unintended and unknown to the slaveholder, holding acts of everyday defiance in the obscure, in refusal of recognition. In contract law,<sup>41</sup> non-performance connotes the legal grounds for the termination of a contract. Reading slavery as a form of contract law underscores non-performance’s inextricability from the termination of the slave system’s relational grounds, compromising the logic of consent that is critical to liberalism’s legal framework. Sora Han writes “the legal idea of nonperformance also makes of the contract a way out for the contracting parties from their expectations’ hold on the future” (408). Fugitivity or affiliation in the *non-*, though forged in racial terror, exceeds racial identification because the grammar of abolition is not of difference and identity, but of an im/possibility that dis/articulates the very meaning of freedom and performance and enslavement’s carceral structure of relation.

In the foreword to Harney and Moten’s *Undercommons* Jack Halberstam wrote “fugitivity is being separate from settling”, which i had misread as “separate from setting” (11). This

41 Legal theorist Sora Han noted the ways in which thinking slavery as contract rather than merely in terms of property reveals slavery as a condition of contract law and not its effect. She writes, “in this way, the slave was always a kind of afterlife, a form of legal being that was neither birthed by law, nor extinguished by law, but nonetheless present in the law (“Slavery as Contract” 410). Anishnaabe legal scholar John Borrows (Chippewa of the Nawash First Nation) highlights how the framing treaty rights as historical rights reproduces the disavowal of the constitutionality of Indigenous legal rights (“Challenging Historical Frameworks” 115).

misreading writes non-being in affiliation with non-compliance—separate that is, from the setting of the political grounds wherein the Human becomes human.<sup>42</sup> Non-performance’s fugitivity demands a separation from carceral sociality’s relationality and threatens to break the link to a future that remains captive to the logics of the present. In Philip’s refusal of a recuperative speaking for the slave, non-performance in opacity allowed for the reoccurrence of the *non-* in every telling of the story that can’t be told. Non-performance as non-compliance is thus a function of an end, demonstrated in fugitive thought and affiliations formed in the “without” of non-being. In the absence of direct applications, the *non-* indicates a rivenness in the setting, recursively suggesting separation from sett(ling), prompting a search for a way to move “without filling the void.”

### **irreconcilable**

“My argument is that it is a sign, also, of colonialism’s ongoing existence and simultaneous failure. Colonialism survives in a settler form. In this form, it fails at what it is supposed to do: eliminate Indigenous people; take all their land; absorb them into a white, property-owning body politic.”

—Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*

“Moving forward, one of our goals is to help lift this burden from your shoulders, from those of your families, and from your communities. It is to accept fully our responsibilities – and our failings – as a government and as a nation.”

—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, “Statement on the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Report”, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> This idea of the realm of politics as a setting or habituating ground for the human to become human (coming to be virtuous and moral as political education etc.) is an Aristotelian postulation (*Nicomachean Ethics*) which has significantly informed the category of “political thought” in the subsequent the history of political philosophy in the West.

“Liberal exceptionalism pivots on the common sense truth of two competing, or at least incommensurate, political and social discourses and their affective entailments—that in cases of cultural conflict the problem of difference is solved through public reason and in these same cases moral reason must draw red lines across which difference cannot proceed, or a bracket must be put around the difference so that it can be removed from public debate until that time its challenge can be managed.”

—Elizabeth Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*

flash 8: ᐃᑲᐃᑦ ᐸᑲᑲᑦᐅ

Joi. T. Arcand, *Don't Speak English* ᐃᑲᐃᑦ ᐸᑲᑲᑦᐅ, 2017.

See [www.joitarcand.com/#/dontspeakenglish](http://www.joitarcand.com/#/dontspeakenglish)

Joi T. Arcand’s practice activates a framework of a future that is already here—a future actualized in the here/now in which Cree is the only language in the frame. Lindsay Nixon called this the future-present, “we are living the Indigenous future. We are descendants of a future imaginary that has already passed; the outcome of the intentions, resistance and survivance of our ancestors” (*par.* 1). Refusing colonial representations of Indigenous space and technological traditions as absence, as Canadian landscape paintings typically show,<sup>43</sup> Arcand’s practice features Cree presence as a given and ordinary aspect of the city, its architecture and everyday life. In Cree territory, Cree language in “public” and “institutional” space requires no translation.<sup>44</sup>

Indigenous thought and activism have long articulated the importance of incommensurability in theorizing settler colonialism, emphasizing an irreconcilability between colonial philosophies of relation (rooted in the interest of extending colonialism)

43 Jolene Rickard has called landscape art in the Americas “arts of dispossession”, in which Indigenous land is represented as empty and available to be propertyed by settlers (60). In this way, Indigenous peoples are cast as a part of nature, in distinction to the “civilization” settlers saw in themselves as they regarding the painted work for an “understanding” for the “new world”.

44 The settler policing of Indigenous presence in public and urban space is essential to settler colonial spatial production. See starlight tours, history of the pass system, the Sixties Scoop, the militarized invasion of unceded sovereign Indigenous territory. Also see Sherene H Razack’s “Gendered racial violence and spatialized justice: the murder Pamela George.”

and Indigenous relational philosophies, where the former moves in perpetuity to subsume the latter *within* its own terms. What i want to address as a non-Indigenous person in a settler-colonial system is the relational terror imparted in the colonial state's claims to "renew relations", to underscore the structural violence of such announcements and reckon with the radicality of decolonization's unsettling of the relational structure that supplements colonial modernity's carceral worlding. i am not writing against Indigenous formations of relationality in any way or pretending to evaluate Indigenous political strategies or modes of resistance. That is not my task and nor my interest. The intention here is to consider the risks incommensurability and irreconcilability pose for this dominant structure of relationality which i too have a stake in desedimenting.

The question "reconciliation to what and with what?" posed repeatedly by Indigenous peoples since the official launch of Canada's Reconciliation project makes clear a fundamental antagonism—within a relation of domination, there can be no reconciliation. *Between* the settler state's desire for Reconciliation<sup>45</sup> and decolonization, *between* the settler colonial logics of Indigenous elimination<sup>46</sup> and Indigenous life, there can be no commensuration (Wolfe 388). For Indigenous freedom to be possible, the settler colonial relation and Canada as a settler colonial entity must cease to exist. In an active disavowal of Indigenous legal systems and governance,<sup>47</sup> impossible attempts continue to be made to assimilate sovereign Indigenous nations into colonial civil society as settler subjects articulated within the legal spaces of the colonial government.<sup>48</sup> Where commensuration

<sup>45</sup> i capitalize Reconciliation to distinguish the colonial state's Reconciliation project from Indigenous led movements for justice and relationship building which sometimes also use the term to shift the parameters of conversation, to push for broader efforts towards decolonization: the return of land and stolen material wealth, reparations for harm done, the ending of institutions of genocide.

<sup>46</sup> Note the Church, the Police, the RCMP, Prisons, Residential Schools, the Defunding of Indigenous institutions, Reserves, the Indian Act, the Colonial Control of indigenous Status, the 60s scoop, the Settler Society, the University.

<sup>47</sup> For more on Indigenous law, see Borrows, John, *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*, University of Toronto Press, 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Initiatives have been taken by Indigenous community members, families and survivors of the residential school system to transform processes such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (which had come out of a class action lawsuit forwarded by survivors of residential schools) towards something which exceeds the reconciliatory interests of the Canadian state.



constitute acts of genocide—*within* a colonial situation—its courts and injunctions, its “conclusions” and its unanswered Calls to Action<sup>49</sup> are set to fail the “unsovereign.” As Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien’kehá:ka) wrote, “there really is no way to decolonize from within the reconciliation paradigm. There is no way, except to get out: a resurgence of authentic land-based Indigeneity” (11).

Reconciliation is an instance of a *politics of commensurability* enacted through a standard-procedure of settler-colonial maintenance, casting Indigenous space as the distant space of “the wild” beyond civilization, as natural “resource” to be accessed, and Indigenous time as an idea of the past to be transcended. To render Indigenous thought-worlds appropriate to modernity/coloniality, commensuration proceeds in a murderous and dis/possessive undertaking which perpetually displaces the radicality of Indigenous demands, desires and values, made to seem illegible and out of line. The designation “out of line” has severe implications, one of which is heightened policing, surveillance and militarized forms of state encroachment deployed at a programmatic and quotidian manner to destroy Indigenous dissent (Crosby and Monaghan 88). What appears to be spectacular, exceptional “events” of extreme state violence are as Audra Simpson has pointed out, “in fact very structural” (155). The simultaneous figuration of Indigenous struggle *within* the terms of civil society and the positioning of Indigenous lives as *outside* of civil society is the product of a relational structure which exposes Indigenous persons to both direct forms of violence (targeted and increased criminalization, surveillance and militarized policing) and violence by means of exclusion (denial of rights, support, resources, basic living conditions). This structure of shifting inclusion/exclusion enables the violence of settler colonialism itself to appear unseen, such that even when undeniable colonial terrors (e.g. youth suicide, water, housing crisis in Attawapiskat<sup>50</sup>) do enter colonial civil society’s conversational platform they remain dismissible. The description “basic human rights” always fails to meet the demands of Indigenous life, because within the relational framework of the Euro-Western genre of the Human, one cannot be both Indigenous and

49 Since 2015, the year of the “conclusion” of Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 84 of its 94 calls to action remain unanswered. See the 94 and Beyond project. <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform-single/beyond-94?&cta=41>

50 See <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/attawapiskat-water-quality-emergency-1.5204652>

Human. This is the logic of the residential school system and the genocidal parameters of settler colonialism expressed in Duncan Scott Campbell's rationale: "killing the Indian in the child" (TRC Report).

Settler colonialism is thus not only a structure of relation in itself, but a figuration of the relational structure of the Human and its attendant logics of distinction, overcoming, transcendence, subjective self-actualization practiced on the ground through the seizure and dispossession of Indigenous lands, which legitimizes the settler subject's capacity to transform the earth and make "value" of it. Given that the spatial extension of empire unfolds in tandem with philosophical violence, the legibility of the cultural autonomy, self-determination and specificities of Indigenous cosmologies, epistemologies and ontologies are barred by the imaginative contours of settler colonial Humanism. The communicative exchange which underwrites the principles of transparency, sovereignty and free will ascribed to Human intersubjectivity structurally prohibits the recognition of Indigenous subjecthood and consent. In the context of settler colonial governance, where the goal remains to claim Indigenous land for ongoing extraction and accumulation, the proceedings of consent and consensus are inconceivable and inapplicable. The trials of Gerald Stanley and Raymond Cormier for the murders of Colten Boushie (Red Pheasant Nation) and Tina Fontaine (Sagkeeng First Nation) are indicative of the violence of consensus where relations of power are irreparably asymmetrical. In this case, it is consensus by a juridical system and civil society to privilege the genre of White Settler Humanity from which Boushie and Fontaine are cut off.<sup>51</sup> Philosophical violence also occurs in attempts to submit Indigenous relationality to philosophies of relation, making commensurate to erase the radicality and autonomy of Indigenous relational frameworks. Again, the problem is not contradiction, but a relation of domination which claims to *be relationality* in the absolute.<sup>52</sup> Australian settler scholar Patrick Wolfe put it saliently: "settler colonialism destroys to replace" (388).

51 See <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/raymond-cormier-trial-verdict-tina-fontaine-1.4542319> and Kent Roach, *Canadian Justice, Indigenous Injustice: The Gerald Stanley and Colten Boushie Case*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019.

52 i do not see a contradiction in problematizing the logics of relation as i have been trying to do and the centering of relation in the discussion of Indigenous worldviews, because the two are irreconcilable. Further, what i have been calling philosophies of relation and Indigenous relationality are not only

*flash 9: #ReconciliationIsDead*

*#ShutCanadaDown#Wet'suwet'enStrong#ReconciliationIsDead*

*#Unistoten#landback#allegesonwetsuweten#NoPipelines*

A question about relationality is also a question of land. In the territory where i am writing, this involves the energy company Enbridge and the National Energy Board's repeated violation and denial of the territorial sovereignty and consent of the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation<sup>53</sup> to install the ecologically destructive Line 9 pipeline through Chippewa land. In what is commonly called British Columbia, the Canadian court injunction to permit TransCanada's Costal GasLink access to Wet'suwet'en territory<sup>54</sup> for the installation of a 670-kilometer Hydrofracturing gas pipeline is again a clear violation of Wet'suwe'ten law and principles of consent. The fact that Canadian courts have no jurisdiction in Wet'suwe'ten territory—which had never been ceded—means that the encroachments of the Canadian legal apparatus, the RCMP paramilitary attacks and TransCanada's encroachment are strictly speaking acts of invasion. Writing about Kanehsatà:ke and the state invasion which occurred at the juncture of resistance that is often called the Oka Crisis, Simpson wrote that “it was most specifically, most grievously, a sustained problem of constant land expropriation” (156).

In *Our History is the Future*, Nick Estes (Lakota) argued these practices of invasion and violations of consent are acts of deliberate destruction aimed towards severing Indigenous systems of relationality and the specific relations Indigenous people have with land, water, animals, plants as “other-than-human relatives” and between Indigenous people themselves (“Prologue”<sup>35</sup>). Understanding the importance of relation for Indigenous life,

incommensurable in themselves, they also exist within a context of a relation of domination, in which philosophies of relation subsume Indigenous relationality into its own framework as yet object under the domain of philosophy to be cut and managed rather than a philosophical paradigm in its own right.

<sup>53</sup> Enbridge's Line 9 project which proposed to reverse the flow of a 40 year old pipeline, to transport heavy crude oil extracted from Alberta's tar sands Sarnia to Montreal, was legally challenged by the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation. The court of appeal denied the claims of the Chippewas and permitted Enbridge the “right” to use and access Chippewas land.

<sup>54</sup> For more updates, background and analysis on the Unis'to'ten resistance see <http://unistoten.camp/> Currently, there are three energy companies working on Unist'ot'en territory without consent, Chevron, TransCanada and Enbridge.

colonial entities installed colonial heteropatriarchal relations in the aftermath of a profound severing which saw the disenfranchisement of the political authority of Indigenous women, queer and two spirit people and people with non-masculine genders (“Origins” 161). Audra Simpson and other Indigenous feminists have argued that this severe relational severing is crucial for understanding and resisting contemporary forms of violence against Indigenous women, queer and two spirit people, since it is Indigenous knowledge, language, cultural life and autonomy they sought to destroy through genocidal relational violence.<sup>55</sup> The crisis of “disappearing” Indigenous women, girls and two spirit people is therefore situated in the colonial project of disappearing Indigenous people and Indigenous relationality from the land Canada claims to possess (A. Simpson 156). Indigenous resurgence practices the refusal of this severing of place and relation that has been central to the colonial project. Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee Nation) writes “being Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one’s relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization” (88). The fact that Indigenous peoples exist, resist and continue their ways of being and knowing as Indigenous people perpetually troubles the legitimacy and stability of the colonial structure. For Audra Simpson, these projects of ongoing dispossession, including the move to “manage” Indigenous sovereignty by means of “nested nationhood” within Canada is an indication of settler colonialism’s failure “at what it is supposed to do: eliminate Indigenous people; take all their land; absorb them into a white, property-owning body politic” (7).

Claiming intersubjective relationality where the terms of intersubjectivity are fraught and unstable (since it is a relation of domination between the colonizer and the colonized and not a relation between subjects), Reconciliation discourses circulate renderings of difference overcome, announcing the repair of an original wholeness that somehow has *always* involved Canada. Lee Maracle describes the peculiarity of this procedure in the

<sup>55</sup> Also see Beverly Jacobs, Kim Tallbear, Joyce Green, Kim Anderson, Bonita Lawrence, Zoe Todd, Eve Tuck, Sarah Hunt, Erica Violet Lee. Also see non-Indigenous feminist scholars Sherene Razack and Andrea Smith. See *Violence on the Land, Violence on Our Bodies: Building an Indigenous Response to Environmental Violence* by Women’s Earth Alliance and Native Youth Sexual Health Network, <http://landbodydefense.org/>

following terms: “[reconciliation] is a bit of a misnomer, as the conciliation of the reconciliation is unknown to many Indigenous people...Canada views itself as the nicest colonizer in the world. It does not ask the colonized if they agree with this, Canadians just keep repeating it to each other like bobbleheads that can’t stop bobbling” (127-128). The assumption of an anterior conciliatory state between “equals” to which Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state can both “return” provides a convenient forgetting of the colonial relation itself which had already broken any plausibility of “equality” and continues to displace the reality that Indigenous possibility exists prior to and outside the temporal span of the settler-state.

Figuring itself as an entity that is transcending or has already transcended colonial conflict, the settler state projects a present and future of settler colonial continuity in which the unfinished work of decolonization has no place. In this situation, commensurability reinforces false equivalencies in an asymmetric field, where Indigenous peoples are asked to make available their “historical” trauma in order to foster a “shared understanding” that would allow a mutual learning to “move on” and “forgive” (“Statement by Prime Minister”). This vision of a “collective” moving forward in forgiveness, understanding, and shared futurity is settler centric in form and content, and is also profoundly individual and extractive, taking up the discourses of healing that provide sources for Indigenous resurgence for a colonial project of healing nationally “shared wounds.” By orienting the problem as strained relationship between individual settler subjects and abstract Indigenous people, reconciliation weaponizes notions of the “common”, “reciprocity” and “consent” to elude the clarity of a structural relation of domination in which the wounds are not shared, furthering the fantasy of an original consensus that had been interrupted by the “event” of conflict, a shared “mistaken” past that “we” must now move beyond. This instrumentalization of relation in other words, obligates the colonized to dialogue with the colonizer without ending settler colonialism. Its “moving on” is a erasure of the irreconcilable structural violence of the colonial relationship, which at the same time displaces Indigenous demands for decolonial restitution or redress that include but are not

limited to, the return of land, self-determination, the end of expropriation, the end of capitalist coloniality<sup>56</sup> (Coulthard; Estes; L.Simpson).

In *Red Skin, White Masks*, Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene) examines the limits of colonial recognition, arguing that despite the winning of some cultural and legal rights, jurisdiction remains in the realm of colonial courts. For Coulthard, the turn to recognition especially in the last four decades of activism has produced new techniques for incorporating of Indigenous nationhood, sovereignty, and dissent into the social parameters of the colonial state, which in its turn, can never fully recognize Indigenous people as Indigenous people. Following Fanon, Coulthard makes a case for the self-recognition and empowerment of colonized peoples, challenging the Hegelian formation of recognition as mutual and reciprocal, even between the Master and his Slave. For Coulthard, as for Fanon, the Slave/Master structure of recognition is a disturbing proposition of false equivalency in which mutual recognition is an impossibility, because in a relation of domination in which slavery is possible, the Slave cannot be recognized except on the terms of the Master. Further, the Slave does not recognize the Master because the Slave can never become a Subject for herself—she is by definition a non-subject. As Fanon had written insightfully in a footnote in *Black Skin, White Masks*, “For Hegel there is reciprocity; here the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work” (172). Writing about Indigenous art, Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora) explained that recognition “places work only in settler-state confinement” and often only extends in so far as an identity between the work and the artist can be established, and not between the work and the artist’s claims to cultural autonomy, land rights and sovereign nationhood (58). Mutual recognition mobilized in the framework of Reconciliation functions similarly to obscure the structures of power underlying the relation and is as such insufficient as an emancipatory framework. It is in this context that Audra Simpson writes, “under the conditions of settler colonialism, multiple sovereignties cannot proliferate robustly or equally” (12).

<sup>56</sup> See Yellowhead Institute, *Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper*. <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/>

In his critique of colonial recognition, Coulthard situates an expanded understanding of recognition in an Indigenous context where recognition is firstly self-recognition, inseparable from the understanding of land as relation and the Dene relationality which makes Indigenous life possible. This understanding of deep relationality and reciprocity with beings and land is radically exterior, incompatible and incommensurable with the relational paradigm of settler colonialism and the extractive and incorporative logics of racial capitalism. It is not reducible to an additional form of relationality in a field of different relational philosophies (which would again position Dene relationality *within* Euro-western claims to relation) but instead registers an outside of colonial relationality, radically autonomous and self-determining. As Coulthard explains, for the Dene and other Indigenous nations on Turtle Island, culture denotes more than an identity within the fraught statist notion of the Indigenous-Canadian. Dene demands for cultural recognition carry an understanding of “mode of production as mode of life” and are as such intimately tied to Dene land claims and sovereignty (65). The Dene use of the term “culture” is attuned with Dene ontologies and epistemologies and the deep political capacity which derives from Dene governance systems and the place-based practice and theory of deep reciprocity which constitutes what he calls “grounded normativity” (13). Relationality in the Dene context thus refers to Indigenous self-determination and an understanding of ongoing relation with land and beings as kin.

In this context, the “transitional” framing of Indigenous struggle which underlies the dialectics of recognition for both Sartre and Fanon also poses a problem for decolonization, since the teleological framework in which the “particular” struggles of the colonized are ultimately transcended reduces the ongoing character of Indigenous world making to a temporary stage within a grander project of humanist liberation from capitalism. For Coulthard, this logic is carried out in the understanding of “primitive accumulation” as a historical stage which precedes a fully developed capitalism; it ignores the ways in which capitalist accumulation continues in conjunction with coloniality in the form of ongoing Indigenous dispossession in the present—the murder and disappearance of women and two spirit people, incarceration, pipelines, extractive industries, the violation of treaty rights, denial of Indigenous land claims, territorial sovereignty and consent (60). The point is that

Indigenous self-recognition and resurgence does not end, they are processes of being and knowing that continually makes one Indigenous. For the Dene Nation, place-based cultural-recognition *is* what undergirds their critique of capitalist imperialism and is importantly understood as “struggles not only *for* land, but also deeply informed *by* what the land as a mode of reciprocal relationship (which is itself informed by place-based practices and associated form of knowledge) ought to teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and our surroundings in a respectful, non-dominating and nonexploitative way” (60). In other words, grounded normativity is both a practice of Indigenous world making, and a rejection of settler colonial conceptions of value imbricated with capitalism and logics of extraction and accumulation. The Aboriginally determined research-creation network, *Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace* explains the distinction in the following terms:

“Capitalist wisdom teaches that the value of a territory is a function of its resources. Wars have been fought over lands that yield gold, oil and other exploitable raw materials. Indigenous peoples have traditionally placed a different set of values on the land. Rather than seeing it as a vessel from which to extract and exhaust resources, Mother Earth is regarded as a site of exchange between Creator and individual, a support system to be held in trust for future generations.” (AbTeC, *Cyber PowWow04*)

In situating reciprocity as a method of Indigenous self-governance that cannot simply be absorbed into the frameworks of Euro-western philosophies of relation, Indigenous nationhood unsettles assumptions about sovereignty, territory, law and the subject. Reminding of the coloniality of rights and the settler state’s illegitimate claims to “grant” rights, Indigeneity also poses an important “problem for thought” (harking back to Chandler) underscoring the fractures and limits of the intersubjective basis of reciprocity, recognition, consent and the common in the Western philosophical tradition. Although not detailed in this document, Indigenous resistance <sup>57</sup> consistently figures in oblique

<sup>57</sup> See Idle No More, Unist’ot’en camp, Indigenous Women and Two Spirit led street patrol in Toronto’s Downtown East, Grassy Narrows mobilization against mercury poisoning, Gustafsen Lake, Elsipogtog blockade, Secwepemc Tiny House Warriors against TransMountain Pipeline, Aamjiwnaang Solidarity Against Chemical Valley.



arrangement to liberal relationality by asserting Indigenous relationality as a framework from which Indigenous life can flourish. As Audra Simpson suggests, there *is* an alternative to colonial recognition: It is refusal (11).

### **immanent revolt**

An oblique stance to relationality attempts to hold space for the radicality of what we might call immanent revolt—to be “foundationally in revolt against orthodoxy and the world” (Kolozova 24). Immanent revolt is a phrase I borrow from Katerina Kolozova indicating revolt determined by the concrete demands of a situation in the last instance of the real and not by ideology or philosophy’s imagination of what ought to be (21). It is practiced in moments of the outside and without, made in and of radical forms of being, self-determination, relation, sociality, exchange, creation—in blockades, protest camps, meals, mutual aid organizing, place-based care networks, and convergences. Immanent revolt is fugitive non-performance tied to material over-turnings and formations on the ground; guided by demands for the return of Indigenous land, the razing of colonial borders and liberation from carcerality, even though struggles can occur in contexts that involve a loss of homelands to which one can return. It consists of practices of intense dreaming in the concrete that change the parameters of the way “things” are thought—where “things” in thought involve the persons made into “objects”, the socialites cast as “uncivil” and the “commodities that speak” (Million 321; Moten, *In the Break* 9). Immanent revolt constitutes grounds of im/possible revolutions and un/thinkable sovereignties.

Because Kolozova’s revolt takes place *within* civil society: “immanent rebellion is static, both as ‘not moving’ and in the Athenian political concept of *stasis* that means a rebellion or civil war in the polis” (25), the outside and beneath of civil society are nowhere to be found and the revolt of “things” is nowhere to be recorded. So, we take our rebellion as defectors to the *without* of civil society, where immanent revolt is a necessary condition of being in the *non-*. The polis will indeed be suspended, but not by means of civil war. We follow the slave’s demand for the termination of carceral society as a non-eschatological practice in ending the World, where the Human’s self-concern with its own finality is

uninteresting and inapplicable to thought in the non-. It seems only tactical to take as a starting point for a generic philosophical insurrection the non-positional stance: to be “*in but not of civil society*”, *in but not of this World* (“Gramsci’s Black Marx” 191). In riotous dreaming, when the emancipatory status of existing categories can no longer be retained, might we attempt sovereignty in non-sovereign terms *without* the Euro-Western model of sovereign nation-states (Bonilla 202)? Might we invent relation in non-relational terms without standard relationality? Might we conspire in the criminal enactment of politics *without* the polis, where commodities in colloquium obstruct the logic of commensurability? In immanent revolt—horizon in the “real and sensuous”—might we make space for movement in the *without*, for worlds we may not, do not and cannot yet know? (Kolozova 21) As Taiaiake Alfred wrote “the challenge is to reframe revolt” (*Wasáse* 26).

*flash 10: yes*

*“Yes to life. Yes to love. Yes to generosity. But man is also a negation. No to man’s contempt. No to the indignity of man. To the exploitation of man. To the massacre of what is most human in man: freedom.”*

— Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

## incomputability

“Can one find what was not ever there — the missing head of a black queer or the identity of an unnamed trans woman whose body is never claimed? How do we measure the pain of burying generations of those we love or even those we never knew?”

—Eric Stanley, “Near Life, Queer Death: Overkill and Ontological Capture.”

“History pledges to be faithful to the limits of fact, evidence, and archive, even as those dead certainties are produced by terror.”

—Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts.”

“Look!”

—Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Where does the count begin? Theft recorded in the sediment at the bottom of the Atlantic. The poetics carried by the *without*; scattering, diasporic longings. Dreaming of the dead, counting on the presence of the missing. The making-belong of “things” to “person” proper that severs belonging. Inheritance, a time tethered to material life transformed by economies of mastery. Does the count inculcate a practice of possession? Without count, do we only have loss? Why does a count not count? How does one count when a count answers so devotedly to the logic of capture, so resolute in its power of dispossession? How do we count when *count* involves procedures which hold captive and annihilate, when it makes account to forget? What does it mean to be accounted for when count doesn’t distinguish between body and cargo, criminality or self-possession? When the count retrieves the world it has measured into being to discount the bond between slavery and “freedom”? When it erases because it is too beholden to distinction, too invested in scoring over and over the incisions which inscribe the “difference” that makes this account believable?

Count for Rancière always contains a miscount at its basis of description, a designation of “parts” within a community that is also constituted by the uncounted. Arithmetical (exchange) and geometric (ideal, common good) equality are established by count—the count of the police which makes equal and makes commensurate in non-account and missing counts (Disagreement 6). Counting cuts, *le partage* indicates division, setting a/part. The order of the police as determination of what is sensible, sayable, and knowable, counts to disappear. The count’s measure of equality thus contains an underlying inequality. Counting is a procedure of enclosing the dead, an occlusion by means of visible containment and detention in the cell, the hold, the reserve that incorporates by counting parts. What of the count composed not of no-count, but of the count of flesh as both fungible property and means of accumulation—as in the (mis)count of the enslaved? Or of the count that cannot even be “counted as those of no account” (38)? What does miscount record on body counts that do not count? What violence does the non-account of the count make permissible? What violence does the counted registration of no-thingness impart on the uncountable dead?

Count is measurement available to computability, a philosophical determinism that circles the World to let you square progression with the explanatory inevitability of calculation. Computation concerns information, persons and entities as they are thrown through capitalist and colonial translation into the grammar of the Human, coterminous with the grammar of the commodity form. Computability can perhaps be articulated as the exploitability of the body and its convertibility into “data” that can in turn, confirm the brutal calculus of the dominant genre of the Human. However, the point is not to frame computation as the meridian of contemporary colonial and anti-black violence, but to place computation accordingly so as to enlarge its inconsistencies, such that computation as an image may be torqued, offset and visualized in unjustified alignment or a non-standard view. Retaining the (im)possibility and the posture of the “non-” provided by Black studies, the undercurrent re/settling and unsettling the sedimented grounds deposited with each inflection of the Human, we turn to the incomputable as an unfinished meditation on ways of saying “no.”

The incomputable, according to Antonia Majaca and Luciana Parisi is integral to the operation of the algorithm itself. Incorporated into the logic of computation, it is an ungraspable factor irreducible to glitch or mistake. Always exceeding the initial input conditions of a procedure, incomputability describes the unpredictability and breach that is internal yet defined in radical externality to the algorithm. The incomputable in this elaboration attempts to dislodge algorithmic thought and digitality from their merely technical designation and pulls them into the terms of the flesh and the non-Human. The count, containing a violence attached to the categorical allotment of cargo, body, and flesh also carries liminality—the missed marks, the runaways, maroons, militants, resistance, refusal, and the thresholds irreducible to the in-between—that is, counting which exceeds the binary in its articulation of the contours between the one and the two. The count thus carries with it an exorbitance, that is always persistent in the failure of the count. Following Alexander Weheliye’s proposition, we re-member flesh as that which makes possible the racial capitalist and settler/plantation colonial worlding we seek to abolish. We amplify the flesh as excess, as that which exceeds the limit condition of this World that presses it against visions of Humanity (*Habeas Viscus* 44). So, we will move as though we could, in conspiratorial companionship with the flesh, with “what was never there”, performing instead dodgy calculations that sidestep the authority of precision and evidence that cannot, in any case, be accountable to the flesh. In this swindle, we make exuberant the destructive dreams of the flesh. What does it take to throw off a count? Or to obfuscate the count in fugitive miscount? In circumscribing algorithm, im/computability, and count with the carving of the flesh, what kind of calculus—what kind of decisionism may we trouble?

*flash 11: stats.*

*“Aboriginal women represent the fastest growing offender category under federal jurisdiction” (Office of the Correctional Investigator).*

*“...blacks are only 3.9 percent of Ontario’s population, but constituted 17.7 percent of admissions to Ontario’s correctional facilities in 2010–11” (Owusu-Bempah and Wortley 19).*

*“In 2017/2018, Aboriginal youth made up 43% of admissions to correctional services in the nine reporting jurisdictions, while representing about 8% of the Canadian youth population” (Statistics Canada).*

## **difference**

Underlying this project is a need for a practical and philosophical disruption of the cultures and logics of carcerality and more generally of incorporation and capture. In my iteration of a practice in seeking ways to move despite what seems to be a political and imaginative foreclosure, i want to take us to a critique of difference, and with that to a critique of the violence of philosophical decision and the ways in which abstraction maneuvers through decision and conversion to delimit the relations of equivalence and hierarchization that render possible the bind of identity and difference. To problematize difference, i solicit support from Laruelle and other affiliate interpretations of non-philosophy, without practicing non-philosophy per se. i am only putting its method in and out of context, so as to retrieve an image of the feelings, consequences and possibilities in the holding-in-proximity of Black studies, anti-colonial critique, digital thought and non-philosophical propositions. My goal is not to resolve the various terrains into one another, neither through distillation nor mixture, but simply to carry them in the same text in hopes of catching some reverberations, however difficult, however cursory, however contradictory. Taking a turn from the non-philosophical critique of difference, we may consider the implications of difference as it is given life and form under *late liberalism* and its appendages—state multiculturalism and the politics of inclusion/exclusion—in the material and social life (death) of settler colonial carceral society.

Laruelle’s position or “posture of thought” (in his vocabulary) establishes Difference or “the problem of passage from one contrary (to) the other” as the contemporary instantiation of the Greco-Occidental unconscious, the replication of the perennial philosophical question of “duality-as-unity” which has been pertinaciously placed at the centre of all (Euro-Western) philosophical thought (*Philosophies of Difference* 6). “Duality-as-unity” is a problem localized in the commensuration of difference—its maintenance, mediation, and resolution—conjugated differently in the formal methods of “unity-of-contraries” or

“scission-as-unity” (12). The moment of adjustment or compulsion to Unity out of which Difference is given force performs the problem of philosophical decision, a procedure productive of a circularity that makes philosophy seemingly sufficient to itself. He writes, “Difference becomes a concrete principle or philosophical decision when it frees itself from this double subjection and becomes Unity, capable at once of bringing to itself, in order to determine its syntax, its own “transcendental” experience of reality, and thus operating the genesis of empirical reality” (4). Difference in other words, is an ordinance with a world-making function, distinguishing thought-worlds into an evidential reality that can be verified, captured, measured and represented in confirmation of philosophy. Philosophy proper or what Laruelle would later call standard philosophy, functions through an originary cut which is elevated to a principle approximating the status of philosophical absolutes like essence and unity, in a thought-world which bestows upon itself the authority to make claims on the world vis-a-vis a transcendence of the very world it seeks to capture.

Given our concern with violence and more specifically the logics of capture related to contemporary algorithmic violations and historical techniques of debasement, we might say that Difference tethered to philosophical decision more broadly is not only the foundation of every philosophy in its “proper” sense (in the Greco-Occidental tradition), it also functions as the philosophical core of Euro-Western capitalist-coloniality and its attendant logics of racialized and gendered enslavement. In *Philosophies of Difference*, Laruelle puts forth a critique of Difference to formulate a non-philosophy, troubling the coherence of a particular brand of worlding which derives from differentiating mobilizations of Difference as principle—i.e. the movement of the cut, its claims to unity and resolution, dialectical incorporation or the displacement of the cut via assignments to alterity (6). All of the aforementioned movements of Difference would fail to sever the relationality that is the double bearing of the bind established by the cut, and as a consequence are unable to think the One. The relationality realized through the procedure of Difference and its economy of exchange is one grounded in reversibility between the One and the Other.

What non-philosophy postures towards is a praxis in determination according to the One, the Vision-in-One or the real in its last instance, which exist in radical externality to philosophical thought. Where standard philosophy reduces the One or the real (irreducible, inaccessible immanence) to a function of the task of the unity of contraries tethered in reverse to the two, non-philosophy aims to maintain the opacity of the One, through a unilateral mode of causality which remembers the severing and incorporation, the relational binding made in the industry of setting the one to the two that is at the core of Difference. The One is removed from its radicality as immanent to itself as it enters into equation with the two, along with the other numerations derived from that foundational relationship between one and two. This severing determines the condition of multiplicity made available through the rule of difference, that is a multiplicity characterized by aggregation and sequencing—an algorithmic multiplicity, in so far as we understand algorithm to be a set of operations which inputs ‘stuff’ for the purposes of solving a problem, an equation set in motion. As Laruelle writes “philosophy calculates and settles accounts, establishes distributions and draws up balance sheets, recognizes debts and assures its own benefits” (xvi).

One of the problems with Difference for Laruelle is the procedure of philosophical decision which accompanies it, the philosophical cut which divides and assembles a vision of the world it claims to possess and access as the real. The cut is the principle which makes philosophy or what we can contextualize as a colonial anti-Black worlding, “sufficient”—that is to say, adequate (according to philosophy proper)—to access, interpret and organize the material of the world and to speak for it as though it were the real itself. As a result, the real as such is removed from reality and the foundational inaccessibility of the real is mistaken by an assumption of supremacy over the real. It is displaced or more appropriately replaced by the conquest for the real, and as such always distanced from the immanent political possibility that may surface in a determination in the last instance according to the real. As Katerina Kolozova writes, “philosophy is constituted in a fashion perfectly analogous to the one which grounds capitalism—philosophy constitutes a reality in its own right and a reality that establishes an amphibology with the real (acts in its stead, posturing as ‘more real than the real’)” (*Towards 2*). Perhaps to put it in blunter terms, the problem



with philosophies of Difference—and i would add, mechanisms of repair and resolution tolerated by liberalism—is that the possibility of a way of living that is exterior to capitalism and coloniality-carcerality becomes foreclosed. The instrumentalization of Difference, if we stay attached to non-philosophy’s bearings, is the aporia which moves every binding of oppositions, each pairing, every attempt to resolve and totalize the image of the real. Difference in other words, depends upon not only the establishment of distinction between things, but additionally the hierarchicalization of the distinction, where some distinctions carry violences which become foundational, sedimented grounds of cruelty that are gratuitous and excessive, belonging to what Jared Sexton has theorized as the libidinal economy of anti-blackness (“Curtain of the Sky” 13). Difference, we might say, is an operation that is complicit in the overdetermination of dominant fictions, in positivist proclamations of knowledge over absolute reality, nourishing the fantasy of access and the knowability of the real. Invoking Laruelle again:

“...the aporetic power of Difference comes from what in it is ontico-ontological, of what in it is neither a transcendent difference between two beings, as between human being and God, nor purely intra-ontological difference, but what definitively enchains Being to beings, the ideal to the real. It ratifies an amphibology which it raises to the status of an a priori fact and then to that of the essence of metaphysics, as the most dignified and worthy of being questioned” (*Difference* 8).

Consequently, Difference finds itself involved in the scandal of the possessive, the positivistic realizations of evidence, as well as the nothingness against which presence is pronounced. Primarily, Difference is a relation; it is framework of relationality realized in the operation and artefact of the cut. If we provisionally allow a separation of the “domains” of world-making, we may say that socially, Difference appears in its equivalence to diversity, presenting unity as an aggregation of the multiple as we see with slogans the likes of “unity in diversity.” Politically, it instantiates its modality through the modulation of differentiating characteristics, deploying the doubled technique of inclusion/exclusion. An example may be the simultaneous and mutually constitutive institutionalization of state multiculturalism and xenophobic anti-immigration policies and cultural tunings. Difference is remade and reaffirmed aboard the ship *Zong*, on the sidewalk where Mike Brown’s memorial was destroyed, on the stage of the Minstrel show, in the breaking of the

sound barrier as the cut transferred from the hand, to the whip, to the flesh. Economically, difference produces commodities and justifies the laws of the market as the rational arena where differences as attributes and indicators of relative value are played out; it authorizes value in so far as it makes possible valuation and accumulation through an operation of distinction. Carrying overtones from Kolozova, we may say that Difference is a founding gesture of capitalism. Epistemologically, difference modulates positivism, empiricism, idealism. It finds “evidence” through absolute claims to externality. Its possessive principle captures the World as knowledge. In its function as classification, type, genomic-phenology, difference becomes a force of annihilation which lacerates in such a way as to render the pain of the cut illegible and discountable. Considering Difference in relation to the procedures of distinction which give order to the repetitious teleological vocation of becoming-Human or becoming-Other (which can never be fully realized), the transcendental epistemology of absolute (racial) purity and cosmopolitan free markets exercised in fragile accord with multicultural empires, we may find appropriate the announcement of the Fanonian refrain of being “overdetermined from without” (*Black Skin, White Masks* 95).

Yet, we might rehearse an accent on the revolt, refusal, resistance, a practiced cadence haunting every institutionalization, every performance of capture and domination. Examined in the context of settler colonialism and the conquest of the Americas, what we have called philosophy proper can be understood as the forces which operationalizes the cut, the thought-world of coloniality which deploys the “principle of sufficient philosophy” to claim authority over and access to “identity”, assumes ownership of stolen land, and takes as “observation” colonial and racial hierarchies as though they were natural and real. In other words, the cut orders coloniality/modernity, producing conceptual, social and physical in-divisions—that is, it claims wholeness in the divide and regurgitates its effects as phenomenological evidence. It is through cutting that Western philosophy grants itself authority over all other domains of knowledge and being.

Denise Ferreira da Silva, Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter have all argued in various ways for a framing of blackness as an object of knowledge in a shift away from the

sociological and anthropologic impulse which claims individual persons and communities attached to blackness in a white-determined world as objects to be studied. The implication of this is that blackness, desedimented from racial identity and racial difference is not only relevant, but crucial to philosophy, theory and the political in general. In this disavowal of difference, we refuse the containment of blackness as a category of Difference. For both Wynter and Spillers, distinction secures the relegation of matters of race and gender—matters that are ontological and political—to merely particular “readings” and “subtexts”, when the problematics of racialization and gendered difference hold together every formation of Universality.

Holding ontogeny in relation to racial distinction, Sylvia Wynter provides another critique of Difference. Borrowing Fanon’s substitution of “phylogenetic theory” with “ontogenetic theory” and locating the roots of both in the procedures of sociogeny, Wynter clarifies the ways in which ideologies, truths and conditions produced through social relations are made to seem ontological (“Towards” 35). For Wynter, the mobilization of ontology to justify not only acts of violence but systems of violence, is a problem of and for the flesh and for epistemology. Wynter modulates Fanon’s sociogeny as “the sociogenetic principle” as to set it in adjacency to the genomic principle, which scientism instrumentalizes to organize and sort “matter” in the world as species-identity (46). The biological determination of race transfers ontogenic invention onto the skin and the mark of difference into physiological attributes. Race as a practice of distinction or decisionism both fortifies and is reproduced through relations of belonging, the articulation of sameness and the managerial amplification, incorporation or reduction of difference. Difference, a sociogenic cum ontogenic and phylogenetic way of holding everything, renders itself universalizing and all encompassing. Expanding on Franz Fanon’s critique of “fact” in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Wynter tells us that the structures and performances of domination and subjugation are located in the narrativization of difference (racial, cultural, gender and sexual) posited as natural distinctions verifiable in the empirical world. Nature in modernity, no longer exists as a static field upon which knowledge of the world is captured, but a changing, evolving condition of reality governed by efficient causality. Denise Ferreira da Silva makes use of

the following quotation from Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* to demonstrate this causal formation of nature:

“Negroes are enslaved by Europeans and sold to America. Bad as this may be, their lot in their own lands is even worse, since there a slavery quite as absolute exists; for it is the essential principle of slavery, that man has not yet attained a consciousness of his freedom, and consequently sinks down to a mere Thing—an object of no value.”  
(Hegel 113, qtd. in Ferreira da Silva, “1 (life)”)

With Hegel, the cut of difference is established in history. In this move, the subjugation of Black persons of African descent in the brutality of the political economy of racial slavery and coloniality/modernity is rationalized along developmentalist terms, locating “qualitative” difference in the conflation of the work of historical domination with attributes resulting from physiological, biological, cultural “causes” of an everchanging “natural” world. By this logic, difference is merely an effect of change in modernity, and acquires an ontological capital that facilitates its emergence as a given. For Ferreira da Silva, that measure and calculation, the gathering of “evidence” which underwrites what we are referring to here as computation is configured in accordance to social and material inventions reinvented as causes and effects. Difference secures itself as fact via the transcendental intervention of self-actualizing universal reason which sets Europe/Whiteness exclusively as universal measure (“1 (life)”).

We can find these conceptual, economic and political-aesthetic commitments re-instituted in contemporary calls to measure DNA in the search for what is real in one's racial belonging or in biocentric explanations of gender that perhaps inadvertently support forms of new naturalism that reproduce existing distinctions. This deferral to the biological, to first explain then justify the realness of race, functions not only as positivism, but also operates in parallel with the Greco-Occidental “philosophizing forgetting of philosophical decision” implemented in the capture of the real (Laruelle, *Difference* 8). Forgetting to forget the act of forgetting itself. It is a forgetting which reduces the historical and ongoing violence of colonial decision which makes possible the political, technical, and onto-epistemic means of empire and conquest, race and gendered and sexual subjugation articulated over and over vis-à-vis the cut, to natural reality and recorded event.

In the negligent fantasy of the fading incision, Difference hurts. Such biocentric investments, to invoke Wynter, are reorganized—politicized—to reinforce the phylogenetic imaginaries that police the limit conditions of the Human. Its functional prowess as a mechanism of containment supplementing the managerial capacity of late capitalist settler colonial worlding, continues to be felt in the definition of politics in the contemporary. Difference made ontological is then transposed to the register of the individual where the violence experienced and inflicted becomes confused with personal history, relationally bound to notions of the deserving and undeserving, the innocent and the criminal, the citizen and the fugitive, the immigrant, the minority, the refugee and so on. Difference in this way finds itself at the foundation of affirmative politics oriented around fixed identities. In Difference, which is another way to say the count, even the negative must become positive. As such, “progressive” politics is set against the limitations of furthering individual rights and freedoms within the context of the settler colonial state and white civil society, where the terms of admission are bound to analogy—distinction and equivalency.

How might we read an equation, a technique indicating an equality between two expressions or pointing to a difference that has yet to be solved? How does the equation work to uphold the liberal democratic fantasies of equality and freedom in unity and difference? A solution to an equation typically involves rendering equal two expressions, to evaluate terms to one another such that we are left with nothing and everything at once. Equation, I would suggest, is also an operation of difference, and as such permeated with the material, physical and sensuous parameters of the worlding discussed thus far. In the making “equal” of two (or more) terms, the asymmetry which joins the terms in the first place is often left unconsidered. The power of decision thus moves vertically, entrenching the product of domination in the articulation of every difference, while making each difference equal to another as difference—nothing more, nothing less. What is established in the appearance of a dualism or even a binarism is, rather, the articulation of a hierarchical relationality—here previously described as an obligatory, subsumptive relationality of domination. And so, what we get is the simplification which seeks to resolve contradiction

or at least suspend it through sayings like “everyone is different” or “diversity is strength” without troubling the terms of differentiation and how differentiation itself has been instrumental in reproducing the forms of relationality which govern the contemporary moment. Equation is a rigged mechanism of equivalence that solidifies what is tethered in difference, valorizing every affirmation, reinstating each negation as confirmation of a real condition that can be proven in the world. Although equation functions through abstraction, it also generates realities that rely on the subjugation of bodies and flesh. With equation, every pain is made comparable, every hour of labour time exchangeable, every identity replaceable, while every cut is disappeared. Yet, in equation distinction ensures that some cuts are still “worth” more than others. It is this work of equivalency pertinent to (neo)liberal political-economy, which Marx had also problematized in the commodity form, where Blackness is inscribed as symbolically interchangeable with object.<sup>58</sup> Objecthood is announced through equivalency as mechanism, rather than through objectification as a form of inclusion. It is this interchangeability which names the absolute abjection assigned to the non-Human. In other words, the structural logic of equivalency as it exists in the present liberal framework is punctured by hierarchy and differentiation, where paradoxically “equality” rests upon an absolute debasement, the maintenance of a radical exteriority that is concealed by the subordination of the one to another. In the comparative mode which relies on the calculability of equivalency, the only option remaining which permits resistance is alterity. Alterity, however, is a risky position, too close to ontologization; too close to the proclamation of difference as marginality. Alterity too, relies on the disappearance of the cut.

We are still left, here, with the problem of commensurability and computability. Again, what we have as remainder is the possibility of non-exchange, of non-circulation that is not anti-exchange, but misses it and activates something else in the off-tempo. The supposed interchangeability of suffering valorized in the imaginary of liberalism renders illegible the cuts which write specific grammars of suffering into reality. Identity is contained to a unit

<sup>58</sup> With Black feminist theorists and other thinkers of abjection, i want to maintain as priority that despite the extreme and axiomatic character of such a violent equation, the procedure is never complete nor wholly incorporated.

of measure that may be simply swapped out by another and re-entered into the equation. In this framework, political struggle is bound by the value of the calculus, the one for one or one for two, that is really a matrix of consolidation. As noted previously, a paradigmatic anti-blackness axiomatic to the structuring of this World carries an incommensurability which follows the relationship between Blackness' grammar of suffering and the grammar of suffering attributed to oppressed subjects in general. Likewise, albeit non-identically, the grammar of suffering for the colonized Indigenous peoples of this land is structurally incommensurable with the grammar of suffering of exploited migrant workers, those without shelter, queer and trans settlers, or descendants of the enslaved, even despite the overlapping entanglements and amplifications in characteristics of the cut which render suffering a modulated yet common condition in late liberal capitalist colonial patriarchy. This non-exchange of suffering is the register of incomputability—the irresolvable, unpredictable, inaccessible “real” (if we will permit it, however reservedly)—where the substitution of one for another, one for the two remains incomplete and does not guarantee the anticipated result. What happens to the equation when we consider afro-pessimist/optimist accounts of the non-analogy of Blackness? What trouble comes of that intolerable gap widened in the analogizing pull as the “differend” is dragged by the terms of White civil society into diversity? For Hortense Spillers, there is a cost. “The cost of Americanization, of equality, is to forget” (Spillers et al. 306). What cost is amounted in the cut of difference? What is the cost of equivalence? What is its damage?

### **colonial digitality**

*flash 12: compute*

*'compute', from computare; arithmetic,  
accounting, reckoning, to settle, to clear up<sup>59</sup>;*

*'com' : with, together*

*'putare': to reckon, to prune, to cut, strike,  
stamp<sup>60</sup>*

<sup>59</sup> See [www.cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/584/computetymology.html](http://www.cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/584/computetymology.html).

<sup>60</sup> See [www.etymonline.com/word/compute](http://www.etymonline.com/word/compute).

... *i clean*

The presumption of access and expertise—philosophy proper’s self-authorized right of seizure of all of the world under its domain—is this not the logic of conquest and colonial thought? Let’s settle an account by way of undercutting “account”. To do so, we turn to digitality where difference also makes its decisive incisions before returning to computability and incomputability and the tension holding together calculation and the incomputable. This shift to digitality is simultaneously a shift to an account of settler colonialism, a shift to place in adjacency the relationship between digitality and the project of Humanism as we meditate on count, capture, theft and the logics of calculation and recognition which comprise the syntactical thought-world of coloniality/modernity. The image i am trying to provide attempts to locate coloniality as a paradigm next to and overlapping the paradigm of anti-blackness, with reverberations that should be considered crucial for philosophy and digital thought.

Without undermining the actuality of exploitation and conquest that saturate the processes of digital technological production or the imperial span of such technologies via militarized infrastructure, resource extraction and developmental projects, i hope to elongate the scope of what connects digitality and coloniality in apposition. Rather than fixing colonialism as a record of a historical event or reducing a critique of coloniality and digitality to the neocolonial industrial practices of digital economies and data oriented exchange, i want to consider the logic, material and conceptual forms of digitality, beginning with the performance of the binary (another way to say distinction or difference) as a constitutive feature of coloniality. If we follow Alexander Galloway’s reading of Laruelle, digitality is a procedure extending from the philosophical cut which performs the basic distinction that makes possible all distinctions. Digital techniques may be conceptualized as the systems, methods and operations which administer the cut, the procedures which define the 0 and 1, and the sets of binarisms that mark and delimit the contours of lived life, including what is defined as its outside. Galloway describes the digital in the following way, “the making-discrete of the hitherto fluid, the hitherto whole, the hitherto integral. Such making-discrete can be affected via separation, individuation, exteriorization, extension, or alienation. Any process that produces or maintains identity differences between two or more elements ...”



(*Digital* 52). In short, the digital is the dividing action which slices and manages the borders of distinction. It is the function which produces and manages “input”, the activation of the process which formats flesh, bodies, desires, politics, land and relations into a computable compression. Thinking of the “oceanic” suspension of the middle passage, where captive persons were forcibly rendered “nowhere at all”, Hortense Spillers notes the absolute removal in the following terms: “under these conditions, one is neither female, nor male, as both subjects are taken into ‘account’ as quantities” (72).

Digitality, as an instrument of capture and world making is thus immediate to the racializing, un/gendering (acknowledging Spiller’s insight) and colonizing work of Difference. Its cuts are in flesh, matter, and earth; of sociality, kinship, and ways of being, belonging, knowing, touching and imagining. The reciprocity between coloniality and digitality—specifically this form of digitality that we are calling colonial digitality—is set in the span and breach of pipelines extending underground, the oil spills and poisoned water; the fiberoptic infrastructure laid across the bottom of the Atlantic beside the remains of those who did not make the oceanic crossing and those who chose against the passage; the wires reaching above our heads transmitting currents, signals and messages which decode the market prices of the coltan, gold, copper, nickel and silver torn out of the earth. They are related through blood, alienation and labour time of workers waged and unwaged across continents and metropolises lifted up from violent dispossession and displacement. The city, the site of contemporary digital industries, abstracted from the material and historical conditions which enable the very experience of the digital, is built upon the repeated carving of old colonial roads appropriated from Indigenous trade routes on Indigenous lands. If the digital cut is the function which enables the cruel calculations and crude rationalizations which permit and indeed rely upon violation and violence, the digital as the format of computability is an exercise in domination. Computation (given its linguistic weight) connotes a world making capacity, structurally bound to the “imperialism and ongoing (settler) colonialisms [that] have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence” (Yusoff 12). Built off stolen knowledges, stolen bodies and stolen relations, those routes are also where telegraph and telephone wires were laid, where colonial requisites of communication, transparency and access displace Indigenous systems of

being together in the act of severing from land and kin (L'Hirondelle 153). Its formal presence, its infrastructural articulations, architectural postures, its proprietary markers, everywhere are the products of extraction and accumulation. Everywhere are the sediments of colonial digitality. Everywhere are traces of the cut.

Thinking of the cut, i am weary of the retelling of particular kinds of pain belonging to bodies, individuals and communities marked by specific wounds of distinction. i am concerned with the seemingly unavoidable display of injury performed in the effort to provide yet another case for abolitionist imaginings and dreams of the end of this World. How do we reckon with historical and material events of violence without letting the pain of the incision be disappeared by the report of another number? How do we keep structural violence of count from rendering another life uncountable and unaccounted for? i think of Aunt Hester and Frederick Douglas' account of her abuse during which the damage inflicted on her body was made public spectacle. i think of the undependability of witness and the slippery link between witness and abuser. i think of Fred Moten's strategic shifting of register, and his search for attunement to the sonic articulations of her suffering—her scream, and what implications that may hold for us in our attempts to capture an image of originary subjection, and for a civil society which gains its coherence from the simultaneous representation and covering over of unspeakable violence (*In the Break* 1). i think of Saidiya Hartman's refusal to detail Aunt Hester's torture and her careful non-account of the murder of the young woman whose name no longer remains, who we can only know as Venus, a second Venus. Her refusal to re-enact the scene of subjection is a refusal of the bind which demands the equation of black personhood to gratuitous suffering (Hartman, *Scenes* 3). i am weary of the count. i am weary of the count's effect of capture and non-consensual burial, the disappearance of the cut when wounds are still being inflicted. There is no accounting, reckoning, repair(reparation) that can adequately recuperate the problem of measure, and no recording that can "make right" in capturing "the position of the unthought"—to "fill in the void" (Hartman and Wilderson 185). It is strictly a syntactical im/possibility.

In this re-etching of a line between past acts of violence and present conditions of theft and carcerality, we cross over the marks of measure and calculation, the standards of Universal reason and procedures of computability. With every articulation of count, we are followed by incomputability—the incompleteness of the count and that which exceeds the count, those who count cannot account for, and those whose status is always already haunted by the count. What foreclosures and what enclosures are introduced in the naming of a number? How much persuasive force can a count carry when the syntax of count itself serves as a force of elision? As Hartman cautions, there is a violence of the number. With the violence of the number, there is also the violence of numeration, “the violence that produced numbers, ciphers, and fragments of discourse, which is as close as we can come to a biography of the captive and the enslaved” (“Venus” 3). The numbered accounts persist as empirical techniques that are in this Worlding always already set in decisionism, assigned to the instrumental effecting of “various kinds of human and non-human data collection, and matters of fact” which work to secure the “commodification and dispossession through accounting and making black fact” (Weheliye and McKittrick 32). Fact shares the same root as factory, deriving from the Latin “factum”, meaning something made, something fashioned, something done.<sup>61</sup> The compression of fact that equates it to a basic, indisputable “Truth” disguises its invention and genesis, its always already tethering to some condition of worlding. In this manner, data gains an equivalent currency to “fact”; data as such enters conversion into “property”. The ‘fact’ of the matter is that facticity has a particular designation in the destruction of mattering, where bodies in aggregation don’t seem to add up to a count that can be reckoned, no matter the exactitude of the recording. To account for the material life of data, we must situate colonial digitality as that which lacerates the blood and flesh of the “unthought”.

To compute is to reckon with-, to trim something into being, to count, and account, to settle and clear up. “Compute” establishes ways of collection and acquisition through decision. This same word for reckoning, for settling an account is a conjugation of “cleansing”—“putare”, the first person singular of cleaning—which asserts the subjectivizing ‘I’ in

<sup>61</sup> See <https://www.etymonline.com/word/fact>.

conjunction with ‘clean’ in the invocation of the pure, coherent, transcendental subject of modernity. To reckon and clean, to reckon through cleansing—what kind of world is achieved in this reckoning? What is being recognized if not the difference that re-establishes itself in self-discovery and confirmation, in the affirmation of the racialized product of computation? Computation as the performance of calculation has never been in isolation from bodies and flesh and their proximity to the idea of the Human. Think of the feminized and subjugated bodies, the women called computers, who composed the invisibilized and racially segregated labour force that executed algorithmic commands in the early and mid 20th century; how those embodied computers, who themselves were always marginal to the “genre of Man” were employed in service of the defence of the Human across borders and geographies. We can note the computational as the performative standard of intelligence collection and its teleological role in the practices of policing, militarism, conquest and expansion.

What we have is the technical production and reproduction of the subject of Universal reason, the Human of modernity authorizing how “Truth” is measured and cut. In computation, there is always a calculus, a mandate to determine the computability of something. The calculus is a technique of ordering, a rationalization. Calculation is apparent when the biocentric turns biometric, disclosing biometric figuration as biopolitics. Biopolitics then may be seen as the calculation which exploits the function of distinction, where the governance of life is first and foremost elaborated in the police work overseeing the border between life and death. Calculation is also the procedure of value determination, a technique belonging to capitalism and the Subject of modernity. Sidestepping from the authority of evidence and the requirement to prove violation vis-a-vis numeration and calculation, we muddy the transparency of count to account for that which had to be missing in the count. In the context of White civil society (which persists under the banner of state multiculturalism) the count has little correspondence with the violence inflicted. How many times do we need to say queer, trans people are being killed, that Indigenous women and two-spirited people are being killed, that black men, women and children are being executed by the state? The count of the violation of the non-human and not-quite-human cannot matter so long as the syntax remains intact, so long as the axiomatic cut of

the Human remains in place. Put differently, an increase in the measure of violence, a rising death count has never persuaded the colonizer or the abuser to cease his abuse. When has violence stopped because sound evidence was presented to the abuser or because the oppressed has asked for it to be stopped?

There is no amount of evidence that can be made commensurate with harm. And no proof that can sufficiently give representation to violation, no less when the representation of abjection itself is turned to justify a “Truth” to the rationale of violation. Evidence thus becomes a function of circular re-presentation, assembling a biometric calculus which quantifies and extracts dimensions, movements, locations, as information from the body as the techniques of categorization and taxonomic arrangement write an order of the world into being. Biometrics applied vis-à-vis the asymmetrical ordering of distinction is a technique which demands total access. As a reiteration of the presumption of access and possession, particularly of the body that is assigned as exterior to the metrics of the subjective self, biometric reason is also an instance of digitality. Biometrics, as such also ought to be contextualized in relation with the logic of capture practiced in the time leading to, during and after racial enslavement and the mechanisms of measure that make it possible to reckon into obscurity the large scale theft which continues to supplement the imperial project of the Human. Biometrics then assumes that an excavation of the body would reveal a “Truth” about the subject or the object. As Simone Browne has meticulously demonstrated, the extractive principle of biometrics carries the afterlife of a relation structured around property—subjective self-possession and its dispossessed contradiction—which has become ever more expansive in the conditions of a late liberalism defined by the techniques and knowledge systems of racial capitalism and (settler) coloniality (11). Surveillance understood as a technique of the onto-epistemic order produced and heightened with racial slavery grounds the metrics of calculation and computation (cutting and reckoning) in the political economy of the plantation. In the settler colonial context, surveillance has historically played a foundational role in the displacement and policing of movement of colonized peoples. In the cut that produced what settler society calls “Canada”, surveillance techniques were practiced in the maintenance of the pass system, reservations, residential schools, which enabled the expropriation of resources from

Indigenous lands and the cultural and physical extermination of persons to whom the land belongs. The Canadian state continues to exercise extreme surveillance measures to target Indigenous dissent<sup>62</sup> to ongoing violations of treaty rights, the criminalization of Indigenous presence in White spaces and other forms of quotidian debasement. The reach of measure is thus totalizing and fixed to an economics anchored in the exchange of living bodies reduced to quantities of flesh.

### **vision**

*flash 13: threshold*

*“how one trespass could make all others suddenly visible.”*

—Hafizah Geter, *The Break-In*

*flash 14: retina*

*“The door is not on this map. The door is on my retina”*

—Dione Brand, *Map to the Door of No Return*

Being seen, being recognized in relation, and the imperatives of asymmetrical exchange rely on vision as an apparatus and property of the Human. What does it mean to look? What is implicated in being looked at, to be looked upon in violation in the absence of consent, in realization of the consolidating function of equation and the fiction of reciprocal exchange? Might we contest visibility, given that sight carries tones of both oversight and overseer, or that seeing as a function of Being is predicated upon a baseline of access as knowability? Exposure connotes multiple things. It may refer to the state of being exposed to something (harmful, environmental, unexpected) that is likely to have consequential impacts; a vulnerability in being without protection. Exposure intimates openness, access, and communication that correspond in reflection of the extractive and invasive logic of capitalism and the associate relations of exchangeability that coercively demand the transformative violence of commodification. Additionally, exposure having to do with

<sup>62</sup> See <https://aptnnews.ca/2020/02/26/opp-gave-intelligence-identities-of-tyendinaga-mohawks-to-cn-rail-without-legal-challenge/>

measure refers to the revelation of underlying ‘Truth’, the exposure of otherwise hidden facts, the discovery of the real, of which biometrics is but one technique. Exposure assumes the attainability of acquisition which reinforces the positivist confidence that knowledge may be procured from any medium so long as the subject or sovereign mines for it. It can also express the condition of being made available to a gaze circumscribed by a presumed “culture” of openness that relegates permission to a slight concern. Exposure describes the condition of falling under the scope of visibility. In the entanglement of the technological and onto-epistemic, that is the social-cultural claims to truth and being, exposure proceeds as a photographic process and filmic technique, an operation belonging to a discipline always already locked in contentious relation to the capture of the real.

Deployed as a colonial technology, the photograph has historically been significant in the development of racializing science. The photographic image constituted by the moment of exposure, functioned as a tool of measure and quantification, cutting particular moments in time and place to certify the cut of the marked body. Photographs of non-white colonized peoples composed a body of evidence which legitimated racial, that is to say, racist modes of knowing, which then justified the immense violence of colonial capitalist worlding. The categorical mode already established and practiced through various technologies of recording and measure were intensified by the photograph, performing what Zakiyyah Iman Jackson has called the “violence of prevailing notions of the indexical image” (629). Photographic exposure enabled the visual and material sequencing of subjective perception as objective evidence of scientific knowledge. The visual representation of racial distinction in the 18th and 19th centuries in the image form served as the technical production of the biocentric imaginary. Vision and the techniques of the eye saw the world into being, in a method comparable, if not one in constitutive relation to the cut of difference. Exposure is the procedure of the visual cut. Emulsion technology prior to the spread of digital photography for instance notably carried the visual-racial distinctions in their application and function. As Sarah Lewis explained “photography is not just a system of calibrating light, but a technology of subjective decisions. Light skin became the chemical baseline for film technology, fulfilling the needs of its target dominant market”. With colour photography, the Shirley Card, an image featuring a light skin white woman

named ‘Shirley’ became the standard for calibrating colour exposure. The film developed by Kodak was technically unable to capture the colours in the spectrum ‘outside’ of ‘white’. Shades of brown disappeared under a generic notion of an over-exposed ‘Brown’, meaning a compressed range of what would be visible to the photographic eye. This invisibility of dark(ened) bodies intrinsic to photographic technology continues to inform the colour-balancing technologies of digital photography. The invisibility of the brown colours and of racial ‘blackness’ operates in conjunction with the simultaneous hyper-visibility of distinction. Blackness in the racial imaginary acts as a signifier of an absolute outside, which in visual culture following a western philosophical-aesthetic tradition registers in contrast to White. The failed calibration of black to white confers an illegibility, a technical incomputability of the technologies of visibility. While it is relevant to consider exposure as an indicator of the scope of surveillance culture and digital technologies of total capture, exposure functions in a differentiated manner set in differential relationship to the standard of calibration, providing the visual reproduction of what Weheliye has theorized as “racializing assemblages” (*Habeas Viscus* 50).

In *The Right to Look*, Nicholas Mirzoeff exposes visibility as a colonial technique and discusses the ways in which vision is tied to power and the sovereign subject. Vision has historically been regarded as a definitive feature of Human sense perception, with the capacity to see and to be seen figuring as the foundation of the form of relationality that underwrites the work of recognition and intelligibility. The paradigm of the visual is as such a property of the subject, a qualifying attribute of the Human determined by the hierarchical distinction of ability, sensibility, and capacity—that is to say, reason. Visibility can thus be seen as the entanglement of the perceptual and the conceptual, a medium in which the boundary between what is imagined and what is sensed is blurred. This command of the visual—the authority obtained in and through the look—extends its control over not only identity, ontological claims and the rights which accompany sovereignty, but also the movement of the body through space. In delineating the visual field through “evidence” supplementing categorization and quantification, a colonality of vision performs a decisionism which unilaterally declares that particular lands and bodies are knowable, discoverable, searchable and available. In this context, visualization features as a method



of capture and of making things available which begins as a demand for access. Mapping visuality through what he identifies as visuality in the plantation, imperialist and military industrial complex, Mirzoeff traces the instrumental role of ways of seeing for not only dominant modes of power, but also for what he calls “counter-visuality” (5). Such formations of visuality continue to structure the performative and perspectival basis of digital capture in the contemporary where the command of visuality persists in the ratification of the sovereign through legal, technological, social and onto-epistemic means.

As a consequence, visuality and digitality have emerged as an important terrain in the contemporary struggle for civil rights against the computational and visual “biases” that Joy Buolamwini has discussed as the “coded gaze.” The coded gaze describes the ways through which “the priorities and prejudices—conscious and unconscious—of the people who design them” shape the development and performance of A.I. systems (Buolamwini, “When the Robot”). The Algorithmic Justice League founded by Buolamwini has documented a number of ramifications deriving from the prevalent application of the coded gaze. As suggested already, the coded gaze does not mark a departure from the disciplinary techniques practiced in a periodized modernity/coloniality, but an amplification and refinement of the mechanisms which exercise control over the movement and social life of racialized, colonized and gendered persons in an ongoing condition of domination. Facial recognition software for example, have been shown to be unable to detect people with darker skin; they are more likely to be misgendered and misidentified, i.e. falsely matched as somebody who they are not. In the context of over-policing of black and brown persons in Canada, the United States and localities where anti-blackness expands, the increased utilization of such technologies for policing, this misidentification or inability to distinguish between individual persons coded as black or native or alien reproduces the disappearance and compression that is set in the logic of distinction. From being unseen by self-driving cars, to being unregistered by the camera, to being misgendered (ungendered), to the equivalency which matches a dark skinned face with criminality (and thus deserving of state/vigilante abuse), the mundane terror of not only unrecognizability, but misrecognition contributes to an intensified exposure to quotidian violence that has become quite literally calibrated to shade, in spite of the fact that race as an invention persists as

relational hierarchies rather than an epidermal property of difference. At the same time, the overwhelming tendency for data sets used to derive biometric technologies (whether it be for biomedical, border control, environmental policies etc.), reflect the visioning parameters of dominant onto-epistemologies and political-aesthetic commitments that unsurprisingly reproduce the codes of universality modulated by a fundamental exclusion and incorporation, or disappearance and over-exposure. Contemporary digital technologies, in so far as they continue to be produced and deployed by and for a system predicated on violence and violation would assist in the maintenance of already established ways of seeing and knowing—both analog and digital (discretization)—that are foundational to this worlding and genre of the Human. Visuality, as a “somatechnics of perception” thus repeatedly performs an over-exposure, an “over-kill” descriptive of the impulse towards visualization surrounding exposure (Sullivan 302; Warren 402).

To widen the focus on Human visioning, we can turn to Enlightenment aesthetics and its casting of the incomprehensible in the discretizing, or digitizing allocation of subject and object, rational and irrational, human and non-human, the beautiful and its other. In the Kantian framework, aesthetic judgement is a necessarily subjective, disinterested and universal experience which qualifies Man as the unique proprietor of reason. In aligning the perception of formal purposiveness (attributed to the beautiful), that is a “purposiveness without purpose” with nature and by extension the capacity to make sense of the beautiful with moral law and the capacity for critical judgement, Kant places aesthetics—sense—at the center of the intersubjective validation of communicability, a sensing in common which establishes Universal reason. Feeling, the subjective experience of the beautiful and sublime that is then pulled into articulation by reason is raised to the domain of the transcendental, by-passing the troubling incoherence which comes along with the resolve to maintain difference in objective fact. In Fred Moten's account, blackness figures in Kant's aesthetic theory as the referent for racial difference, “a physicality that is indexed to something that is more than merely physical,” a transcendental antipode in hostility to sense—irrational and unintelligible, a non-sense in absolute exteriority and incomprehensibility to reason (“Black Kant” 15:58). The notion of darkness and more specifically racial blackness as expressed through the colonial reading of Africa and

persons racialized as black would be mapped to opacity. The visual registry of blackness moralized and aestheticized reinforced marking of the black body in terms of lack.<sup>63</sup> The Black subject in this context is a necessary impossibility. For Ronald Judy, Kant's "Negro" is an object of transcendental logic, an inferential concept produced by relating concepts with other concepts. While the "Negro" represented an aesthetic lack, the category functioned as a paralogue, a purely formal empty category (133). Blackness has also been associated with the formlessness of the sublime, as an unintelligibility that never gets resolved in the faculties of aesthetic judgement or reason, where transcendental human freedom is attained. Judy explains that Kant's "the Negro, on the other hand, being so much of nature, cannot attain this consciousness, and so remains bound, as it were" (109). The formlessness made equivalent to blackness, not only renders people racialized as black to be disqualified from Human *sensus communis*, but for the (dis)figuration of blackness to anaesthetic.

As Denis Ferreira da Silva writes, "in the modern Western imagination, blackness has no value; it is nothing. As such, it marks an opposition that signals a negation, which does not refer to contradiction. For blackness refers to matter—as The Thing; it refers to that without form—it functions as a nullification of the whole signifying order that sustains value in both its economic and ethical scenes" ("1 (life)"). Simon Gikandi's reading of Kant places aesthetics in relation to political economy and ideology to reveal the "objective" distinctions elaborated upon in Kant's anthropological work, which in tandem put forth a rigorous concept of race that is both aestheticized and "evidenced" in physiological terms. In other words, aesthetics propelled through teleological trajectory granted philosophical legitimacy to the equation of black bodies to labouring property, circularly confirming the mark of distinction in the entanglement of the perceptual and conceptual. Judy describes this procedure expressed in *The Critique of Judgement* as "a correlation between the physical and metaphysical" (110).

63 While Kant imagined the "black female body" in terms of "hyper-feminized inert objecthood", Burke assigns the "black female body" to the sublime, "as an emblem of a pathological and indefinitely gendered hyperactivity, or more specifically, as an innately aggressive, terror-inducing threat to the physiological inner workings of the eye and visions of totality more generally" (Jackson 625).

The allure of the transcendental and subjective orientation of Kant's aesthetics and its promise of Human freedom might lead one to query "a critique of biometric reason", but as underscored by Jackson's study of the biocentric and physiological parameters to Kant's racial theory, Human freedom is a relational implement of difference and synthesis that has to have an underside. Kant's attempt to classify and catalog aesthetic feelings by difference (sexual, national, racial) in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* can be seen as an attempt to provide a grounding for an aesthetic vision, an aesthetic totality always already locked into a transcendental universality of Man. Is it possible that the aesthetic command implemented via unmitigated exposure, immeasurable injury be countered in the aesthetic moves to make visualization uneasy? Uneasy in divergence from access, uneasy as in compromised transparency, uneasy as in remaining and becoming troublesome to the apparatus of vision and techniques of visioning: is there an aesthetic reduction that is not minimalist, but conspiratorial, in the generic notion of non-representation? Recognizing the pain which comes with being unseen, the exasperation of being restlessly undone, what would it take to make a practice of illegible aesthetics?

*flash 15: lacuna*

*; pool, lake*

*; oceanic imaginaries*

*; planning without a plan.*

*flash 16 : flesh*

*"... before the 'body' there is 'flesh', that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse or the reflexes of iconography ... we regard this human and social irreparability as high crimes against the flesh, as the person of African females and males registered the wounding."*

*—Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book."*

### **exorbitant flesh**

Flesh is the temporal and conceptual antecedent to the body. It is also its counterpoint, an aftermath carved out in the injurious production of the body where the body is resigned

into form, inflected with signifiers of biological and social registers. The body is what is found after someone dies. The body beginning and ending with legal personhood is given form in measurement. The body is possessed, brought into intersubjective belonging by self-possession and the attachment of the pronoun “I”. Communication predicated on exchange is the relational determinant of the subject which establishes community over top of the flesh. Flesh on the contrary is not biological, nor juridical. A person cannot be the flesh but can be made akin to it. Flesh is a figure of the undead and incomputable, both overloaded and without referent. It is also what Marx might have described as “physical and sensuous”. Yet as Spillers would tell us, it is an inheritance (no less “physical and sensuous”) fleshed into (non)-being by the “calculated works of iron, whips, chains, knives, the canine patrol, the bullet” (67). What the flesh therefore connotes is enfleshment—a procedure whereby something is fleshed, where a condition of possibility carried by the flesh circulates in non-indexicality to the subjective, affiliating the para-subjective in a theoretical fiction resonant with Nahum Chandler’s desedimentary *para*-ontological line of thought (19). As such, the flesh carries the significance of the captive body, transformed into “being for the captor” (Spillers 67). Not the property of any single body, the flesh instead signifies a proprietary relation synchronous with the disavowal of consent, where flesh is forced into equivalency with property, and Blackness as a conceptual paradigm and object of study is put into equation with the racialization of physical attributes attached to persons.

There is always a calculation involved in the ma(r)king of the flesh, a computational equation which leaves a recording that can only be read in and as “hieroglyphics of the flesh” (67). The “undecipherable markings on the captive body” is a ma(r)king which does not fade even with the granting of “personhood” by those who claim to command sovereignty (67). Even in the work of inclusion, the invitation into civil society arrives with the caveat of regulatory measures that would leave incorporation incomplete. Even in “political” participation, the duplicitousness of the “contract”, the obligatory relation of capture does not expire. In the procedure of the count the flesh is born in dispossession, in the severing of body from its remainder, from the absolute abjection which follows the “natal alienation” of absolute disinheritance that is also the cruel inheritance of an abject

genealogy—the flesh is made in the cut (Sexton, “Curtain” 14). Where property relations have invaded kinship, flesh is divided and parsed from belonging with the thinking body. In the same stroke, the body is emptied and defleshed, such that no matter their fleshly mattering, the bodies of the colonized, racialized and feminized do not register. In the words of Weheliye, “if the body represents legal personhood qua self-possession, then the flesh designates those dimensions of human life cleaved by the working together of depravation and deprivation. In order for this cruel ruse to succeed, however, subjects must be transformed into flesh before being granted the illusion of possessing a body” (39). The cutting of the flesh thus always necessarily pertains to the actual dismemberment and dispossession experienced by Black, Indigenous and colonized peoples. Yet it relies ultimately on the ruse of sociality, of inclusion and the possibility of agency and equality given as one proceeds along the available avenues in the demand for recognition. For Spillers, it is paradoxically in this cut where the female captive body loses gender differentiation, where the enslaved becomes ungendered and undone in and through the systemic sexual and reproductive violence legally protected through *partus sequitur ventrem* (79).<sup>64</sup> In this ungendering, in the erasure of differentiation which at the same time inscribes Human belonging, a deeper cut is made which rendered wholly illegible the terror of sexual violence to which “black female bodies” were subjected (Jackson 623). Thus, for Spillers the “slave” and correspondingly the flesh (though repeatedly ungendered by the proceedings of slavery) is quintessentially female, “granting her a ‘feminization’ that enslavement kept at bay” (73).

Situated in intimate exchangeability with surplus, quantification follows the flesh as measurement fabricates the commodity. Flesh made in the messy index of distinction, passed through the economy of discretization appears representationally as data, complicating the narrative outlines of the procedurality of digitality which tend to perform the erasure of the cut of colonial digitality. If as Luciana Parisi claims, the algorithm is “spatiotemporal matrix of the present” (*Contagious* 36), accounts of algorithmic thought

<sup>64</sup> *Partus sequitur ventrem* is a slave law originating from English common law which determined that a child follows the slave status of the mother. This legal procedure in combination with the one drop rule, facilitated the expansion of the number of people that would be categorized into “Blackness”, and accordingly institutionalized dispossession, genealogical cutting, and dis/inheritance.

ought to contend with the inheritance of race, coloniality, and the flesh. Extending the algorithm from its conceptualization as an object in Computer Science denoting a sequence of discrete instructions, we may take the algorithmic as metaphor to thicken the scope of its procedure as a racializing and colonizing technique. The algorithmic taken as an object of study, not unlike Blackness or colonized (non-)being as an object of study, may help to divert the slippery equivalency which too quickly works to map biological persons onto conceptual inventions. In Dixon-Román's formulation, the algorithmic is realized through what he calls "more-than-human performative acts" that not only exceed anthropological decision making, but shape both physical and digital flesh according to existing social and onto-epistemic parameters (487).

Given this performativity of the algorithm, data (content) does not refer to that which is abstracted from "nature", but to "rather lively assemblages of materializations and discursive formations" that are put to work in relation to other assemblages (483). A poetics of the algorithm, as Iman Jackson has done with the metaphoric appropriation of physics, may allow a disentanglement of overlaid and overexposed incisions of difference. To borrow an image from Parisi, computation consists of incomputable data, a fundamental contingency internal to algorithmic processing that cannot be synthesized by pre-existing programs and procedures (*Contagious* 14). Rather than listing as an error or glitch, incomputability is a feature internal to the logic computation—unaccidental and non-incident—containing indeterminate and unrepresentable possibilities that may exceed the quantitative assessment of the procedure. Incomputability understood in the context of the algorithmic object represents an unsettling of the presumption of a unilateral relationship between parts and whole, where the parts in aggregation and assembly, need not equate to the whole. Formally speaking, the algorithm contains in its own logic the possibility of the part to uproot the whole, to flood the infrastructure of the whole in a manner that is not a simple reversal, but the infection of deviant excess. There are two ways (maybe more) to "account" for the unintelligibility which "has more radically become its absolute condition" (Parisi, "Instrumental Reason" 134), and they are not necessarily contradictory. The incorporation of the incomputable into the logic of computation itself may be seen as a technical mimesis of capital's incorporation of contestation, figuring as a method to

annihilate the outside. By the same token, it is the partial intelligibility given in the recognition or computation of the incomputable which makes it possible for the excess, indeterminacy—exorbitance—to “enter computational order and provoke an irreversible revision of algorithmic rules and of their teleological finality” (134).

Where the equation managing input and output produces leaks and defies compression, incomputability’s partial register as file increase forces the calculus to re-count, a foundational irreversibility is achieved which upsets the circularity of decision. To continue risking an obtuse metaphoric transposition, can we postulate a double (maybe triple, quadruple and so on) exposure on the algorithm as an image to “flesh out” the immanence that is in the algorithmic object with that which exceeds dimensions of racializing assemblages? In this extension of computation as metaphor and metric, I want to resist the temptation to equivalency which compresses computation to the matrix of colonial worlding and vice versa. Yet, an incomputable mode of thought which sounds the “para-” as theory-fiction may perhaps propagate the exorbitance which “cannot be synthesized into a totalizing theory or program” (135), the exorbitance which from another conceptual field—that of the Human in general has always already been there in the figure of absolute abjection and objecthood. Exorbitance is in this sense a fugitive infection of the algorithm’s attendant teleological finality. The incomputable is also operative in what Jackson has described as the perceived excess which both “troubles and thrills aesthetic vision” when the “black female body” enters Euro-Western aesthetic discourse (625).

What conditions of reality might we enflesh when we stubbornly listen to and look for the dead? To think with the flesh, would that require refrain, both in the sense of the repetition of the fleshly poetics and to hold back, to refuse to expose the flesh once again, to refuse to participate in the tearing open of a wounding? What might it mean to take seriously “thinking with the flesh”, a prompt Weheliye has provided in *Habeas Viscus*? What would it require to keep the flesh from the overexposure that puts her in equivalency with total violence? What might it take to amplify the flesh? For Weheliye and Mckittrick, “the flesh is not merely inert violated matter but praxis incarnate” (30). Thinking the flesh as that which exceeds the axiomatic function of anti-blackness may allow us to linger with the



underside of Spiller's provocation that the flesh is also characterized by capacity and potential irreducible to the violence committed against the flesh. Put differently, the exorbitance of the flesh contains a refusal which nullifies the aesthetic paradigm kept in check via subjective capacity and Human membership as posited by Kantianism.

Recounting the inheritance of (subjective) captivity, the flesh enters the frame as sublimity which reflects not nature, but an image of the terms of aesthetic determination, calibrating the porosity of algorithmic thought through an indeterminate unintelligibility, an incomputable "\_\_\_\_", both internal and excessive to the material, historical and conceptual decisionisms that mark our present. For Jackson, this sublimity enacts in the promising and perilous space of the black mater(nal), a black feminist indexing of material relations which "cannot be comprehended as a unified object with definite identifiable endpoints; it invokes the infinite in size and power, appearing boundless on both registers, and, therefore, resists a mental form in the mind or imagination as well as understanding or conceptualization" (630). Jackson's black mater(nal) resonates with the figuration of the flesh as a "problem for thought", incomputability's fugitive slippage that is "both the cornerstone and potential ruin of the world of Man" (Weheliye 44).

We may consider the horizon again, this time as a performance of the incomputable, as a horizon whose distance is measured in obscurity, unattainable and formed in the "spill."<sup>65</sup> Horizon as radical practices of digitality or visioning must count on the flesh and recount the worlding which cuts it. Might a horizon(tal) digitality require a synaesthetic undertaking derived according to the immanence of the incomputable, envisioned in the hermeneutical listening of the "hieroglyphics of the flesh" (Spillers 67)? Neither mixture nor synthesis, a dangerous synaesthetics seeks not the resolution of the one into another, but a dual expression of "with" and "feeling; perceiving." A synaesthetics is a wayward aesthetics troubled by the problematics of the *non-*, not a rejection of feeling or insensitivity, but a recalibration of the relational paradigm and hierarchical distribution of the practice of sense. A synaesthetic intervention can perhaps point to a digitality disassembled in

<sup>65</sup> See Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Spill: Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity*, a textual elaboration on Hortense Spillers's *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*.

immanent vision, for a praxis of visuality that moves closely to determination in the last instance according to the flesh, to turn obliquely from the aesthetic totality of modernity/coloniality. Digitality for Alexander Galloway also has another meaning:

“the digital is the mechanism of negation, of the confrontation of the "two," of breaking with the present state of affairs. Indeed, the digital is the site of the event, and thus of a political confrontation more generally. Thus "digital" is both a term to describe the contemporary infrastructure of power, but also a term of art meaning cut or distinction. In this way, the digital is both the site and the stake in any contemporary struggle, as Stuart Hall once said about popular culture” (“Peak Analog”).

If Galloway is correct in his assessment of digitality as a “site and the stake in any contemporary struggle”, it is a matter of imaginative exigency that we arrive at another calculus that can trouble the work of difference. We require a formation that exceeds the assemblage, that “spills over” composition and representation. In other words, the multiple cannot remain an aggregation of discretized cuts, however dynamic. Maybe here, we hold on to the One, to withhold it despite not being able to grasp it, as to delay dialectical capture. We observe albeit without seeing the non-, the unspeakable the missing persons we can never adequately conjure without risking their capture once again, knowing well the gravity of the demand for transparency. We hold on to exorbitance, whatever that may be, whatever it may become without first authenticating what it could bring into the world. In Ferreira da Silva’s aesthetico-mathematic formulations, the equation is called upon to answer to the question “why don’t Black lives matter?” where life and blackness are placed in opposition. Arguing for an opposition without contradiction, that is a dialectic without resolution, Ferreira da Silva demonstrates the necessity of a formal shift, or rather an evasion of formalization that would make black life possible. Unlocking opposition from the formal contours that define it, opposition without contradiction functions as a destructive rather than reparative force, figuring as a nullification of the bind, inaugurating the obliteration of the relationality of domination which denies the co-proliferation of blackness and life (“1 (life)”). Her inventive troubling of value and equation, may be appropriately conceptualized in terms of what Weheliye and McKittrick have called “wicked mathematics”—a transposition of the violence of the number and a re-writing of the

mathematical that sets into motion a calculation, a cryptography of the flesh against the “master-code of Man” (Weheliye and Mckittrick 33). This destructive possibility evokes the Fanonian image of the “program of complete disorder”, where the obliteration of the exchange relations and property relations that underwrite coloniality/modernity and the social ordinates of Human relationality is a base requirement. Exorbitance or the incomputability that is held by the flesh as such mobilizes a principle of non-exchange in excess of the representational grammars of the Human.

In a (syn)aesthetic of the count, we might count on the flesh as a principle of visioning in the manner of the “spill” which exceeds the logic of captivity and capture; count on the flesh to not divulge and to resist transparency and obfuscate exposure; count on fugitivity to make incomputable the count of the police. In the throwing off of a count, can we approximate a negation appropriate to the refusal of the finality of distinction? Counting on the flesh is to think with Fred Moten’s observation that “the history of blackness is testament to the fact that objects can and do resist” (*In the Break* 1). Counting on the flesh is a refusal to transcend the flesh, a move to commit to the absolute withdrawal from investments in the futurity of this World’s groundings. What is the cost of living in proximity to a fleshly account of the in/computable? The good news is: everything. This maneuvering around the cut is an attempt to trace the marks left in the poetics of abolitionist dreams.

## incognita

“... a person has the right to be opaque to my eyes.”

—Edouard Glissant, *One World in Relation*, 34:20

“What if the questions we ask can’t be answered with words, or really ‘answered’ at all, but can be appreciated through an open yet careful inspection of the foggy...”

—Will Rawls in conversation with Malakai Greiner, Feb 26, 2019

*flash 17: air*

*“I can’t breathe” — Eric Garner, July 17, 2014*

*Gwen Carr @GwenCarrERIC. “He said it 11 times before they murdered him.”  
Jul 27, 2018. Twitter.*

*See [twitter.com/GwenCarrERIC/status/1019287422738272257](https://twitter.com/GwenCarrERIC/status/1019287422738272257)*

Incognita; the air is thick suggests humidity or something in the way of vision, obstructive like subjection or “i can’t breathe” counted and discounted 11 times.<sup>66</sup> Incognita, an adjective for some “thing” unknown contains a description of the violence of being unseen that is structured by miscount, the violence of a deadly recognition which procedurally fails to register the force of being forced into a given frame by the cut of distinction, as “body” unaccounted as anything other than body count. Incognita meaning unknown or unseen, also describes a refusal of capture and exposure, a refusal of carcerality that is written here as a tactic of sidestepping recognition, an oblique insistence on naming an im/possibility

<sup>66</sup> In memory of Eric Garner who was murdered in a chokehold by the NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo in his neighbourhood on Staten Island while repeating “i can’t breathe.” The image was tweeted by Gwen Carr, mother of Eric Garner four years after his death. The video of his murder has circulated widely across media platforms, spurring the echoing of the phrase “i can’t breathe” by Black and Brown people protesting police violence that occurs on a daily basis, for moving *and* not moving in public and private spaces. See Safiya Umoja Noble, “Close-Up: Black Images Matter” for a critical analysis of the link between profits, surveillance videos and images of Black death in online media.

in non/being, that is, an impossibility in being for the World. To activate the latter meaning of incognita, we make a practice of a non-standard operating procedure, taking an interpretive swing with what Nathaniel Mackey has installed as a “paracritical hinge” to consider the vexation of sound and sight that is always recollecting *in the flesh*, the troublesome missing of standards of communicability contained in the phrase “discrepant engagement” for a syn-aesthetic shift on keeping count<sup>67</sup> (15). I consider opacity as an adjustment of spectrality, a light bending skill of genre refraction or World disturbance that is akin to what Mackey thinking of Ralph Ellison wrote of as “bend[ing] notes in an effort...to hear and see around corners, outmaneuver the rigidities of a taxonomic grid” (210). Reading sound, atmosphere, ocean and *mu* to complicate vitalism, relation, geography and vision, I think *texture as tactic*, keeping in mind Édouard Glissant: “opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components” (190). It is this trouble-causing movement of discrepancy, the textured obstruction and disturbance of visual ordinance ringing in the *non-* and the *para-* that I wish to attune to in this chapter.

The *para-* of paracriticism for Mackey shares meaning and resonance with the para-legal and para-medical, “indicating an auxiliary, accessory relationship to criticism, a near equation with or close resemblance to criticism” (212). Paracriticism<sup>68</sup> we may say, is a habituated suffusion of an outside and alongside of critical theory, a practice of pose and sometimes prose, sonorous at a slant. The hinge as a structural mechanism of opening can also be read as “swing.” As a play on and of standard (as in standard procedure in quality control, standard repertoire in music, standard time), paracriticism swings by means of the *non-* to make generic what is non-standard in procedure and what is *para* in non-standard practice. Taking up an emphasis on discrepant engagement as performance in the “mix”, the account of syn-aesthetic here is aligned with calibration as the co-incidence of genres in heterogenous conspiracy (conspiracy in *spirare*). I set aside “mix” to keep it at distance from the synthetic—as in the mode of mixture or blending into congruity—and instead

67 A common form of synaesthesia involves the association of numbers or serial alphabet with color, i.e. the count is always inherently colourful.

68 Mackey develops this as operation of black aesthetics in the volume paracritical hinge.

write it as com-position, extemporized invention, and traffic in the not-yet-real-in-the-real in discordant posture. As theoretical element, a syn-aesthetic shift moves in non-relation to existing relational mandates that correlate the “syn” with obligatory unity. Syn-aesthetic composition does not defer to unity, wholeness or a combinatorial procedure wherein *any* sense in *any* number can be made commensurable in exchange for a “greater” or more “comprehensive” sense. i make use of syn-aesthetic in the sense of “non”, as in non-relation and non-standard, non-colonial and non-capitalist sensibility held disruptively in tense discord with the supposed sensorial free flow and free movement of sensing-in-common (the liberal sensorium that overwrites the legibility of structural relations of power that prohibit any real possibility of a common measure to begin with<sup>69</sup>)—a non-sense.

i borrow Mackey’s para-criticality to composite *something like an installation* <sup>70</sup> in incognita to shift the terms of legibility and availability, which for me also recalls Nahum Chandler’s para-ontological project of a double movement in desedimentation and delimitation that figures non/Being as a “problem” *for* thought (“Paraontology” 18:46; Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction* 4). *Incognita* is none and all adjective, noun and verb, like a variable ( $\mu$ ) practiced in substitution, a thought-image given density and intensity in miscommunication, an impedance in communication and the relay of the predatory registries and relational binds that produce value out of imagined and coerced consent. For the retention of the “atactic” as Mackey might say, i resist holding incognita in definition and proceed in repetition with “no stereochemical regularity in structure”<sup>71</sup> for figuring “an acknowledging regard for what gets away or for the fact that something, no matter what, gets away” (4). Referring to the descendants of maroons, the Saamaka of Suriname,

<sup>69</sup> The 2016 conference “Synesthesia of Law” stipulates synesthetic theory as “a possibility of mixture, manipulation, movement, and change. It can be understood as pointing to the moments of interaction between various perceptible – that is visual, audible, haptic, olfactory, palpable dimensions of law – thereby producing a multi-dimensional and multi-sensuous space of rhizomatic interrelation.” i want to ground movement, change and sense in self-determination and make a case for the “right” to inaccessibility, illegibility and opacity in non-relation, in contrast to the total access mandate given to “rhizomatic interrelation” in a neoliberal framing, which reproduces if not accelerates the dispossessive and invasive violation of the sovereignty.

<sup>70</sup> Laruelle uses this term “theoretical installation” in *Photo-Fiction* and other works to describe the making of scenarios, duals, characters, postures with thought materials (4).

<sup>71</sup> Definition of atactic from Merriam-Webster dictionary. [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/atactic](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/atactic)

Mackey posits both “regard” and “getting away” as practice in fugitive theory—our refrain in an account of incognita as paracritical tactic and abolitionist tact.

At the pivot point that is the “paracritical hinge”, we traffic a case for theoretical fraud—an improper stance in mis-communicability that is made in the oneirological demand for the end of this World. A fraud theory is fugitive theory because the “atactic” rituals that unsettle the proper-ly<sup>72</sup> and property of thought (the requisite *para*-metres of late liberal order) are formed in criminality, the distinction which inscribes the criminalization of the evasion of the relational terms of the Human. The criminal is she who refuses colonial and carceral obliteration, whose theory is made in immanent practice. Fraud theory pertains to the criminality of the accident, the unintended fugitive genealogy spilled in aftermath of a disaster that continues to shatter worlds—unintended that is, only for settler colonial racial capitalism’s murderous relationality. Fraud also refers to a discrepancy in identity or the ambiguous concealment of non-identity that may also be figured as interference to transparency. We configure fraud as a paracritical method in refusal of the classificatory relations of identity and difference. Fraud is understood here also in part to mean the “accidentally-aesthetic” dropping of the beat that would make something else of standard procedure.

Incognita; a location of and by accident, is the mark of error from the standpoint of the World that claims to *be* all worlds, conceived as a miscount to be transcended, mastered and overcome when prevention and pre-emptive policing fails.<sup>73</sup> For us, accident is not necessarily unintentional nor the result of chance, but also a technique of the accidentally-aesthetic which makes use of subterfuge and infiltration to thicken the fugitive space and place of the *without*. As non-essential property of the subject, as the Aristotelian description

<sup>72</sup> Proper-ly as in the keeping of good order was discussed by Jodi Byrd et al. in “Predatory Value.”

<sup>73</sup> For more on the role of pre-emptive policing of black neighbourhoods by means of algorithmic prediction and its connection to technologies of war beyond the national borders of the U.S. empire. See *Black Software*. Nick Estes, in *Our History is the Future* has also outlined the connection between local police in Dakota and private mercenary companies hired to provide intelligence and technical support to the National Guard and police, and how the police saw itself as a part of a larger global counter-insurgency effort with purpose of suppressing dissent from Ferguson, to Palestine, to Standing Rock, to Unist’ot’en, to the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border (250).

would have it, accident primarily pertains to a property relation between the subject(substance) and the accident(property) (Robertson and Atkins). As far as merchants, buyers, traders, capitalists and prison guards are concerned, accident is the occurrence of the “spill”, the non-essential property of commodities who speak—the “accident” of the commodity “whose speech sounds embody the critique of value, of private property, of the sign. Such embodiment is also bound to the (critique of) reading and writing, oft conceived by clowns and intellectuals as the natural attributes of whoever would hope to be known as human” (Moten *In the Break* 12). Incognita is hinged on accident as the constitutive grounds of a non-aesthetic, since there can be no “proper place”, no “appropriate” reckoning with the intersubjective damage of *aisthesis*. It is the unintended aftermath retrieved in the position of being held in the “non-” of non-being, non-place, non-Human—the “non-” as accident. Although the injuries of which we speak—the cut and its gruesome circulation—are neither accidental nor incidental, their afterword in the spill is injurious to the system. The non-subject *is* the accident: the “unfortunate” encounter, the crash from flight, the failure in transgression, the intersectional collision, the prison riot, the place names colonialism couldn’t destroy. To be *for* the accidental is occupation in the position of the unthought, always already incidental, threatening to pull apart. And accident in wrecking collusion with aesthetics materializes as a furtive yet calamitous fracture in subjectivity’s identity in the Human, an accident of the outside that brings (in)coherence to the sensory paradigm of transcendental Man. The accident is the runaway property of ex-sense and ex-communicability, the dreaming work of *para-*, in para-critical, para-ontology and para-digm. This unnamed *s/place* of and for the fugitive can only be approximated in incognita code, extemporized and ex-humanized. Taking improvisatory attitude as a practice of the unforeseen, a convention of analeptic choreography in the face of the injury of property and the proper, we may say that extemporization is also ex-spatialization. Hayward and Gossett noted that the “maroon” of *maroonage* is rooted in the Spanish word *cimarrón* used to describe escaped cattle prior to the Conquistador’s application of it towards the fugitivity of the enslaved (19). Maroonage derives from an ex-spatialized transgression of containment that at once imparts the “ex-” and the “non-” space of *cimarrones* and inscribes through definition, the “accidental” nature of the place of fugitivity, the place of non-existence that was never meant to be possible. But, as Ruth



Wilson Gilmore tells us, “abolitionist geography starts from the homely premise that freedom is a place” (226).

Because being undone in perpetuity hurts, we spill into the tremendous aftermath and present-day of injury and dehiscence, in a restorative yet deserting scheme to frustrate the logics of extraction and dis-possession. In extemporization, we extend a generosity to the accidental. We spill love<sup>74</sup>, however unprofessional into the unexceptional, haunted grounds that Spillers called the “terrible grounds” where the monstrous reduction of persons, peoples and worlds to exchangeable and fungible flesh took place, and where “place” continues to be realized as cities, national parks, fields, museums, mines, and telescopes<sup>75</sup> on top and over seized grounds, heritage sites commemorating colonial inheritance, where “place” made in *dis-place-ment* with expropriated bones and flesh—*peças* or units as the Portuguese colonists called the enslaved—map out the grounds of a cruel entanglement (D’saete 5). In the spill, we honour the “accidents” that have desedimented the grounds of this World in ex-temporal and ex-spatial procedures of non-standard performativity to continue to impress upon those fault lines etched by “accident.”

Thick air also conjures proximity, a heavy breathing im/possible sociality that is not supposed to exist in social death (Sexton “Social Life”). Also alluding to the locational effect of being in proximity to the ocean or a large body of water, thick air references place in the unnamed. In the penal economies of empire, this thick air—made in crowded clubs and tropical fever, in Quilombos memory<sup>76</sup>, in heated refusal, exhaustion and onerously procured meeting spaces, in border crossing and moving in public—is akin to criminal undertaking. Thick air as weather expanded to account for loss, accumulation, criminalization and fleshly disposability, is a tacit incrimination of thickness with tactic, where thickness signifies a betrayal of the order of transparency. Thickness as incomprehension, illegibility, unintelligibility, and incommunicability denotes opacity as

<sup>74</sup> This is a reference to *Spill: Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity* by Alexis Pauline Gumbs.

<sup>75</sup> See Keolu Fox and Chanda Prescod-Weinstein “The Fight for Mauna Kea Is a Fight Against Colonial Science”, July 2019. <https://www.thenation.com/article/mauna-kea-tmt-colonial-science/>

<sup>76</sup> Quilombos were communities of runaway slave in the hills in North Eastern Brazil in the 16th century where over 20 000 self-emancipated people lived in networks of autonomously governed groups.

a warning against the normative sanctioning of passage without consent that is exercised in routine (non)observance in the securitization of this World. I think of thick as in a climatic shift in conceptions of ground and relation, that is, an environmental destabilization of the structure of relations, the inscription of the one and the two, that divides and orders what is thinkable and what is possible in the arrangement of the “between”, “beneath”, “outside”, “closeness”, and the “without.” Thick is the environmental registry of imperial damage, where thick air as materiality is composed of the very grounds of philosophical violence circulated and practiced in coloniality, racial capitalism and its figure of the Human as a genre of extraction, distinction, and being that is cultivated in genocide. Thick as in the density and opacity, the thickness of queer, trans community defense, feminist mutual aid collectives, fugitive co-operative life, Indigenous language schools, whose dangerous refusals threaten the communicative and communing assumptions of civil society.

In this muddling of *incognita*, I’ll try to provide a tactical shift on tactics—a *tactic-without-program* that might disturb the existing syntax of civil society’s relational order of “political” and “social.” We can describe this as a tactical dis/articulation from the *without*, which makes use of atactic installation. Rather than attempting to provide clarity in the direction of achieving specific ends, the dream of ending the World requires staying with murky waters. Tactics-without-program in this paracritical exercise can be seen as a wayward guide, plotting the terrain of these “terrible grounds” to thicken the plot, to plot a scheming-without-schematics as praxis that is less diagrammatic than textured, connoting “structural character, networked weave or [disturbance] to smoothed plains”<sup>77</sup>. For the sake of sidestepping the procedure to make-exemplary, this “guide” must remain an improper one, inadequately practical and theoretical fraudulent. Theoretical fraud in this instance is organized in texture, because fraud, as in false identity is a condition realized in frictional exile and exorbitance or in “going off the track.” Tactics are configured here as images, impressions (marks left by pressure on a surface) of an extemporization in which *incognita* as a tactical-fictional lesson of guerilla para-interpretation is established in homage to the

77 See <https://www.etymonline.com/word/texture>.

practice and traditions of fugitive and disobedient time signatures. Fugitivity, as “separate from setting” in my missed-interpretation of “settling” insinuates an *ex-*, while bringing along a *para-* and a *non-*. Tactics slip into the text as echoes, notes, timbre and *mu*<sup>78</sup>—as changes in tempo<sup>79</sup> that do not involve unity, conciliation or compatibility as their primary functions, but what Mackey may have been getting at in “the fruitful instability of words, the presence of alternate, hidden words within a given word, thematizing anagrammatic and cryptogrammic resonance” (7). Since sound travels slower than light, a shift in register along the tonal and the sonic may permit a desedimenting, slow-moving interference that both destroys and amplifies waves to pronounce the instability of the given, in which slowed tempo frustrates the progressive futurity that too often solicits access and procurement, and too quickly propagates the logics of conquest and capture that are frequently insinuated in “going forward.”

In this chapter, i pull several negotiations of relation and space into proximity without forcing any reciprocal becomings, hoping for reverberations that might shake up the hold of multiplicity, difference and relation. In trying to provide a textured account, i make of saturations and intensities areas of concentration and conspiracy. Since the underside and underground are just as likely on the ground in *incognita*—the anagrammatic figuration of *actioning*. This is because pressure collects, as does duress, even if it is uncountable as an aggregation of discretized parts, and the “con-” of conspiracy is marked by resistance to amalgamation, always already inflected in the “non-” and the “para-.” So here we are in hiding (sort of), at the university in passing, holding space in tired infiltration for an insurgent study<sup>80</sup> of what might be transmitted by the word *incognita* (“a woman who is unknown or in disguise”), hoping thick air as syn-aesthetics can also be of anaesthetic use. *Incognita* is an image of opacity in tactical attunement that is used here to perform a breaching of nothing and something, skirting beneath the relational restrains of the

78 *Mu* has many meanings. It refers to nothingness, the Greek letter “mu”, lost continent. It will be discussed more later in the chapter.

79 Here i am thinking of Lindsey Nixon’s articulation of “future-present” as Indigenous resurgent time, decolonial ways to be in time and move in time that can be described as time travel.

80 *Insurgent and study* are terms used, but not used together in Moten and Harney’s *The Undercommons* (38, 67).

Human/non-Human. In the making of incognita, by sketch and inquest in atactic slips, we hope to lay down in duplicitous inversion a shadowy profile, a thick saturation of tactics of the underside cast in proximation to a condition of operating against (and to the side) of the grain—a denial of the World and its Universal program, its professed self-sufficiency and functions of identity, difference and unity. Perhaps in a speculative spill, increasing the opacity and thickness of the image, we can move in a making-a-mess of temporal procedure and non-sense, suspending the proprietary mandate of “something known” to refuse the inscription of some “thing” to be made known for some “One.” In spilling speculative thought, might incognita as the site of *image* (copy, imitation, likeness, statue, picture, phantom, ghost, apparition) and *imaginary* (seeming, fancied, pertaining to the image) disarticulate projective clarity of overcoming for the inconsonance of the now-here and no-where?

*flash 18: life*

*“We have tremendous life.*

*But this life is not analogous to those touchstones of cohesion that hold civil society together.”*

*—Frank Wilderson, “Position”*

### **vital dissolution.**

Incognita as thick air, suggests the difficulty of taking a breath, referencing the atmospheric—that is the social-spheric difficulty of recognition and its asphyxiating effect. This strain of breath is also at work in the soma-material difficulty of oxygen intake, like an excess of moisture or debris in the air or the toxic out-pour of petro-chemical exhaust. Worlding unfolds to make environments, changing the air and water, sedimenting in the material inscription of colonial trauma on the earth which records the crises that have been underway for 500 years and counting. This is where the species-logic of the *anthropos* cuts breath short, where the crisis of ecological trauma is exacerbated by a terroristic<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> In a speech in 2017 in Toronto, Yusra Khogali insightfully remarked that “Trudeau is a white supremacist terrorist”, denouncing the discrepancy between Canada’s humanitarian claim, this time in making empty declarations of welcoming refugees denied by the U.S., and the ongoing murders of Black, Brown and Indigenous people in the country. Khogali was harshly criticized by White civil society, which harassed

sentence that is unevenly and unilaterally distributed along those same contours of human-being that have become climatic. From my location, this is most enduringly expressed and punitively managed in its ongoing settler colonial carceral form. Zoe Todd and Heather Davis wrote that “the Anthropocene is the epoch under which ‘humanity’—but more accurately, petrochemical companies and those invested in and profiting from petrocapi-talism and colonialism—have had such a large impact on the planet that radionuclides, coal, plutonium, plastic, concrete, genocide and other markers are now visible in the geologic strata” (765). Understanding climate catastrophe as the crisis of the accumulated waste of the extractive and traumatic entanglements of capitalism, colonialism and race, i situate “environment” in the context of our discussion on philosophies of relation (Ferreira da Silva, “On Heat”).

Kathryn Yusoff writes of “geo-logy” as a product of the enlightenment logics of mastery, making non-accidental the intimacies between labour, land theft, racial subjection and imperial extraction in the materiality of the earth. In thinking the announcement of the anthropocene with that which always already accompanies the human—the non-human, Yusoff considers the “body burdens of exposure to toxicities and to buffer the violence of the earth” that is offloaded by force onto black and brown bodies as the geo-logic of Earthly thinking. Earthly thinking in this sense references the proprietary transformation of land, matter, peoples, water, knowledges, all that which exists and may exist, into value form bound together by the connectivity of a global imaginary of late liberal modernity. Her intervention, a proposition for what she calls Black Anthropocenes would require a critical thinking of the intimacies between harm (extraction and appropriation) and the inhuman that makes the human possible. She writes, “...literally stretching black and brown bodies across the seismic fault lines of the earth, Black Anthropocenes subtend White Geology as a material stratum”(11). These earthly foundations articulated through what she calls “geological grammars” take the form of methods of speech, inscription and legibility that circulate geographically and ecologically, and most resoundingly in and through the announcement of an Anthropocene that is to mark a transformative era of critical concern

and pressured her to step down as spokesperson for a group she helped co-found, Black Lives Matter - Toronto, for speaking for Black life. Yusra is right.

for humanity and for life-at-large. But since “imperialism and ongoing (settler) colonialisms have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence”<sup>82</sup>, the alarm of the Anthropocene sounds in ways that muffle the disproportionate violence of environmental harm for much of the earth’s populations (12). This idea of an *anthropos* existing in an earthly-commons accomplished through the equalizing promise of interconnectedness and openness turns to ecology as a principle of new material ontology which smooths over the very material, fleshly cut of difference, as though relationality is somehow inherently desirable and free of power or domination.

Although these appeals to ecology have seen a surge in currency, they are not novel. As Neil Smith has demonstrated in *Uneven Development*, the view of the human as outside of nature and the human as an inextricable part of nature—one among many species, had been essential to the conceptual and material arrangements of the European Enlightenment and Europe’s scientific and industrial revolutions<sup>83</sup>. These visions of humanity and nature were not mutually exclusive, but often overlapped in ways that helped to justify the extension of colonial belonging and extraction. Tracing what he termed the ideology of nature, Smith situates the development of ‘nature’ in both aesthetics and sciences within the context of industrialization and the colonization of the Americas. The coloniality of ecology is perhaps best illustrated in the settler “back to the land” movements of the 18th and 19th centuries that performed journeys “into the frontier”<sup>84</sup> where the “wilderness” was imagined as simultaneously something to be dominated and something to be a part of. This frontier logic which buttresses ideas of Human freedom to move through “empty” land is predicated upon the dispossession and disappearance of Indigenous peoples and land claims.

82 See Margaritoff, Marco (2019). “Genocide of Native Americans Left So Much Untended Land That Earth’s Climate Cooled, New Study Shows”. <https://allthatsinteresting.com/little-ice-age-cause>

83 We may add “political” revolutions within the framework of civil society, given that liberal concepts of freedom and enslavement were articulated through the institutions and economies of racial slavery. See Susan Buck-Morss on Hegel and the effacement of the Haitian Revolution, an event that profoundly shaped liberal democracy in the West in his theorization of the master-slave dialectic.

84 For Jodi Byrd, an iteration of this logic of the frontier can be seen in uses of Deleuze-Guattarian images such as rhizomatic movement, smooth plateaus and nomadic assemblages that also give way to the occupation of Indigenous lands (11).

For early thinkers of colonial America, the two functions of human *and* nature and human-nature were not contradictory, since the human—more specifically the Human mind of the thinking subject—was what enabled a transcendence of the dualism that buffered human and nature. According to Smith, this Kantian distinction of internal and external nature, resolvable by the faculty of the mind, continues to inform the contemporary “bourgeois ideology of nature” (12). The “vital fulcrum” at this connective point between human and nature and between interior and exterior nature, today assists in the development of renewed forms of universality that feature human/nature as yet another component of a broader biological nature<sup>85</sup>, a web of relations consolidating the transhistorical dynamics of “life-at-large” (17). In a seemingly contradictory turn, “human-nature” has experienced a revitalization vis-a-vis vital materialism as a kind of anthropocenic response, whereby the value of “life” is expressed in a diffusion of historical inscription and material inheritance that is indeed vital to the survival of the figure of the Human. Relying on notions of empiricism, evidence and nature, “humanity” presenting as general, neutral and objective can again be conveniently repositioned everywhere at the centre (*and* nowhere at all). Taking for granted the “human” and the “environment” as self-evident objects coming into realization of their intrinsic entanglement rather than as products of historical invention, discourses of human and non-human connectivity risk geo-logically naturalizing “difference” as constitutive elements of an extended ecology of total relation. As a consequence, the “human” as species and the “Human” as normative genre are expressed interchangeably in accounts of climate emergency, earth-writing and calls to save the “\_\_\_\_\_.”<sup>86</sup> In part, this is because the Human has not actually been de-centered nor done away with in the Western philosophical tradition, but instead grafted onto notions of the human-in-nature as well as nature-without-humans.

<sup>85</sup> Using this claim to a broader biological nature—a nature belonging to everyone—pharmaceutical companies and scientists have justified the patenting of medicinal plants in the Amazon, without the prior consent of the Indigenous peoples who held and guarded those plants as a part of their knowledge systems. This is one example of acquisition vis-a-vis nature.

<sup>86</sup> Extinction Rebellion, the “citizen-driven”, direct-action movement which began in the U.K. has argued that governmental action on climate change has the added benefit of stopping the movement of migrants into Europe, equating “saving the planet” to “saving the U.K.”

It is not by happenstance that the seemingly widespread appeal of contemporary declarations of shared humanity and interspecies entanglement in the West corresponds with predatory wealth consolidation and the intensification of dispossession of peoples across continents, seas and archipelagos in line with already existing racial capitalist violence. Yusoff writes, “as the Anthropocene proclaims the language of species life—*anthropos*—through a universalist geologic common, it neatly erases histories of racism that were incubated through the regulatory structure of geologic relations” (14). Axelle Karera cautions that survivalist thinking in anthropocenic discourse is affirmed through an extension of the present, ushering “the violence and terror that arrive armed with the language of critique, care and empathy” (51). That is, the logics of dispossession, carcerality and enslavement too quickly pushed underground, form the mass grave of resolved differences that persist as the “new” grounds of the post-anthropocenic earth, still operative as the legal and ethical management of “life worth saving.” Because care and empathy in the liberal humanist tradition depend upon innocence and defensibility (notions that structurally exclude blackness, understood as always already guilty, criminal and indefensible), they function as weapons of policing noncompliance and refusal—Blacks must “choose” love over hate, become angelic, cyborglike superhuman to make the impossible appeal to innocence, redemption and the sympathies of civil society to have a chance at avoiding racial terror (Vargas and James 197 ).

The creation of the anthropocenic consciousness that assembles this “we” in the time of crisis, the “us that must save ourselves”, abides by investment in the endurance of liberal intersubjectivity and forms of relationality that at once conceal and deepen the foundational asymmetries of what Yusoff has called an “extractive imperative”, generating renewed opportunities to claim post-raciality (50). By the convenience of colonial forgetting, the *anthropos* is given a function of abstraction, now reinterpreted to stand for “life in general” through a generalized exchangeability predicated upon the regulation of distinction and differentiation, such that “life”, “human-kind”, “earth” can all signify the same thing without naming the violences and fractures inherited through the genre of Man. As such, the relational web of the commons must contend with its perpetual task to obliterate the terrible reminder of *who* counts in the calculus of “humanity” and *what* is being saved.



Predicated upon the consumption and evacuation of the *anti-, ante-, non-* Human for its coherence, the *anthropos* is already a figure of the apocalypse. Accordingly, narratives of extinction and crisis continue to depend on a disregard for the fact that for much of the world, socio-ecological apocalypse is and has already been a reality. As critical theoretical interventions come to the conclusion that “thus, it is time for an earthly form of critique” (Bunz et al. 12), it must be stressed that “earthly” epistemes have already been in practice whether or not Euro-Western thought takes notice. In precluding the possibility of critical thought arising from other locations and traditions, such calls for renewing “earthly critiques” participate in the diminishing and dismissal of Black, Indigenous and subjugated knowledges that have long negotiated environmental thought and the ways of thinking environment in non-relational stance to critique proper. As such, the currency of what scholars are now announcing as a “critical planetary condition” (Bunz et al.) reveals an ongoing epistemic provincialism that remains unable or unwilling to contend with the damage of coloniality/modernity, a condition of “imperial planetarity” that Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd has traced to the 18th century launch of scientific rationalism and Enlightenment liberalism (*Transit of Empire* xxi).

“Human” impact on the environment and on persons treated as environmental resource has always had a planetary effect, and ecocide and genocide though unacknowledged by colonial powers (at least not by name) are logics that made possible the collected wealth of empire. Between the climate conscious argument along the lines of “*now* all life is precarious and so now *we* must act” and the eco-fascism of oil and gas industries and the far right that only denies climate science in words but not in action<sup>87</sup>, such calls to “save humanity” or to “save the earth” remain inescapably compatible with capitalist colonial jurisprudence of border enforcement, immigration control, biometric carcerality, militarism and austerity. This is why even as earthly logics of species extinction and the necessity of unity are invoked, migrants are left to drown in the Mediterranean, go missing

<sup>87</sup> The rise of eco-fascism and how the far right is responding to climate emergency. Naomi Klein has pointed out it is not the case that the biggest polluters deny climate science, but that they are aware of it and acting accordingly to push white supremacist interest and the solicitation of militarizing borders against climate “invaders”. See <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/against-climate-barbarism-a-conversation-with-naomi-klein/>

or die in deserts or ranches along the U.S./Mexico borders<sup>88</sup> or are held captive in detention camps and prisons, indefinitely, while separated from family and kin. Axelle Karera argues that “given the pervasive silence on matters of race in this emerging discourse, nothing guarantees thus far that the world we could inherit, in the event of successful post-apocalyptic/post-Anthropocene times, would de facto be non-racist” (34). Instead, survival imaginaries that do not adequately consider race, coloniality and the suffering of Black and Brown peoples would proliferate a “post-apocalyptic “recalibration” of anti-black racist practices” (Karera 34). The narrative power of apocalypse that is now put towards narratives of extinction has been of import to capitalist adjustment for centuries in the making, where crisis and threat have been alarmed to reservice and insure the prolongation of acquisition. This logic is expressed by Swyngedouw as a performative gesture which “turn[s] the revealed (ecological or political-economic) ENDGAME into a manageable CRISIS”, where a seemingly unbroken passage from the ecological, to the biological, to the social is regulated to maintain the teleological arrival of nation, civilization, humanity and life-in-general (10).

*flash 19: machinima*

*Skawennati. She Falls for Ages, 2016, Machinima.*

*See [www.skawennati.com/SheFallsForAges/index.html](http://www.skawennati.com/SheFallsForAges/index.html).*

The body of work loosely consolidated around the term Critical Posthumanisms<sup>89</sup> have made significant made efforts to contest philosophical dualism by seeking ways to reconcile the human/nature split. New vitalisms, new materialisms and object-oriented ontologies in particular have worked to expand the scope of life, intelligence and agency beyond the figure of the human, looking to multiplicity, difference, connectivity and affect to ground new political ontologies. Though not reducible to the same project and there certainly are important exceptions and political divergences, we can nevertheless note a

<sup>88</sup> See <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/migrant-deaths-and-disappearances> and <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/18/us/mexico-border-deaths.html>

<sup>89</sup> Critical Posthumanism broadly refers to theories on conditions of posthumanity influenced by Kantian critique, post-colonialism, feminism, and post-structuralism, that take a critical view on “techno-positivist” future imaginations that make way for “the assimilation or supersession of the human in the suprahuman machine” (Banerji and Paranjape 2).

tendency in some “critical” branches of posthumanism to presume a vital relation open to all things that would dissolve the exclusionary boundaries of humanism’s protagonist. This vision of universal agential entanglement has been advocated by Jane Bennet as the “common materiality of all that is” and is the basis of her posthumanist ethics’ claims to extend vitality and agency of all matter, and the concept of “life in general” to “matter in general” (122). In her proposal for an ethics of expanded political ecology, Bennet generously invites the non-human (plants, objects, animals, matter) into the privileged human realm of the political, forgetting that the historical domination of the figure of the Human has left any presumable account of “matter” or “nature” with still open philosophical wounds—injuries that make im/possible political subjectivity, cuts that materially deny the very possibility of “life.” Similarly, the “new pan-humanity” of “careful negotiation in order to constitute new assemblages or transversal alliances between human and nonhuman agents” forgets that this place of the common is also a place of terror and of unnamable violation (Braidotti 17). The granting of agency—inclusion by denied consent—can only following grave contortions and compromises on the part of the non-human make domination cosmetic, so long as the human and non-human structure of difference remains intact in relation. Karera calls this sweeping equalization a “hyper-ethics” and “the hyper valuation of the concept of life” at the expense of the total displacement of death—the *non-* produced in the same colonial and genocidal inheritance that give “life” to the agential subject (Karera 34). By stressing life as that which enacts the co-production of the world, vitalism colonizes the very parameters of the living and the dead. And in conditions of sociality under duress calls for “common” responsibility for a world “*now*” in ecological and philosophical crisis, negating again that in/habitation in this World had always been troubled and spectral.<sup>90</sup> Juanita Sundberg has provided a critique of the coloniality and extractive character of this “invitation”:

“in calling forth imaginaries of modern, well-educated Selves and naive, superstitious Others, Bennett enacts colonial gestures of superiority that cast others outside the sphere of intellect and knowledge production. This

<sup>90</sup> These mobilizations of theories of difference, multiplicity, connectivity and the like, have been used to invalidate the relevance and salience of Black and Indigenous movements who refuse colonial and anti-black death (Idle No More and Black Lives Matter), without cognizance of the philosophical and experiential significance of life and death out of the Human fold (King 163).

is also to say that Bennett's text calls forth the non-modern Other as capable of giving 'things' their due as co-producers of daily life, but incapable of producing knowledge relevant to theorizing materialism" (38).

Put in another way, vitalism (as an iteration of the Western philosophical tradition) can perform and proceed as an expression of renewed settler colonial ontology, investing in grounds that can only appear solid given the continuous reproduction of the settler as the natural and legitimate subject of civility and sociality who has transcended the "mistake" of colonialism. In some ontological accounts of the non-human where the non-Human/non-being underlying these logics of Difference is displaced, naturalization is replaced by technical authority. Jodi Byrd noted:

"the ontological turn we are seeing in software, social media, and digital studies is predicated on the algorithmic structures of code, software and technology as civilizing scripts that assume the world is composed of primitive and complex data bundles that can be activated and deactivated, moved and replaced at will to operationalize a more efficient and presumably more egalitarian mode of interaction" ("Beasts" 602).

The metaphysics and technophysics of settler colonial endurance thus permits a mutation towards a general maintenance of "life" as settler/citizen/user responsibility, demanding the simultaneous circulation of crisis and resolution, individual welfare and common good, while accelerating dispossession through future imaginaries of reconciliation, species survival and human overcoming. There is nothing "natural" or merely "technical" about the undrinkability of water in reserve communities, the toxicity poisoning Indigenous bodies in chemical valley, the mercury and cancer rates at Grassy Narrows, the uncounted disappearance of women, girls and two-spirited people, the militarized deployment of the RCMP and the accumulated stress and strain of living targeted in a genocidal state. As discussed, in a decolonial situation freedom requires the relational termination of both the colonizer and the colonized. From universal interconnection and interdependency, to the democracy of "life"-in-general, to bio-logy, geo-logy and the microscopic interactivity of molecular posthumanism<sup>91</sup>, reverberations of the Human have found avenues to reinstate

<sup>91</sup> MacCormack, Bradotti, Bennet, Barad make this claim in various ways.

its self-appointed advisory position, mobilizing difference and multiplicity to ensure the oneirological mandate of the *non-*—the termination of relation is never met.

The equivalency required to “solve” or make commensurate “human/nature” has given way for the redemption of the Human to follow particular orientations in critical environmental thought. Conventions of incorporation and appropriation which pull all theories of relation regardless of origin, place or cadence into the connectivity thesis proposed by what we may call relational posthumanisms, can be seen as redemptive instruments that inevitably fail the position in the *non-*. Redemption, as Wynter has shown us, functions in the transcendental matrix of redeemed spirit/fallen flesh as the master code of Man, enabling its reiteration through substitutions over time, allowing the easy return to modes of distinction invested in ensuring the survival of a relational paradigm which keeps intact the cutting and communing logistics that buttress this World (287). For Claire Colebrook, the concept of the environment “as that surrounding and infusing life from which we have emerged, and which, so the argument goes, would be retrievable through a vitalist overcoming of our malevolent detachment—maintains the same structure of anthropomorphism” (16). Humanist redemption in this way, moves circularly to ensure only the redemption of itself, in which a posture without the human (and without the concept of nature) seems structurally irredeemable. As Colebrook writes, “what needs to be thought today is that which cannot be thought, lived, retrieved, or revitalized as the saving grace of man or woman.”

### **coda**

Indigenous coded knowledge, as a distinct paradigm of self-determination in thought refuses and challenges the absorbent motions of relational post/humanisms and displaces humanist redemption with Indigenous resurgence. Alterior and anterior to liberal relationality, Indigenous cosmologies of relation cannot be captured and decoded by colonial language and onto-epistemic fields (i.e., English, French and Spanish) as epistemic property *in relation* with the Western philosophical tradition. As Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) has pointed out, Indigenous

knowledge is not a kind of minority discourse in a direct “dissenting” relation to colonial power and colonial normativity, but ways of knowing and being that exist and operate in their own right (*Dancing* 60). Dian Million (Tanana Athabascan) argued that coded cosmologies and their methods of transmission *are* theory: “these Indigenous concepts of what happened can never be summarily dismissed. They work differently and the same as my prior description of theorizing. Story has always been practical, strategic, and restorative. Story *is* Indigenous theory” (322). Nishnaabewin or Nishnaabeg intelligence for Simpson, is a theoretical framework grounded in belonging in the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg Nation—the imaginative grounds of being and living as Nishnaabekwe (Nishnaabeg woman), in which *making* means the on-going procedures and coded practices of self-generation that makes possible Nishnaabeg worldview. She writes:

“i didn’t need to look for catastrophe or crisis-based stories to learn how to rebuild. The Nishnaabeg conceptualizations of life i found were cycles of creative energies, continual processes that bring forth more life and more creation and more thinking. These are the systems we need to re-create. The structural and material basis of Nishnaabeg life was and is processes and relationship—again, resurgence is our original instruction” (*As We Have* 24).

In other words, resurgence as coded practice is indifferent to recognition or agreement from settler-colonial philosophies of relations, and so, thinking in non-Human terms is not “beyond” or “post” human, but simply unrelated—Nishnaabewin codes reflect the specificity of Nishnaabeg language and cosmology, autonomous in their own terms, in their own right. Colonial relation is therefore not primary, but circumstantial as an imposed structure of relation that seeks to totalize but has never succeeded. Simpson understands Indigenous algorithm as an array of practices for solving a problem that include what she calls “coded disruption”—procedural and negotiated as coded knowledge found in “moss ... pine trees, or maple trees, or geese” that are “profoundly anti-capitalist to their core” (72). The algorithmic networked knowledge of Nishnaabewin as a theory and practice is continually codified and generated in the repeated presence of stories, language and teachings, informed by Nishnaabeg aesthetic and philosophical principles of *duality*, *multidimensionality*, *abstraction*, and *layering* (200). Tradition and future are not oppositional but formulated as complex and adaptive, time traveling codes that shape

knowledge and being according to Indigenous law. In this framework, relationships are not assumed as a prior condition nor a status achieved through contract, but a regenerative process attentive to changing material and intellectual parameters to determine, make and renew in an on-going manner.

*flash 20: newlandia:debaabaminaagwad*

*Scott Benesiinaabandan, newlandia:debaabaminaagwad, 2018, Ryerson Image Centre. See [www.benesiinaabandan.com/#/newlandia-debamanaagwaad/](http://www.benesiinaabandan.com/#/newlandia-debamanaagwaad/)*

Artist Cheryl L'Hirondelle (Métis/Cree/European)'s coding frames the "divide" in *nêhiyawin* (a Cree world view). As the "opposite or taking away of multiplication", it refers to colonial strategies of "divide and conquer", and at the same time refers to "the beautiful vistas and intricate landscapes of the geological term that connotes watersheds, ridges of land between two drainage basins, and/or that of the grandiosity of the continental divide" (151). She explains, "for Native people, a divide therefore is not a binary, an either/or—it is rich with variety and the means of our sustenance and continued survival" (152). The digital is not only where things become separate and discrete, but also where beings gather to practice Indigenous "code-talking", where autonomy and boundary, territory and sovereignty can be defended and asserted in a time of the divide oriented not only towards the future, but also towards the past. Indigenous algorithm thus indicates the insufficiency of nature/human/technology as a kind of progressive, transcendental triad, instantiating a critique of transhumanist imaginations of a techno-commons whereby technological futurity can produce "superior" even more "just" human forms. In contrast to the standard algorithmic production and assimilation of racial, colonial and gendered codes, Indigenous algorithm problematizes colonial code; it works not to correct its error or improve its function, but to program non-colonial worlds according to an Indigenous script. Skawennati (Mohawk) and Scott Benesiinaabandan (Obishikokaang Anishinabe First Nation)'s respective art practices are engaged in the work of time-bending that Mackey may recognize as paracritical shifting in deep time, as performance and actualization of multiple locations and traditions that *exceed* the standards of cognitive science, artificial intelligence and notions of the "non-human" that are somehow untouched by the long *durée* of coloniality, race, capitalism and gender violence. Their coded practices involve

resistance. Skawennati's narrative episodes and cyberspaces are found in Haudenosaunee method and stories. Benessinaabandan's computational fragmentations of space and time in the trans-dimensional worlds brought from story, to model, to print, to stone, from geometry to surface, mapped physically to material sites and objects that carry decolonial and resurgent meaning. In different ways, their practices engage in the articulation of a non-transcendental futurity that does not leave the past, where tradition, nationhood, self-determination and creation are the means by which realities of Indigenous inheritance yet-to-come are pulled into decolonial self-recognition as radical resurgence.

### **for opacity**

*Poetics of Relation* opens with an incantation of the abyss, in the afterword of the door of no return. The abyss is carried in time and earth, in the bodily and material inheritance of persons forced into transit across the Atlantic. Incognita space—the textured, textural writing of the abyss is description in blur, moving in cycles of precipitation and atmospheric reshuffling, into the durational mark of the oceanic where time is elsewhere; where in every direction the world was unknown and unmade. It is in this imaginative space of temporal-genealogical traversal, the care-ful arrival of and to a no-place by allusion to the abyss, bisecting the emphatic proclamation of new planetarity and global communicability and connectivity, that the Martinican thinker and writer Edouard Glissant found troubling. The abyss is an instance of diasporic inauguration and the precondition of an errantry which carries Glissant's "poetics of Relation"—a movement by a poetics in thought in the aslant with regard for unintelligibility, incompatible and irreconcilable with the genre of relationality forged in the jurisprudence of Human normativity he calls "totalitarian relations" (171). Glissant's Relation, at its roots, does not assume an originary wholeness that is then split by difference. Instead, identity is always already split—not by biological facticity or ontological calculation—but by the discontinuity and continuity of colonial world making that lingers as a haunting of the abyss (Han 5). This notion of Relation works in disregard for conquest, born of errant motion troubling acquisitive transits that move by principles of nonconsent. As Glissant writes, "the thinking of errantry conceives of totality but willingly renounces any claims to sum it up or possess it" (21).



He shifts the register of Relation by working without and outside relationality and in so doing alters the grounds of consent's possibility in exteriority to civil society.

Though Glissant may clearly be read as a thinker of Difference, a more trepidatious reading may find him as a thinker of *differences-without-difference*, a thought of other routes—moving still in removal, in the no-place of the Western philosophical tradition in textured elocutions more accurately described as non-relational. That is, a concept of Relation directed outside and without the structure we have previously called philosophies of relation. Glissant's Relation is radically un-common; it is total but does not “base its principles on itself” and does not represent a totalizing structure of relations. Moving according to the motions of every and all differences, in details, textures, intonations, archipelagos, in the real (as opposed to a principle of difference), it is devoid of a principle of sufficiency, disinterested in philosophical authority (171). For Glissant, “Relation cannot be “proved,” because its totality is not approachable. But it can be imagined, conceivable in transport of thought” (174).

Contrary to the idea that the proliferation of difference can open up towards the transformation of identity in a relational structure of difference and identity, for Glissant differences are transformations in Relation, without “undoing” capacity or relation to the formal logic of identity. As he tells filmmaker Mathia Diawara, “there's no likeness and differences; there's only differences (19). In Relation, nothing can be made commensurable with another; no relation can be subsumed by another, or it ceases to be Relation. Thus, the notion of the multiple takes place in and as creolization, as grounds of gesture, expression, and proposition, a moving earth without essence, teleology, ideology or philosophical ascriptions. Creolization importantly, is not the product of synthesis, but a radical rerouting carrying the unassimilable inheritance of the abyss, opaque and non-participatory in liberalism's fantasy of racial and cultural blending, denying the repose of Unity and the totalizing reach of philosophies of relation (Diawara 10). In his lexical transposition, multiplicity does not connote aggregation, assimilative mixture nor subtractive elimination. Creolization, like errantry, refers to the duality (not dualism) of one and more than one in “para-” critical expression that is superpositional and

suppositional, by means of which the relational terms of being and non-being lose their ontological weight. Glissant explains “in creolization, you can change, you can be with the other, you can change with the other while being yourself, you are not one, you are multiple, and you are yourself. You are not lost, because you are multiple. You are not broken apart, because you are multiple” (7). The logic of relation between individual and the collective does not apply; one is autonomous and one is multiple, and the being of one and not-one is the duality of Relation which conjugates relation and difference not as property but para-ontological performance—the possibility of “consent to not be a single being” (Diawara 5). Glissant’s poetics of Relation may be seen a *co-occurrence* of non-relation, a concurrence familiarized via a tonal proximity to the *non-*, from non-place and non-being made in transit. Even in the *non-*, errantry is at work, giving us non-being as all being. Although the *non-* is not theorized explicitly in Glissant’s poetics, we might nevertheless hear an impression of a co-occurrence of poetics and the *non-*; a withdrawal from standard relations implicated in his “world imaginary” which displaces neoliberal globalization, his multiplicity which dissolves aggregation and amalgamation, and his difference generalized and radicalized (as one *and* not-one) that obliquely circumvents the cut of Difference or “totalitarian relations.” As para-metric adjustment, opacity is a response to what we can call a predatory visualization of the World calibrated to the dispossession Jodi Byrd et al. have called an “insatiable predatory relation” (1).

*flash 21: shapes*

*“No one owns the circle, the singular circle. No one owns a singular rectangle. It has a tradition of course, but it’s time for a new language for that.”*

—Torkwase Dyson

*Torkwase Dyson, Untitled (419), 2018, gouache and ink on paper.*  
 see [burnaway.org/review/tif-sigfrids-howards-open-athens/torkwase-dyson/](http://burnaway.org/review/tif-sigfrids-howards-open-athens/torkwase-dyson/) and  
[www.torkwasedyson.com/](http://www.torkwasedyson.com/)

In the space of “totalitarian relation” where procedures of un/equalization relay what it means to see and be seen, Glissant asserts a call for a right to opacity. He writes:

“there’s a basic injustice in the worldwide spread of the transparency and projection of Western thought. Why must we evaluate people on the scale of transparency of the ideas proposed by the West? i understand this, i understand that and the other—rationality. i said that as far as i’m concerned, a person has the right to be opaque” (Diawara 14).

For artist and choreographer Will Rawls, “opacity is anti-spectacle, anti-revelation, anti-grasping, anti-ownership. The right to opacity is freedom from the expectation of complete coherence and comprehensibility in every aspect of your personhood” (Greiner). Opacity, like thickness, is a meditation on access, a calibration of surface, medium and density, like humidity as indicator of atmospheric movement, an aesthetic theory of freedom in the abolitionist tradition, that is always criminal within the legal order of transparency and the domain of the free, transparent subject of universal reason. Therefore, “right” here does not operate in the sense of the relational rights of Western modernity that indicate the properties of the individual subject. Withdrawing from the assumed “universal” obligation to be seen as one “truthfully is” (in transparency), Glissant stages non-participation in the intersubjective relations of the Western philosophical tradition, shifting poetics and movement in refusal of the imposition of “one’s own transparency on the other” (Diawara 15). Opacity is therefore a breaching of transparency’s law which stipulates a collection of presence, labour and unequal exposure in the image of equality and diversity, formalized in what Sara Ahmed has described as “image management” (“white men”). As the visual-legal order of the Human, transparency arranges by means of extraction, while at the same time compressing captured layers of legibility for the materialization of impenetrable borders where violence can seemingly be out of sight.

Ghosts are spectral, not transparent; they travel by movement in and through walls, passing temporal periodization in deep time, in its own incognita tempo as non-life, devalued life, viral-life. Defiant of capture and exposure, their images are made in visual-temporal tuning that are indeed outside and without liberal-modern carceral time. The right to opacity is thus a taking-back and an upheaval of image management in the covert tonalities

frequented by ghosts, a textured right to refusal, redress and self-determination as the circumstance of an autonomous calibration of being and nothingness. Since it is non-acceptance to being grasped and to being made property in and for relations of domination, the right to opacity, like the right to self-defence, is systematically punished and denied at the fractures of civil society's foundational underside. Only the outside and without can be the tactical field from which such right is asserted, that is, opacity as para-metrics in practice, positioned in the *para-* of paracriticism, the *ex-* of exile, in the unspoken undergrounds of civil society in adjacent yet turbulent errant com-position or fugitive vision. With an interpretative slip, the right to opacity may be posed as an occasion to move along a para-metric geo-metry of right, in a geo-sophy of ghosts as a metrics of the earth in self-calibrated adjustment (which can remain un-transparent), inserting autonomy and non-relation in horizon while slipping the blow of the disastrous cut between the subject of history and the object of knowledge. Para-metry makes theoretical fraud or fraudulent theory of geometry, making use of incognita as a device for the right to opacity.

Considering criminalization's dispossessive function and the designation of inferiority that arrives with the accusation of fraudulence, fraud here is posed in oblique mis-articulation and mis(sed)-representation, making candid and fictive both theory and geometry. Moving in incognita as speculative, im/possible geometry, opacity's para-metre connotes slipping beneath the subjectivity's proprietary logic and order of transparency. Geo-metry according to metrics in the *para-* de-securitized the map as a device of terrestrial appropriation, a practice of writing proprietary rights as writing the earth. Classification and territorial identification's exploitation of an imaginary *nullius*—nothingness, provided a technical and normative means of formalizing the measurement of a graspable and transparent earth. *Terra Nullius*, an inheritance of Roman property law denoting a type of property belonging to no one (as in no citizen, no owner, no human), that is, of no-one and of nothing, empty earth understood as null land transformable and assimilable into propriety law. Even where it had never been formally inscribed into law (e.g. Canada), it holds extra-legal power which justifies dispossession through claims to common well-being. *Terra incognita* or unknown land in Euro-colonial earth-writing was the antecedent of *terra nullius*, representing lands that have yet to be mapped. While *terra nullius* was

augmented by absence and erasure, *terra incognita*'s operative power derived from futurity and possible possession in an exposition of an ownership-yet-to-come. In the 19th century, "terra incognita" disappeared from the cartographical toolbox, because according to colonial earth-writing everything hitherto unknown had been made known, possessed and mapped. Here we keep *terra* and *incognita* set in slippery tension and refrain, using opacity as para-metric tact to practice weight-shifting swings on the paracritical hinge, or making practice of geo-metrics for thwarting carceral cartography.

Refrain, as in repetition in com-position, composure, and refrain from exposure by means of para-critical practice in illegibility, opacity, and incommunication, makes up the infrastructural strategy of movement without representation. Incognita as a flash image of the right to opacity is an interventionous disorientation of structures of presiding spatial recognition. The viral right of non-being and non-life practices subterfuge, disguise, slippage, concealment, camouflage, and copying as pirate geometry. They are compositions of variations in opacity moving in and through incommunication and excommunication at multiple concentrations of dispossession. (*terra*) *incognita* attempts at the work of calling to the dead in an oneirological inhabitation of space without maps. That is, in a place of density, blocking off the spatial registry of cartography's colonial authority to dream in solidarity and conspiracy with the occupants of the *non-* who can have no real place in "life-in-general"—the invaded beings targeted by militarism, poison, climate disaster, sexual violence, resource extraction and other carceral institutions—structurally positioned as non-beings, not well, not progressive, not-life. Opacity is also of habits and habitation, practiced rituals of keeping composure in obstruction and incapacitation. So, taking the right to opacity practically, that is, para-critically (aslant and adjacent the Human's notion of rights) is a practice in the outside and without, in non-sense, ex-sense and com-positional sense, as on-going procedure for non-relational fabrics of consent.

At "the beyond and underneath of this world" opacity is a saturation, a tuning of light, vision and medium like a tactical contouring of mist, as a tuning of the spectral and the opaque, of thickness and transparency, and density and content that may permit a syn-aesthetic listening for ghosts in unmarked drawings of incognita. As light, opacity (in

paracritical shift on species extinction) may also be understood as a feature of ultraviolet extinction, which in physics refers to the reduction of the intensity of visible light to nothingness. Or perhaps it refers to the intensity or thickness of starlight and sunlight that renders a field opaque—like the scattering of blue light into blue sky. Stretching genres in synaesthetic “re-routing” com-posure can be read as a “weaving” of a generic right (as in making genre of) visuality on one’s own terms (Glissant 16). We might stay with incognita, with a tactical tattering of a “map” of no thing, mu, scrambling its codification between sense and non-sense as incognita submersion into opacity, an insurgent study of mu where each track is the mark of a groove carved into a record by pressure and repetition. In this attempt to texturize non-relation, i try to circumvent its circumscription. Perhaps its project—like dreaming is in something like an exercise in speculation-in -the-oblique or in the thick of incognita that make ritual of waves in thought and motion, or practices in textural recursion like artist Wu Tsang’s insight that “improvisation is choreography” (Ziherl 257).

*flash 22: Billie and Glenn*

*Glenn Ligon, To Disembark: Billie Holiday, 1993, wood and sound,  
3' x 2-1/2' x 2', Detroit Institute of Arts.*

*See [www.glennligonstudio.com/to-disembark](http://www.glennligonstudio.com/to-disembark) and [www.dia.org/art/collection/object/disembark-billie-holiday-67405](http://www.dia.org/art/collection/object/disembark-billie-holiday-67405)*

*flash 23: mu*

*mu. is. \_\_\_\_\_. mu. dis. place. sp(l)ace; mu is finding that 'place' to write from.<sup>92</sup> mu is muthos, mu is muse. mu is mu—[sic]. mu—nothingness. mu is the first double letter. mu is the abolitionist imaginary. mu, 'first letter of the anti-colonial alphabet'<sup>93</sup>. mu is Sun Ra's Atlantis. mu, a Don Cherry-pitch. mu, rhythm past and yet to come. mu, the disappeared continent in the pacific. mu, ocean dream in oceanic opacity.*

<sup>92</sup> i am thinking of M. NourbeSe Philip's reflections on place in *Bla\_k*.

<sup>93</sup> See Sora Han, “Poetics of Mu”

**mu***track 1. electric ocean*

00:00

“Any longingly imagined, mourned or remembered place,  
time, state, or condition can be called “Mu.”

—Nathaniel Mackey, *Splay Anthem*, pg. x

In the conquisitive transit Mignolo has called modernity/coloniality, the ocean designates a void between thought and unthought, a gap between land and land, a non-place of no-thing in the afterlife of transatlantic slavery and the displacement of the archipelagos. In this World, the ocean is a mass grave in which histories, kin and names are swallowed in the “transit of empire.”<sup>94</sup> At its beyond and underneath, oceans are places and dwellings, ways of knowing and being; the ocean is habitat, the basis of social and ontological life and relation.<sup>95</sup> In the Pacific, Moana (oceans in Tongan) are the cosmological and epistemological centres from which people, beings and entities are made, that is conceptualized as “void” by continental thought and empire’s annexations (Tecun et al. 156). *Mu* is ocean epistemology because its poetics speak to the terror transmitted across seas in colonial and imperial transit, that also inaugurated philosophies of the continent (Europe).<sup>96</sup> These “tracks” are impressions of mu in the absence of exact location or contour. They are mu images without outlines, mu-like flashes. In this im/possible account of mu, i try to resist a flight to the ocean as commons because a conceptual shift of that sort seeks to absolve antagonisms without changing the metre of commensurability.

<sup>94</sup> This phrase is borrowed from the title of Jodi Byrd’s *Transit of Empire*.

<sup>95</sup> i am referring to understandings of relation in Pacific Island onto-epistemology, which beginning with oceans are not identical and independent of relation as discussed in the Western philosophical tradition. It would be interesting to consider ocean epistemologies from the Caribbean, Indian, South China, and Atlantic oceans.

<sup>96</sup> The colonial imaginary from the 15<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> centuries turned the sea into routes of gratuitous violence and calculated death, the abyss where nothingness is consolidated, also made territory where goods were accumulated.

Electric ocean is fiction<sup>97</sup> expressed as a longing for mu, felt like chromostereopsis or depth resulting from proximate reverberations of collected loss. It is speculative because if the radicality of the real means foreclosure to both thought and imagination, the goal is not representation, only association and improvisation. Electro-fiction describes attempts at slipping by the ecological comfort given by the idea of oceans as nature, because an attention to oceanic irresoluteness and hauntological recursion in looking for the dead is only sensible in a para-normal register. Mu is a dedication to nothing and to the *without* and *outside* which gives electro-spectro-opacity or image to the “tangible unknown” (Sium, Desai and Ritskes xii) felt unevenly like breath and heavy pulse unwriting the assumed determinacy of presence. Mu is an electric conduit in opaque location and runaway diffusion; its images are less about the extension of agency, reproduction, function, capacity, growth and other qualities attributed “life” to the non-quite-life, non-life, or even unrecognized life, and more concerned with care in, for and according to the *non-*.<sup>98</sup> Life and non-life represent the logic of distinction which cuts deep into the ocean, “an ideology that distinguished land from sea so that entering the ocean was to enter a mysterious place “out there.” The sea and everything in the sea became a means to “get across.” (Ingersoll 38).

Of passage and arrival, the sea that takes away names is the sea that gave identity to a technology of “World” making that prohibits mourning and teaches forgetting. The sea spills over into terrestrial amnesia. If the sea is a medium, it was understood by the

<sup>97</sup> See *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements* edited by adrienne maree brown and Walidah Imarisha. i borrow this use of fiction in part from Laruelle who borrows philo-fiction from science fiction, a rendering of an abbreviated philo-sophy without philosophical determination. i write fiction also with cognizance of limits of representational frameworks and the necessity of infidelity to reality in any articulation of the *without* and *outside*. Imarisha wrote, “whenever we try to envision a world without war, without violence, without prisons, without capitalism, we are engaging in speculative fiction. All organizing is science fiction” (10).

<sup>98</sup> i refuse the search for evidence of life as the basis for care, because it is also a refusal of the logic of commensurability that unilaterally submits entities into the qualifying scale of “life-in-general” (just as socialites, languages and practices are submitted to the scale of the “Human”) that imposes control, transparency, access to administer non-life and non-Human. It is a refusal of conversion to the terms of the concept of “life” or the “Human”, and their assumed supremacy, applicability and desirability, because recalling Christina Sharpe, care in the wake means caring for the dead (5).



World as a medium without recall where people and things named “cargo”, “illegal”, “garbage”, “waste” are tossed away when they can no longer be exchanged for profit. This place where what is no longer wanted is dispensed catches and collects memory of a worlding, an accumulated owing transcoded into material concatenation with the World’s debris and castaways. “Ghost-fishing” describes the catching of marine life by nets in the oceans that have long become obsolete, without use or exchange value, typically in the most “stable” waters such as the Great Garbage Patches of the Pacific. Even though ships meet water by the carving of surface, its wake reverberates such that we can also say the ocean is in the sky, that the sea is in the air, that oceanic currents run in the oxygen which re-livens cellular generation in organic life. Or that the ocean is found in the earth transformed into mines, in minefields made in trans-oceanic crossings navigated by aerial means, the ocean is a depository of war mentality, found in earth now too salty to nourish breadfruit, cassava, or yams. Salt watery floods redefine the relational thresholds left in the nomenclature of island, continent and sea.

*flash 24: Alan*

*“they are all secrets of the sea/ and this sea has so many secrets”*

*—Mohamed Hassan, “Secrets of the Sea (For Alan Kurdi)”*

As the sea extended from the other side of the door of no return, its erratic waves took persons, sociality and the cosmos in an exchange for gold, sugar, labour and terrestrial empire. Amiri Baraka said that “at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean there is a railroad made of human bones.”<sup>99</sup> There are few searches for these bones<sup>100</sup> and they are led by communities and descendants who live in the afterlife of ships and sea, because the human bones of which Baraka speaks are not the bones they mean when they “discover” findings in “our” shared human history—the slave is an excommunicated figure that liberal humanism cannot think and cannot re-member into community. These are the bones of those for whom the sea did not promise a future, but the certainty of uncertain social and

<sup>99</sup> Amiri Baraka, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ib1Rb\\_vP2Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ib1Rb_vP2Q)

<sup>100</sup> See Slave Wrecks Project: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/initiatives/slave-wrecks-project>

bodily death, and those who jumped because the certainty of death was better than the uncertainty of ontological destruction with no end. These bones at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, turned to sand, glass and materials used for the construction of prisons, make possible the transparent architectures of the (neoliberal) *polis* and empire. These bones now lay next to the fiber optic cables and infrastructures of war that reduce people to bones from the air in another space and time—the terror is persistent. In *Feeding the Ghosts*, Fred D’Aguiar wrote that “the sea was the beginning and end of everything” (112).

*flash 25: elegy*

*The first death comes by*

*Bullet. The second, when they’ve*

*forgotten your name.*

—*Simone John, Elegy for Dead Black Women #1, Testify. 2017*

Cree artist Kent Monkman said “the settlers came here to forget” (Lecture, Museum London 2019). *The sea is where they go to wash away their histories*. In the subsequent centuries of occupation, forgetting became an essential dimension to Canadian or “northern” self-fashioning. In the blankness of an appropriated slate, they rehearsed forgetting in a becoming anew legitimated by the simultaneous transfer of antecedent principles of property and propriety. In a “masterful political move”, the English and the French occupied the mythical double place as both original peoples and newly arrived conquerors (Walcott and Abdillahi 55), forgetting contradiction and erasure via a devotion to resolution. The Canadian refusal to acknowledge its relation to transatlantic slavery—the institution which took away names by methods of record, catalogue, price, and units—is the consequence of a forgetting made into national tradition, affirmed in identity which forgets forgetting itself (Maynard 4).

The ocean is a medium carrying what Lisa Lowe called a “braided project” linking “liberal promises of emancipation, free labour, free trade and government” with “conquest, captivity, trade and dominion on and across four continents” (137). i often have the impression that the body of water that makes up the Atlantic is the same water that moves

in the Pacific, forgetting that because their densities are different, they never mix. But oceans have multiple transits. My arrival from the Pacific is in part because Baraka's bones formed a railroad across the Atlantic. The railroad built by migrant Chinese workers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century cutting across *Maehkaenah-Menaehsaeh* (Turtle Island in Menominee language<sup>101</sup>) was paid for by the railroad at the bottom of the sea which did not lead to freedom, but enslavement, genocide, indentureship, debt and property carrying logics of the carceral. These transits are incommensurable but linked. Iyko Day wrote of the function of Asian racialization as abstract and alien labour (cheap, disposable, unnatural, impermanent, flexible) in the Canadian nation building project of settler colonial capitalism, a form of subjugation which continues to supplement the dispossession of Black and Indigenous bodies and lands (8). The magnitude of this mass grave/birthplace breaches nation-state borders. Its cultural and structural resonance retreats and ascends, more pronounced in some sonographies and geographies.

Kamau Brathwaite calls tidalectics the collected but not necessarily collective pressure of the ocean's contradictory swells in repetitious time that break dialectic progression (Reckin 1). Both on time and out of time, counting on the unpunctuality of the sea,<sup>102</sup> tidalectics think surge as the material swelling of discordant and unresolvable burial grounds. It is a fiction and description; yielding the destructive powers of archives that consist of what leaves behind no visible records. The sea, like text, as in texture, is made of accumulations of attunements that may make up a genre, like jazz in music, tying mu as non/place to abolitionist hydra-fiction. Its geography drawn in the para-metres of *incognita* geometry's uncertain contours, where illegibility, unintelligibility, incommunication, non-representation, and non-sense—cut off by the record flow over. Thinking music and record, *incognita* syn-aesthetics can be read as an extemporization on a measure (maybe two) in a riffing on mu, understood as practice in recording without record, uninvested in “becoming human.”

<sup>101</sup>See “The Land, Space and Place” by Rowland “Enaemaehkiw” Keshena Robinson (Menominee Nation), <https://onkwehonwerising.wordpress.com/indigenous-critical-theory-study-guide/glossary-of-indigenous-terminology/the-land-space-place/>

<sup>102</sup> i overheard from some place that Malcom X said: a revolutionary is always on time.

If electric ocean pertains to an intensity—a mu feeling—perhaps we can think the sea the way Ann Cvetkovich sees cultural texts, as “repositories of feelings and emotions” (7). If mu describes the condition of transit out of time, the mu note on mu time is a playing with archive—tones in the key of mu, as texture and signature of oceanic opacity. Mu notes contain sounds and textures of the without record, breaking records as the unrecordable. Mu writing can similarly be thought as improvisation on record: as performance, as interventionist playing the archives, as arrangement or composition (dj-ing), as a reworking the script of legibility, as syncopation in held and drag time. In defiance of the authority of colonial earth-writing’s assumed jurisprudence over “life-in-general”, the “living” and the “non-”, mu is contiguous with the oceanic habitat of ghosts next to the 405 and counting oceanic deadzones.<sup>103</sup>

*track 2. syn-aesthetic*

00:00

*mu — no  
thing*

*“nowhere is the wound from which nothingness emerges” (Hayward & Gossett)*

*mu — like mutiny*

*mu — like movement (made like “radiant moments of ordinariness made like art”- Dione Brand)*

*mu, murmur, mu, mucunán*

*mu, muffle, drag, shuffle*

*mu — de-compositional prelude to*

*mu — sic.*

*mu*

*mu talk*

*unmarked tempo*

*abolitionist image in mu.*

*track 3. “map of the might could or what might be”*

00:00:00

<sup>103</sup> Deadzones are parts of the sea that can no longer support biological life.

“The song of the Andoumboulou is one of burial and rebirth, *mu* momentary utterance extended into ongoing myth, an impulse toward signature, self-elaboration, finding and losing itself. The word for this is *ythm* (clipped rhythm, anagrammatic myth). Revisitation suggests that what was and, by extension, what is might be otherwise”.

—Nathaniel Mackey, *Splay Anthem* xiii

“To us, living in this massive land informed our encapsulation and encoding of all our histories, languages, and all of our things that we think we have lost—we haven’t.”

—Scott Benesiinaabandan, Interview with Jaime Issac

The “might could” or “might be” of a map is reminiscent of Nathaniel Mackey’s practice of echo described in *Splay Anthem*: “echo is homage, lineage” and also “the specter of dispersed identity and community, staggered adjunction or address” (*Splay Anthem* xii). Echo, in line with errantry, is a way of moving by means of referential and deferential composition, a tactical and technical sampling of thought as space, map and rhythm along the lines of clipped materials that move ghosts. And echo can be an extension of a particular sound made in a repeated rewind set in motion by a pause (as in the crafting of pause tapes). It is an exercise in rhythmic production that is also a tangent of mapping the “might could”—pulled from the record (played on the radio) or the record book (logs and accounts) as synaesthetized material. In one sense, the echo is literally carried in archival practice that is constitutive of beat making. It also moves through the *mu*-inflected tension of the “might could” of abolitionist geography.

In an essay that is in some ways an homage to Ester Brown, a young Black woman living in New York in the early 20th century, Saidiya Hartman interrogated the difficulty entailed in mapping “might” and “could” in adjunction (“Anarchy of” 468). How can one map attitude or quotidian defiance to foreclosures of racial subjection, where resistance and idleness are seen in blur? What does a map “fix” in placelessness? What does a map do for the strange opacity of ghosts? Might a map of the “might could or what might be” disturbing the mandate of visualization and exposition of unknowns provide an incognita

map? Hartman's "map" does not recover any records that might enclose what can be thought about Ester Brown or anything that might confirm or negate the limit boundaries of her life and possibility. She moves in the speculative underground, dreaming the "might could" of Ester Brown's life and expression, mediations and solicitations that would never be legible as "politics" nor awarded recognition as freedom struggle. Ester's life, for Hartman is a tribute to waywardness. What she "knew" of Ester Brown was by way of records and case files retrieved from the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility that pulled various dimensions of Brown's "life" (including her sexual history, hobbies, family relationships) into a record denoting criminality. Ester herself had never written or published anything. Without formal representation, without a party and without a program, Brown's "anarchy" is echoed in my ruminations on Hartman's ruminations on Brown's perhaps ruminations—that is, what she might could and might have been dreaming—in an extended staying with unknowability made by necessity, like extemporized ruminations after a missing note. Of mobility and errantry, the "might could" is part of Southern dialect in the United States produced by multiple transits and that contain both involuntariness of movement and aspirations of flight. "Might could" and "what might be" entail (con)sequences of movement in echoes and echoes' errant and uncertain passages, resembling Moten's reference to mu as "promise and impossibility rolled into one (Anunica/Nunca)" ("Blackness" 747).

Moten suggests that Blackness' shared ground with Nothingness stipulates an unmapability "within the cosmological grid of the transcendental subject" which subtends all drawings of mu (740). In this sense, "map" hints at the tangibility of im/possibility that thickens and collects as border and contour. A "map of the *might could* or *what might be*" does not refer to "any single set of literal footprints", nor does it reveal with precision Ester Brown's location and place in narrative or chronology (Hartman, "Anarchy" 468). Rather, the invocation of map marks an intensity, a faintness and thickness of line noted in texture, stretched over a collection of ground and belonging where mu as location is elongated in perpetual span. The "what might be" dis/articulated as an underside of the map's surface, eclipses the empirical mandate of mapping from its underground; its weightedness scatters like the weightlessness of sound and light, like when "ghosts try to step into life" (Brand

111). Taking mu as synaesthetic application, i riff by assonance and interpretive proximity, substituting mu in variance like the substitution of mu ( $\mu$ )—the first double letter of the greek alphabet—used variously as co-efficient and function in mathematics, computation and physical sciences, sometimes denoting measure and/or minimalization. Mu as nothingness, like the Japanese mu from the Chinese wu (無) also pronounced mou, also with a tonal inflection in 冇 (mou)... subtracted from 有 (to have; yuo)—still nothingness (Moten “Blackness” 750).

Mu’s transit is noted in its mythic form, which famously found itself as solidified earth in 19th century English “tea planter in Sri Lanka” James Churchward<sup>104</sup>’s extrapolative ambitions to commit to map, a cartographical rendering of mu in *The Lost Continent of Mu: Motherland of Man* or sunken island in the pacific, with the colonial goal of capturing and reclaiming “mu” as territory for Man/Human settlement. The map of “Mu” as coded myth is displaced in Sun Ra’s *Atlantis* where lostness and loss is a condition of past and future, the very means through which one finds oneself in a non-place (not a void), tied to the historical place-making projects of empire. Yet, Sun Ra’s mu is a cosmological no-place brought into textual articulation *without* attachment to earth as planetary ground. Its recovery does not require discovery as in the case of Churchward; it is entangled with irreconcilability and irreparability, not unlike Lowe’s modern braid. “Mu” is the title of the first track on *Atlantis* in which “Atlantis” is the last track, following “Lemuria”—some other discoverer’s name for mu. As such, Sun Ra’s “continent” is not of land per-say, but of a being in multiple places and spaces at once, evocative of what Dione Brand would describe as the diaspora condition of dreaming (29). Without transcendental seduction, the “mu” track does not afford landing or arrival, one is already in step in polyphonic gesture. There is no becoming, one is both in place and displaced. So, the map of mu is a reminder of having no map, an interpretation and improvisation on mapping made in the non-space, nonsense of mu, like jazz.

<sup>104</sup> <http://www.my-mu.com/index.html>

Mackey writes of “stra-dust” in an anagrammatic tuning of star, like a short form of stranger, a remix of stro-nger (21). His writes of mu a.k.a. Andoumboulou song (songs of funeral and birth in Dogon addresses to spirits) in repetition in serial form, which fills like saturation in what might be considered a drawing of mu in the oblique. By sequence and seriality, Mackey sidesteps the fixture of mu to territorial delineation. Unrolling in time like music, *Splay Anthem* performs a “map of the might could” in mu situated extemporization—choreographic and improvisatory attenuation. Like Coltrane is to Mackey, the latter’s serial multiplication of mu in Andoumboulou song feels like pursuing end notes in stretched time, like recitation of geo-fiction mapping nowhere, where mu is longing in an interval between *muthos* and music. Atlantis, deriving from Atlas rings like “Atliss” in Mackey’s “mu” series, and in crossing Don Cherry’s two “mu” albums swings in intervallic landings at the pacific, the atlantic and the no-landic. but Interval, like motion in fiction and dreaming registers spanning notes—an extemporization on/of mu and its nowhere-anagrammatic “um” that moves also through substitution and superposition. Its percussive effects resemble paresthesia complication—a tingling and numbness of the skin. Mu (myth) resides in and as f(r)iction<sup>105</sup>, permitting a generic un/grounding that sounds like philo-fiction<sup>106</sup>, photo-fiction, geo-fiction, museo-fiction edging at times into “Sonic Fiction” (Eshun 00[-003]).

Mu therefore simultaneously interrupts and finds expression in the “‘webbed network’ of computerhythms, machine mythology and concepttechnics which routes, reroutes and crisscrosses the Black Atlantic” that Kodwo Eshun has described (00[-006]). If we take seriously the stakes laid out thus far, “solidarity with a corpse” (which Eshun warns against), a dealing with nothingness (mu)—outside, without, alongside, underside—is catastrophic to racial capitalism, civil society and genre of the Human. For this reason, fictive practice (as dissonant collaborations and spectral calibrations engaging with opacity as right and mu as ritual time *in incognita*) is to be in company with the im/possible conditions of the present. The stakes, therefore, include posing decolonial and abolitionist dreaming as time bending practices in non-relational stances to this World, that is, in

<sup>105</sup> Mu is the coefficient for calculating friction.



recognition of both the damage of relationality in the Western philosophical tradition, as well as the repercussive echoes of the “non-.” This is in recognition of beings, non-beings, non-life, non-citizens, Indigenous, Black, poor, femme, trans militants, pirates, rebel cyborgs,<sup>107</sup> maroons, aliens and defenders of land and water already in practices that halt standard procedure. Traditions cultivated for ending of this World cannot ever be properly assimilated as “humanist traditions” and so consideration on incommensurability necessitates a thinking of tradition, story, and dreaming outside and without decision, normativity or even radicalism.

From generic fiction, we can think the map as com-position and mapping as postures in rhythmic measurement or quantization<sup>108</sup>—the quantification of space and spatialization of time(notation). Hip-hop as a practice of conjuring forms a genre of homage and lineage made of cuts and repetition, a practice of moving in circumstances of the cut (racial, economic, philosophical) via cuts, with an accent on slippage, bending time (tempo) and space (bars) without leaving sight of conditions of material life. Samples layer, reduce, filter, stretch, distort and retune as beat to make new time, with the overtones and undertones in mu—a transposition and extemporization of the cut. A practice in waywardness and echoes, the making of loops and tracks as generic technique involves movement up the count in metered time by means of a repeated throwback to an iteration of a transfigured time. In the radical broadness of its genre (samples can be taken from anything and anywhere) beatmaking with a fictive inflection performs the changing of para-metre in mu time, like a ghost time. J Dilla’s drag performs beat operations in the non-standard, notably in the unquantized bending of the drum machine’s meter, giving textures taken from the record/archive a program in swing. Dragging after the beat and sometimes in an anticipatory drag wound ahead of the beat, Dilla’s time is lag time, echoic dream time, of held breath, heavily sampled with care-ful homage to soul, funk and jazz and the

<sup>107</sup>As Joy James and João Costa have noted, all Black beings always already live as Black Cyborgs, cast as supernatural, non-human, and without autonomous agency (196). Cyborgs do not all want the same thing: “Part divine, part mechanical, part biological, black rebel cyborgs demand not democracy but freedom” (201).

<sup>108</sup> In beat making, to quantize is a standard procedure of automated distribution of beats evenly across a track.

cultural materials of Detroit—radio announcements, commercials, and the humming of the air conditioner. Dilla’s rhythmic elision, out of time but not ametric, makes para-practice of lag sampling—mapping in non-standard geo-metry or *measured ground* pronounced in texture—in which cadence, pulse and pause disturb metered time. Habits of held time, making para-metre of the near-missing of a beat is a homage to time-fiction circuiting in unquantized and extemporized time, because to change a cut always involves improvisatory slips. In accord with Eshun, the concern is not with resolving a supposed opposition between “a humanist r&b with a posthuman Techno” (006), but with moving in the “non-” and the “para-” in mu time.

Glissant spoke of jazz as being made of a “flight of memory” requiring “a terrifying effort” in an imagination of the what might be and might have been—a “reconstruction within a distraught memory of something that had disappeared and had now been regained” (Diawara 8). Dilla’s time makes loops of flight, where sound cuts out to recurrently drop a longing for the low-end return of the bass and kick made into techno-sonic ritual. After the (dis)continuation of the Roland TR-808<sup>109</sup>, hip-hop and the 808 continue as genres active in sonic fiction and recursive time, always in tension with social and economic conditions of racialized and devalued non/life. It is the 808’s failure to “truthfulness” (its “unnatural” sounds and “booming” bass drum) that lead to its commercial abandonment and subsequent availability in the communities where hip-hop and techno came into formation. The 808 thus exceeds technical instrumentality, acting as a signature of temporal and textural (dis)inheritance, Mackey’s serial echo in mu: “Emulations, like 808s, are injuriously loving” (Weheliye and McKittrick 13). 808s can be read as the production of the act of sounding lost record that rewrites and opens up what Wynter called genres of being human, reciting the heartbreak that cannot be repaired<sup>110</sup>: “the reverberating echoes of our collective plantocratic historical pasts in the present” (14). Weheliye and McKittrick write:

“...the 808s narrate life, Black life. So, the VSTs — the sounds and beats and grooves they make — are not outside us or of us, but praxis. The

<sup>109</sup> The 808’s commercial failure made the drum machine a popular option for Hip-Hop producers and beat makers, who not having much access to money were able to purchase them at reduced prices at pawn shops and secondhand stores (Weheliye and McKittrick 13).

story — the stories told above — cannot be told without the deep boom, clap, unspeakable yet audible heartbreak. Like a sssshhh — evinceerated, earpiercing silence” (19).

Can the 808 be thought as an incantation of the imagined memory of the “might could” at the Bedford Hills “noise strike”<sup>111</sup>—the boom-clap—that Ester Brown might have been a part of? Does the example of the riotous sounding in the women’s prison provide a sample of abolitionist demands or more importantly abolitionist dreams that spill over the legible parameters of formal “demands”? Can example, as in “out” + “take”<sup>112</sup> connote the accidental or incidental excess, the “extra-” that *cannot* make the cut for inclusion politics? And sample as the ampling of the ex-sampled, absent record? Can ex-ample and sample permit the non-human to be “studied as more than an example, as more than a product in service of something else”<sup>113</sup>(Walcott and Abdillahi 53)? Rewinding to thickness and the capacity of opacity to threaten clarity and capture, we can pose thickness as a kind of attenuation, a *low-end theory*<sup>114</sup> in bass and kick saturation that extend echoes (Mackey, *Splay Anthem* xi). A thick image of mu is an image of the refusal of apprehension, a fugitive unrepresentable *without* and *outside*, t/here which wants nothing of civil society but its termination. It is entangled but non-reciprocal, affected but non-relational with this World. Interpolating on Avery Gordon’s ruminations, “she is looking for a way to search for the disappeared. She also knows that the disappeared are looking for each other” (82). Non-placeness is the condition of a generic underground, real and inaccessible, performing in and as tactics-without-program (program in mu) where echoic invention sounds in held time, like thickness made by an algo-rithmic/para-metric calling out to names we do not and cannot know for irreconcilability itself. In a refrain of the “might could” in syn-aesthetic reference to mu, can we make echoes in thick air without demanding or assuming access?

111 Hartman tells the story of a sonic revolt of women in Bedford’s Lowell college, where the women screamed and banged on the prison walls and bars, smashed windows, started fires.

112 In Latin, example is *exemplum* from *eximere*, ex-“out” and “mere “take” (dictionary).

113 i borrow this from Walcott and Abdillahi’s writing about Black studies, exhaustion and the Western University: “the repetition to make BlackLife worthy, to have it noticed, to have it studied as more than an example, as more than a product in service of something else” (53).

114 This is a reference to the Tribe Called Quest Album, *Low End Theory*.

Dreaming a Dilla kind of map—an unquantized drop, behind and ahead, in time and off beat—enabling slips and retentions in f(r)iction inflected with para-critical accent, rendering para-normal the acquisitive probe of *understanding* in homage to philo-/photo-/ythem-fiction. Listening to unrecordedness like flight without a guarantee of landing is an insurrectionary practice and tactic that is also resurrectionary; so that in Dilla’s *Donuts* you might hear Don Cherry’s *mu*, and in Coltrane, the “noise strike” of *the anarchy of coloured girls*, like notes of what Moten calls “the insurgency of immanence”, transmissions of bones and ghosts in the grounds of inherence Kathryn Yusoff had gestured towards (“Blackness” 742). Might we place in resonance and assonance Ester Brown, 808s, J Dilla, Édouard Glissant, Sylvia Wynter, Sandra Bland and Saidiya Hartman? Would its low-end attenuation, like movement along to Mackey’s “back/ at/ some beginning” (*Splay Anthem* xi) keep as a sample “a nowhere that subtends—or perhaps even abjects—“the world”” (Hayward & Gossett 22)? What might it mean to locate the “map of the might could or what might be” in a poetic science of dis-funk-tion as unmarked tempo? If “might could” or “what might be” may articulate a sounding of the end of this World, might its rhythm dis-place philosophy proper’s calculated cuts, like Dixon-Román’s shift into “algo-ritmo” as other rhythm? What are its compositional and computational textures if *mu*, as Sora Han suggests, is the first non-single letter, the first letter of an anti-colonial alphabet (9)? In the tempo of Ester Brown, a *mu* note:

“It was the dangerous music of upheaval. En masse they announced what had been endured, what they wanted, what they intended to destroy. Bawling and screaming and cursing made the cottage tremble and corralled them together into one large pulsing formation, an ensemble reveling in the beauty of the strike. Young women hanging out of the windows, crowding at the doors, and huddling on shared beds sounded a complete revolution, an upheaval of the given, an undoing and remaking of values, which called property and law and social order into crisis. They sought redress among themselves. The call and the appeal transformed them from prisoners into rioters, from inmates to fugitives, even if only for thirteen hours. In the discordant assembly, they found a hearing in one another.” (Hartman, “Anarchy of” 483)

*flash 26:* ———

*“Because the sunset, like survival, exists only on the verge of its own disappearing. To be gorgeous, you must first be seen, but to be seen allows you to be hunted.”*

*—Ocean Vuong*

## conclusion: or abolitionist conspiracy

“It’s after the end of the world, don’t you know that yet?”

—Sun Ra, *Space Is the Place* 1974

“The project of the euro-modernity, coloniality and settlement may be to eliminate me, and to make me into an abjected, weird being while we wait until that project reaches its telos. However, i know when i look out and survey the terrain, not only of Turtle Island, but of the planet in general, and see all of this, that we are already moving into and towards the beyond and the underneath of this world.”

—Enaemaehkiw Kesīqnaeh (Menominee Nation) 2019

We are at and after the “end of the world” and what i have to offer is nothing more and nothing less than an auxiliary, delivering another communiqué—in homage and in extemporization—for attending to incommensurability as a starting point for abolitionist dreaming. That is, for abolitionist conspiracy as intense dreaming where horizon and immanence are not easily kept apart. As Walidah Imarisha has suggested, dreaming the termination of a world in which the genocidal logics of carcerality and enslavement, coloniality and dis/possession can exist is always the work of speculative fiction (1). This project is an effort in articulating the grounds of an abolitionist non-relational stance to the “Human” as a genre of being, a theory-fiction troubling too hasty ways to a “post” when the ontological and fleshly procedures of racial capitalism, settler colonialism and the afterlife of slavery are *still* performed and *still* reproduced. In the phrase abolitionist conspiracy are vexed implications of being, relation, communication and common, as well as possibilities for moving in the *non*—a breaking of the terms and contractual grounds of civil society in generic philosophical insurrection.

“The World” describes philosophical authority, an “over-representation” of a particular genre of worlding which generates itself in cuts (Wynter, “Unsettling” 313). Its logics of

distinction and mastery developed in tandem with racial capitalism, (settler)coloniality, the subject and the figure of “the Human” coat a murderous earth-writing with serrated shimmers of universality, commonality, exchange and promises of resolution, continuation and overcoming. This project is a refusal of that promise and an attempt at making practices of moving beneath and against its grain, in view of the violence involved in making commensurable, making computable, and making knowable. The university<sup>115</sup> as one of the many homes of the Western philosophical tradition is also one of the stock exchanges where theory-fiction is traded. Some of the other homes of this tradition from which it hones techniques of extraction and realizes capital gains are open-pit mines, bulldozers, checkpoints, border walls, the RCMP, mercenary armies, tar-sands infrastructure, military expansion, prisons, feminicides, “diversity” certificates, carbon trading, and community-policing where the standard relations of this World proceed through calculated subjection, objectification, and abjection. This composition in the non-standard is a refusal of participation, reconciliation, consensus and agreement in a situation structurally predicated upon nonconsent for the survival and continuation of the given, where the demands of the non-Human can never be met. It is a paracritical exercise in com-posing a generic orientation to the figure “abolitionist≠posthumanism”—an impression of a non-relational stance to carcerality, a posthuman in mu— gathering what Nahum Chandler has described as “problems for thought” and what Frank Wilderson has called “structural antagonisms” for a desedimentation in the beneath, outside and without of this World. Throughout, i have tried to situate the “Human” and its afterlives in the production of difference and relationality as forms of commensuration, exchange, recognition, visibility, digitality, measure, count, record and environmental thought. i read racial slavery/capitalism, anti-blackness and settler colonialism as ontological and institutional features and fixtures of this genre of being that are constitutive and not incidental to its procedures of intersubjectivity, ethics, politics, rights, and civility.

Without the abolition of that which gives the Human coherence, without the end of logics of carcerality, capture, ex/a/proPRIATION, the relational structure which underwrites it will

<sup>115</sup> See <https://abolition.university/>

remain intact and find new techno-ontological iterations in human and posthuman worlds. Its afterlives as biological, humanitarian, algorithmic, ecological, machinic and racial formations do not fail to reproduce distinction in their relational folds. Thus, attempts at arriving at a “posthuman” must contend and engage with the disarticulation of the violent calculus of death through which this genre is renewed. The extension of Human-attributed properties and values such as being, legibility, transparency, and criticality to the non-Human, for instance, functions through techniques of conversion, commensuration, coercion and elimination to reinscribe the authority and heritage of the Human (the colonizer, the citizen, the master, the subject), even when the benefits of “rights”, “inclusion”, “welfare” can be provisionally useful. Because the very coherence of the Human is predicated upon the hyper-exposure and obscuration of the non-Human, admission to Human membership can only ever be partial. In a situation of structural domination, where the grounds of being and recognition are sites of disappearance, where presence, performance and participation cover up violation, relationality is always unconsensual, involving a giving account and a giving away without permission, an unequal exchange posed as equivalency.

Further, the non-Human/non-being is an im/possible figure defined in the *without* of freedom, subjectivity, rights, futurity, property. It is paradigmatically unavailable to thought in the relational terms of this World; it is outside and incomprehensible, even as the reproduction of its very non-existence in negativity constitutes the Human’s condition of possibility. Its *incommensurable*, *incomputable* and *incognita* grammars of non/being are always already in the spill, in fugitive non-relation that cannot be properly incorporated or converted. This is because civil society is a slave society—“the problem in the wake” as Christina Sharpe might say (5)—a carceral sociality given by the im/possibility of the *non-*. It’s cutting-industrial-complex submits flesh, water, land, bodies, kinships, cosmologies to the logic of cells and confinement, in expropriative repetition to make appropriate (property) all that forms the contours of a legible, metaphysical Human-being. In the relational paradigm of civil society, the figure of the slave is irrecoverable—any attempt at doing so performs the obliteration of the slave. As such, we do not seek redemption of the slave or of the Human, but the termination of the carceral relation, because redemption is a



framework which serves the Human's own reconstitution as an institution. Its redemptive formations in the subject of the European enlightenment, liberal modernity, cosmopolitanism, *anthropos*, or "life-in-general" provide little for the slave, the refugee, the fugitive, the prisoner, the native or any figure that falls on the underside and abject-side of its cut, but the perpetuation of the structures of their social death. As many have argued, where slavery *is* its condition of freedom, getting free is inconceivable without the breaking of the notion of "freedom" itself. As Joy James and João Costa Vargas explained, some Black Cyborgs demand nothing from civil society but its end: "they exist outside of humanity that fabricates time and measures freedom and enslavement by teaspoons or Tazers" (201).

A stance towards abolitionist/posthumanism is written from the beneath, outside and without. It begins and stays with the im/possibility of the *non-* and withholds it in para-practice or theory fiction. The *non-* and the *para-* are positional and suppositional refusals at becoming-Human, a withdrawal of being-in-relation according to this World. Because the violence of philosophical distinction is always an emergency, this posture in dreamy immediacy to the posthuman is expressed as an articulation of *genres*, com-posed obliquely throughout the document, bearing semblance to generic refusal, general strike or abolitionist generation. Abolitionist oneirology is a study of f(r)iction and immanent revolt, drawing from traditions of fugitivity, maroonage, decoloniality and genres of freedom struggle that pose a non-relational challenge to this World's dis/possessive fold. The im/possible "demands" of abolitionist dreaming are gestures towards a radicality incommensurable, incomputable and opaque to the relational terms of the dominant genre of the Human.

Setting posture in the oblique—in paracritical tact, i have borrowed textures, images, and positions, not for the imposition of an assemblage but for an echo of conspiratorial undergrounds in the making of "problems for thought." Incommensurability describes that which cannot be made commensurate or equivalent without conversion, reflecting the constitutional underside and outside of philosophies of relation. Incomputability is the spilling over of a count, missed counts and surplus numeration in misregistration;

algorithm's unassimilable excess; of ghosts, flesh and the dead. Incognita is a tactic-without-program, a syn-aesthetic tuning of transparency *vis-à-vis* spectrality and opacity and a calibration of climate in a para-critical practice of adjusting exposure. It is time and space travel in *mu*—the fugitive, fraudulent geo-sonic-fiction in the disarticulation of being and nothingness. It is non-relational, syn-aesthetic, ex-sampled, -ythm, lost track, and riotous ghost-writing. Neither art, politics nor philosophy, it is a trafficking in the *non-* and *para-* disciplinary.

i pose conspiracy and composition in oscillation to posit dreamy militancy from the beneath, outside and without of civil society. Con-spiration as practice then is organizing according to *mu*, a thickening of the plot according to the fleshly underground of civil society's integral abjection, where fugitivity and decolonial liberation are not commensurable but conspiratorial. Conspiracy, as practice in immanent revolt also refers to a practice in articulating the dream time of rebellion or the extemporalized (non)performance of fugitive horizon, a counting according to conspiratorial time, marked simultaneously in the present and the non-present, in the disarticulation of this specific genre called the "Human." These com-positional grounds consist of contradictory and unresolved textures, techniques and conjunctions, because they are suppositional and super-positional. There is no theoretical program or recipe for praxis, but rather an interest in fiction and immanence, a proposition of syn-aesthetic tension as practice in solidarity with the *non-*. Conspiratorial breathing suggests a reconsideration of collectivity as assemblage or aggregation. Breath as climate mobilizes theory-fiction in rejection of philosophies of relation's hold over what is possible in relation. Further, breathing for some is "nothing short of treason" (Hartman, "anarchy" 466).<sup>116</sup> As such, conspiracy is a refusal of cuts, a sabotaging of the colonization and appropriation of death,<sup>117</sup> an organizing

<sup>116</sup> Between the time of writing and the time of the submission of this thesis, people all over the world are rising up in rage and grief for the Black and Indigenous people murdered by the police, for those who lost their lives and their loved ones to the genocidal effects of health care inequality, environmental racism, incarceration and poverty all of which compounded by deeply troubling COVID-19 pandemic responses.

<sup>117</sup> This came out of a conversation with Wiki during our time at El Cambalache regarding the theft of death ceremonies. The criminalization of Māori ceremonies and cosmological practices of passage and relation in settler colonial Aotearoa.

in mu that does not give politics but poli-fiction on horizon-tal grounds, since from the *non-* and *para-* there is no guarantee of the political in any conventional sense. The implication is that solidarity is not in the given but in what is conspired for.

Conspiracy also finds reflection in what Mackey might call the mandate to “collaborate dissonance” (15). Or what Moten and Harney have called the “uncanny that one can sense in cooperation, the secret once called solidarity” (42). Simpson with Walcott and Coulthard described the task as creating “constellations of co-resistance” that no longer “centre whiteness in our movements” (82). I recognize notes of abolitionist conspiracy in Leanne Simpson’s theorization of *biidaabin*, the first light of dawn in Nishnabemowin, as “a radical alternative present ...[made] on the ground, in real time, with real people” (81). For Eve Tuck and Rinaldo Walcott, it may look something like “contingent collaborations” (*The Henceforward*). For Glissant, perhaps it is Relation as “weaving fabrics” of opacities (190). For Povinelli, perhaps it is the refusal to let radical worlds seem unremarkable (320). Perhaps for me, it is a practice of deep solidarity in non-relation, which does not posit conciliation as a goal, but incommensurability as com-position in mu, to find composure in a fugitive break from philosophical relationality.

Taking seriously Tuck and Yang’s insight “that the opportunities for solidarity lie in what is incommensurable rather than what is common across these efforts” (28), might we practice in para-normal conspiracy, solidarity *without* settler colonial relationality, *without* anti-black sociality, *without* carceral society, *without* racial capitalism, *without* the Human, *without* a demand for equivalency, transparency or commensurability? In conspiracy, might we defend community in the *non-*? Might we “care in the wake” (Sharpe 5)? What can we make of exchange and count in non-relation, in the *without* of property, in the *refusal* of capture? What might this genre of thought bring about for the colonial/carceral horizon of debt, commensuration and non-sovereignty? Might we make theory-fiction of solidarity in opacity as guerilla tacts of philosophical disobedience? Can we make speculative practice of abolition dreaming as climate rebellion, a thick weather

underground marked by unstable geo-metry? Or traffic in maps of abolitionist posthuman-fiction without posthumanism? Having yet to answer Robin Kelley's question "what shall we build on the ashes of a nightmare? (196), we refuse closure in a situation that is not yet concluded. We are in the middle, at and after the end of this World, where do we go from here in the presence of multiple apocalypses?

## works cited

- @GwenCarrERIC. "He said it 11 times before they murdered him." *Twitter*, 17 Jul. 2018, 2:27p.m., [twitter.com/GwenCarrERIC/status/1019287422738272257/photo/1](https://twitter.com/GwenCarrERIC/status/1019287422738272257/photo/1).
- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The New Press, 2010.
- Alfred, Gerald Taiaiake . "It's All about the Land." *Whose Land is it Anyway?: A Manuel for Decolonization*, edited by Peter McFarlane and Nicole Schabus, Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC, 2017, pp. 10 - 14.
- . *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. University of Toronto Press, 2005.
- Aravamudan, Srinivas. "The Catachronism of Climate Change." *Diacritics*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2013, pp. 6–30.
- Banerji, Debashish and Makarand R. Paranjape. *Critical Posthumanism and Planetary Futures*. Springer, 2016.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2010.
- Bhandar, Brenna and Alberto Toscano. "Race, Real Estate and Real Abstraction." *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 194, 2015, pp. 8-17.
- Bonilla, Yarimar. "Freedom, Sovereignty and Other Entanglements." *Small Axe*, no. 53, 2017, pp. 201-208.
- Braidotti, Rosi. "Posthuman Critical Theory." *Critical Posthumanism and Planetary Futures*, 2016, pp. 13–32.
- Brand, Dionne. *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*. Doubleday Canada, 2001.
- Burman, Jenny. "Multicultural Feeling, Feminist Rage, Indigenous Refusal", *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2016, pp. 361-372.
- Bunz, Mercedes, et al. *Symptoms of the Planetary Condition: a Critical Vocabulary*. Meson Press, 2017.
- Browne, Simone. *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Duke University Press, 2015.

- Byrd, Jodi A. "Beast of America: Sovereignty and the Wildness of Objects." *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 117, no.3, 2018, pp. 599 - 615.
- . *The Transit of Empire Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Byrd, Jodi A., et al. "Predatory Value: Economies of Dispossession and Disturbed Relationalities." *Social Text* 135, vol. 36, no 2, 2018.
- Buolamwini, Joy. "When the Robot Doesn't See Dark Skin." *The New York Times*, 21 June 2018, [www.nytimes.com/2018/06/21/opinion/facial-analysis-technology-bias.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/21/opinion/facial-analysis-technology-bias.html).
- Chandler, Nahum D. *X – The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought*. Fordham University Press, 2014.
- . "Paraontology: Or, Notes on the Practical Theoretical Politics of Thought." Society for the Humanities Annual Culler Lecture in Critical Theory, Oct 15 2018, <https://vimeo.com/297769615>.
- Colebrook, Claire. *Sex after Life*. Open Humanities Press, 2014.
- Coulthard, Glen S. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2014.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*.
- Davis, Heather and Zoe Todd. "On the Importance of a Date or Decolonizing the Anthropocene." *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2017, pp. 761-780.
- Diawara, M. "One World in Relation: Edouard Glissant in Conversation with Manthia Diawara." *Nka Journal of Contemporary African Art*, vol. 2011, no. 28, Jan. 2011, pp. 4–19.
- Dillon, Grace L. *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction / Edited by Grace L. Dillon*. University of Arizona Press, 2012.
- Fanon, Franz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Grove Press, 2008.
- . *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press, 2004.
- Ferreira da Silva, Denise. "1 (life) ÷ 0 (blackness) = ∞ – ∞ or ∞ / ∞: On Matter Beyond the Equation of Value", *e-flux*, no. 79, Feb. 2017, [www.e-flux.com/journal/79/94686/1-life-0-blackness-or-on-matter-beyond-the-equation-of-value/](http://www.e-flux.com/journal/79/94686/1-life-0-blackness-or-on-matter-beyond-the-equation-of-value/)
- . "Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World." *The Black Scholar*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2014, pp. 81- 97.
- . "On Heat", *Canadian Art*, Feature, Oct. 29, 2018, <https://canadianart.ca/features/on-heat/>.
- Dixon-Román, Ezekiel. "Algo-Ritmo." *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, vol. 16, no. 5, 2016, pp. 482–490.

- Estes, Nick. *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*. Verso, 2019, ebook.
- Robinson, Rowland Enaemaehkiw Keshena. "Briefly on Decolonial Futurity and the Failing Coherence of the Settler Colonial Order", *Maehkōn Ahpēhtesewen*. March 5 2019, [www.onkwehonwerising.wordpress.com/2019/03/05/briefly-on-decolonial-futurity-and-the-failing-coherence-of-the-settler-colonial-order/](http://www.onkwehonwerising.wordpress.com/2019/03/05/briefly-on-decolonial-futurity-and-the-failing-coherence-of-the-settler-colonial-order/).
- Galloway, Alexander R. *Laruelle Against the Digital*. University of Minnesota Press, 2014.
- . "Peak Analog", 2019, *Culture and Communication*, [www.cultureandcommunication.org](http://www.cultureandcommunication.org)
- Gangle, Rocco. *François Laruelle's Philosophies of Difference: A Critical Introduction and Guide*, Edinburgh University Press, 2013.
- Garneau, David. "Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation." *Reconcile This!, West Coast Line*, no. 74, 2012, pp.27- 37.
- Gikandi, Simon. "Race and the Idea of the Aesthetic." *Michigan Quarterly Review*, vol. XL, no. 2, 2001. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.act2080.0040.208>
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. University of California Press, 2007.
- Glissant, Edouard, and Betsy Wing. *Poetics of Relation*. University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Gollom, Mark. "Black Lives Matter got attention, but did its Pride tactics hurt or help its cause?" *CBCnews*, CBC/Radio Canada <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/black-lives-matter-toronto-pride-parade-1.3663659>.
- Gordon, Avery F. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Greiner, Malakai. "Voids of Understanding: Opacity, Black Life, and Abstraction in *What Remains*." *Fourth Wall*, Walker Art Center, 2019. <https://walkerart.org/magazine/opacity-black-life-abstraction-will-rawls-claudia-rankine-what-remains>.
- Han, Sora. "Poetics of Mu." *Textual Practice*, 2018, pp. 1-28.
- . "Slavery as Contract: Betty's Case and the Question of Freedom." *Law & Literature*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2015, pp. 395-416.
- Harper, Douglas. *Online Etymology Dictionary*. 2001 – 2019, <https://www.etymonline.com>.
- Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. Oxford University Press, 1997.
- . *Lose Your Mother a Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.

- . "The Anarchy of Colored Girls Assembled in a Riotous Manner." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 117, no. 3, 2018, pp. 465–490.
- . "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, vol. 26, no.2, 2008, pp. 1–14.
- Hartman, Saidiya and Frank B. Wilderson III. "The Position of the Unthought." *Qui Parle*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2013, pp. 183-201.
- Hartman, Saidiya and Fred Moten. "The Black Outdoors: Fred Moten & Saidiya Hartman at Duke University." YouTube, uploaded by Duke Franklin Humanities Institute, 2016, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_tUZ6dybrc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_tUZ6dybrc)
- Hayward, Eva, and Che Gossett. "Impossibility of That." *Angelaki*, vol. 22, no. 2, Mar. 2017, pp. 15–24.
- Hegel G. F. W. *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Kitchener, Batoche Books, 2001. p. 113.
- Hunt, Sarah and Cindy Holmes. "Everyday Decolonization: Living a Decolonizing Queer Politics." *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, no. 19, 2015, pp.154 - 172.
- Imarisha, Walidah and Alexis Gumbs, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, adrienne maree brown, Mia Mingus. "The Fictions and Futures of Transformative Justice: A conversation with the authors of *Octavia's Brood*." *The New Inquiry*, 20 April 2017, [www.thenewinquiry.com/the-fictions-and-futures-of-transformative-justice/](http://www.thenewinquiry.com/the-fictions-and-futures-of-transformative-justice/)
- Jackson, Zakiyyah Iman. "'Theorizing in a Void': Sublimity, Matter, and Physics in Black Feminist Poetics" *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 117, no. 3, 2018, pp. 617–648.
- . "Losing Manhood." *Qui Parle*, vol. 25, no. 1-2, 2016, pp. 95–136.
- John, Simone. "Elegy for Dead Black Women #1", *Testify*. Octopus Books, 2017.
- Jones-Rogers, Stephanie E. *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South*. Yale University Press, 2019.
- Judy, Ronald A.T. *(Dis)Forming the American Canon: African-Arabic Slave Narratives and the Vernacular*, University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*. Translated by Werner S. Pluhar, Hackett Publishing Company, 1987.
- Karera. "Blackness and the Pitfalls of Anthropocene Ethics." *Critical Philosophy of Race*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2019, p. 32.
- King, Tiffany Lethabo. "Humans Involved: Lurking in the Lines of Posthumanist Flight." *Critical Ethnic Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2017, p. 162.



- Kolozova, Katerina. *The Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Post-Structuralist Philosophy*. Columbia University Press, 2014.
- . *Toward a Radical Metaphysics of Socialism: Marx and Laruelle*. Punctum Books, 2015.
- Laruelle, Francois. "A Summary of Non-Philosophy." *Pli*, vol. 8, 1991, 138-148.
- . *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*. Translated by Taylor Adkins, Univocal Publishing, 2013.
- . *Photo-Fiction, a Non-Standard Aesthetics*. Translated by Drew S. Burk, Univocal Publishing, 2012.
- . *Philosophies of Difference: A Critical Introduction to Non-philosophy*. Bloomsbury, 2010.
- . "The Degrowth of Philosophy: Toward a Generic Ecology." *From Decision to Heresy: Experiments in Non-Standard Thought*, Translated by Robin Mackey, 2012, pp. 327-349.
- Lawrence, Bonita and Enakshi Dua. "Decolonizing Antiracism", *Social Justice*, vol.32, no.4, 2005, pp. 120-143.
- Lewis, Sarah. "The Racial Bias Built Into Photography." *The New York Times*, 25 April 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/25/lens/sarah-lewis-racial-bias-photography.html>
- Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Duke University Press, 2015.
- L'Hirondelle, Cheryl. "Codetalkers Recounting Signals of Survival." *Coded Territories: Tracing Indigenous Pathways in New Media Art*, University of Calgary Press, 2014, pp. 141-168.
- Luciano, D., and M. Y. Chen. "Has the Queer Ever Been Human?" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2-3, 2015, pp. 183-207.
- Mackey, Nathaniel. *Splay Anthem*. New Directions Books, 2006.
- . *Paracritical Hinge: Essays, Talks, Notes, Interviews*. The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.
- Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*. Edited by Joyce Green, Fernwood Publishing, 2007.
- Majaca, Antonia and Luciana Parisi. "The Incomputable and Instrumental Possibility." *e-flux*, no.77, 2016. [www.e-flux.com/journal/77/76322/the-incomputable-and-instrumental-possibility/](http://www.e-flux.com/journal/77/76322/the-incomputable-and-instrumental-possibility/)
- Mansour, Jaleh. *Notes on Militant Folds*. Hostis Pamphlets, Hostis Journal. [www.incivility.org/2018/08/12/zine-notes-on-militant-folds-jaleh-mansoor/](http://www.incivility.org/2018/08/12/zine-notes-on-militant-folds-jaleh-mansoor/)
- Maracle, Lee. *My Conversations with Canadians*. Book\*hug, 2017.
- McKittrick, Katherine. "Mathematics Black Life." *The Black Scholar*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2014, pp. 16-28.

- McKittrick, Katherine and Alexander G. Weheliye. "808s and Heartbreak." *Propter Nos* 2:1. Fall 2017.
- Million, Dian. "Intense Dreaming: Theories, Narratives, and Our Search for Home", *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 35, no.3, 2011, pp. 313-333.
- Mignolo, Walter D. "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom." *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 26, no. 7-8, 2009, pp. 159–181.
- . "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference". *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 101, no. 1, 2002, pp. 57-96.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *Right to Look: A Counter History of Visuality*. Duke University Press, 2011.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Feminist Review*, no. 30, 1988, pp. 61-88.
- Moten, Fred. "Black Kant (Pronounced Chant)." A Theorizing Lecture at the Kelly Writers House, from PennSound, February 27, 2007, <http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Moten.php>
- . *In the Break the Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
- . "Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh)." *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol.112, no.4, 2013, pp. 773-780.
- . "The Case of Blackness." *Criticism*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2008, pp. 177-218.
- Nixon, Lindsay. "Visual Cultures of Indigenous Futurisms." *Guts Magazine*, no. 6, 2016, [www.gutsmagazine.ca/visual-cultures/](http://www.gutsmagazine.ca/visual-cultures/)
- Newman, Eric, et al. "The Los Angeles Review of Books." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, <http://lareviewofbooks.org>.
- Pasternak, Shiri. "Wet'suwet'en: Why are Indigenous rights being defined by an energy corporation?" *The Conversation*, 2020, [www.theconversation.com/amp/wetsuweten-why-are-indigenous-rights-being-defined-by-an-energy-corporation-130833?\\_\\_twitter\\_impression=true/](http://www.theconversation.com/amp/wetsuweten-why-are-indigenous-rights-being-defined-by-an-energy-corporation-130833?__twitter_impression=true/).
- Parisi, Luciana. *Contagious Architecture: Computation, Aesthetics, and Space*. The MIT Press, 2013.
- . "Instrumental Reason, Algorithmic Capitalism and the Incomputable." *Alleys of Your Mind: Augmented Intelligence and Its Traumas*, edited by Matteo Pasquinelli, meson press, pp. 125–37, 2015.
- Perkel, Colin. "Inquest jury rules Toronto police killing of Andrew Loku a homicide." *The Globe and Mail*, 2017, [www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/inquest-jury-rules-toronto-police-killing-of-andrew-loku-a-homicide/article35512946/](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/inquest-jury-rules-toronto-police-killing-of-andrew-loku-a-homicide/article35512946/)

- Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Duke University Press, 2016.
- . "Radical Worlds: The Anthropology of Incommensurability and Inconceivability." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 30, 2001, pp. 319-334.
- Puar, Jasbir K. "'i would rather be a cyborg than a goddess': Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory." *philoSOPHIA*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2012, pp. 49-66.
- Quijano, Aníbal. "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America." *International Sociology*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2000, pp. 215-232.
- Rancière, Jacques, and Steve Corcoran. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. Continuum, 2010.
- Rankine, Claudia. *Citizen: An American Lyric*. Graywolf Press, 2014.
- Reyes Cruz, Mariolga. "Ni con dios ni con el diablo: Tales of survival, resistance and rebellion from a reluctant academic", *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol.1, no.1, 2012, pp.141-157.
- Rickard, Jolene. "Aesthetics, Violence, and Indigeneity." *Public*, no. 54, 2016, pp. 58-62.
- Robertson, Teresa and Philip Atkins. "Essential vs. Accidental Properties." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2016. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/essential-accidental/>
- Robinson, Cedric J. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. London: Zed, 1983.
- Robinson, J. Bradford. "Scat Singing", *Oxford Music Online*. 2001. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000024717>
- Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Duke University Press, 2016.
- Sexton, Jared. "Ante-Anti-Blackness: Afterthoughts." *Lateral: Journal of Cultural Studies Association*, no. 1, 2012. <https://csalateral.org/section/theory/ante-anti-blackness-afterthoughts-sexton/>
- . "People-of-Color-Blindness: Notes on the Afterlife of Slavery." *Social Text*, vol. 28, no. 2 (103), 2010, pp. 31-56.
- . "The Social Life of Social Death." *Time, Temporality and Violence in International Relations*, Feb. 2016, pp. 61-75.
- . "'The Curtain of the Sky': An Introduction." *Critical Sociology*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2010, pp. 11-24.
- Simpson, Audra. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Duke University Press, 2014.

- Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.
- . "i am Not a nation-state." *Leanne Betasamosake Simpson*, <https://www.leannesimpson.ca/writings/i-am-not-a-nation-state>.
- Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake, Rinaldo Walcott and Glen Coulthard. "Panel Discussion, Idle No More and Black Lives Matter: An Exchange." *Studies in Social Justice*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2018, pp. 75-89.
- Sium, Aman and Chandni Desai and Eric Ritskes. "Towards the 'tangible unknown': Decolonization and the Indigenous future." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 1, no.1, 2012, pp. i-XIII.
- Smith, Andrea. "Beyond Pro-Choice Versus Pro-Life: Women of Color and Reproductive Justice." *NWSA Journal*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2005, pp. 119-140.
- Smith, Anthony Paul. *Laruelle: A Stranger Thought*. Key Contemporary Thinkers, Polity Press, 2016.
- Smith, Neil. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*. University of Georgia Press, 2008.
- Spillers, Hortense J. "Mamas Baby, Papas Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1987, pp. 64-81.
- Spillers, Hortense J. et al. "'Whatcha Gonna Do?': Revisiting 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book': A Conversation with Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Farah Jasmine Griffin, Shelly Eversley, & Jennifer L. Morgan." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. ½, Spring - Summer, 2007, pp. 299-309.
- "Statement by Prime Minister on Release of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *Prime Minister of Canada*, 15 Dec. 2015, [pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2015/12/15/statement-prime-minister-release-final-report-truth-and-reconciliation](http://pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2015/12/15/statement-prime-minister-release-final-report-truth-and-reconciliation).
- Stanley, Eric. "Near Life, Queer Death: Overkill and Ontological Capture." *Social Text 107*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2011, pp. 1-19.
- Sullivan, Nikki. "The somatechnics of perception and the matter of the non/human: A critical response to the new materialism", *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2012, pp. 299-313.
- Sundberg, Juanita. "Decolonizing Posthumanist Geographies." *Cultural Geographies*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2014, pp. 33-47.
- Swyngedouw, Erik. "Apocalypse Now! Fear and Doomsday Pleasures." *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2013, pp. 9-18.
- Tallbear, Kim. "Badass (Indigenous) Women Caretake Relations: #NoDAPL, #IdleNoMore, #BlackLivesMatter", *Society for Cultural Anthropology*, 2016,

<https://culanth.org/fieldsights/badass-indigenous-women-caretake-relations-no-dapl-idle-no-more-black-lives-matter>

- Tecun, Arcia et al 'Inoke Hafoka, Lavinia 'Ulu'ave and Moana 'Ulu'ave-Hafoka. "Talanoa: Tongan Epistemology and Indigenous Research Method." *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, vol. 14, no. 2, Sept. 2018, pp. 156 – 163.
- Thobani, Sunera. "The Secularity of Empire, the Violence of Critique: Muslims, Race, and Sexuality in the Politics of Knowledge-Production." *Hypatia*, vol. 32, no. 3, Mar. 2017, pp. 715–730.
- Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1 – 40.
- Vargas, João Costa and Joy A. James. "Refusing Blackness-as-Victimization: Trayvon Martin and the Black Cyborgs" in *Pursuing Trayvon Martin: Historical Contexts and Contemporary Manifestations of Racial Dynamics*, edited by George Yancy and Janine Jones. Lexington Books, 2013, pp 193-204.
- Walcott, Rinaldo and Idil Abdillahi. *Black Life: Post-BLM and the Struggle for Freedom*. Semaphore Series, Arp Books, 2019.
- Warren, Calvin. "Onticide: Afro-pessimism, Gay Nigger #1, and Surplus Violence." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2017, pp. 391-418.
- Weheliye, Alexander G. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. E-book, Duke University Press, 2014.
- . *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity*. Duke University Press, 2005.
- Wilderson, Frank III. "Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society?," *Social Identities*, vol. 9, no.2, 2003, pp. 225-239
- . "Grammar & Ghosts: The Performative Limits of African Freedom." *African and Afro-Caribbean Performance*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2009, pp. 119-125
- . *Red, White and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*. Duke University Press, 2010.
- Winant, Howard. "The Theoretical Status of the Concept of Race." *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, edited by Les Back and John Solomos. Routledge, 2000, pp. 181- 190.
- Wolfe, Patrick. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2006, pp.387-409.
- Wynter, Sylvia. "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, The Puzzle of Conscious Experience, of 'Identity' and What it's Like to be 'Black'", *National Identities and Socio-Political Changes in Latin America*, edited by Antonio Gomez-Moriana and Mercedes Duran-Cogan, Routledge, 2001.

---. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument." *The New Centennial Review*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2003, pp. 257-337.

Yellowhead Institute. *Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper*. Yellowhead Institute, 2019.

Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Ziherl, Vivian. "Being in Movement: Denise Ferreira da Silva, Yuki Kihara, and Wu Tsang in Conversation." *Mousse Magazine*, no.60, 2017, pp. 256 - 263.