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Beyond the Limit: Gender, Sexuality, and the Animal Question in (Afro)Modernity

by

Zakiyyah Iman Jackson

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

African American Studies

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Film Studies

and the Designated Emphasis

Women, Gender and Sexuality

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Abdul JanMohamed, Chair

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Spring 2012

Abstract

Beyond the Limit: Gender, Sexuality, and the Animal Question in (Afro)Modernity

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Doctor of Philosophy in African American Studies

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“Beyond the Limit” provides a crucial reexamination of African diasporic literature, performance, and visual culture’s philosophical interventions into Western legal, scientific, and philosophic definitions of the human. Frederick Douglass’s speeches, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The Pet Negro System*, Charles Burnett’s *The Killer of Sheep* and *The Horse*, Jean Michel-Basquiat’s *Wolf Sausage* and *Monkey*, Ezrom Legae’s *Chicken Series*, and the performance art of Grace Jones both critique and displace the racializing assumptive logic that has grounded these fields’ debates on how to distinguish human identity from that of the animal. In complementary but highly distinct ways, these literary, performance, and visual texts articulate humanity in a manner that neither relies on animal abjection nor reestablishes liberal humanism as the authority on being human. They creatively respond to the animalization of black gender and sexuality by generating conceptions of humanity, paradigms of relationality, and epistemologies that reject, alter, or expose not only the racialization of the human-animal border found in science, law, and philosophy but also challenge the epistemic and material terms under which the specter of animal life acquires its authority.

Our interpretations of African diasporic cultural production tend to suggest, from the slave narrative until today, that writers were motivated by a desire for human recognition. Departing from this interpretation, *Beyond the Limit* argues African American and

diasporic culture is not a unified tradition that merely seeks inclusion into liberal humanist conceptions of the human, but rather, one that frequently alters the meaning of humanity from the perspective of being animalized. If we read Western law, philosophy, and science through the lens of African diasporic literature, performance, and visual culture, it reveals the limits of dominant conceptualizations of humanity. I demonstrate that African diasporic and transnational cultural production intervenes productively in rethinking the role of “the animal” or the “animalistic” in the construction of “the human.”

Contents

INTRODUCTION On Becoming Human ii-xxix

1. Losing Manhood 1

Epistemology, Animality, and the Ethics of Uncertainty in *Beloved*

2. The Law is Your Mother 26

(Animal) Metaphor, Reproduction, and Dissimulative Acts in Law and the Literary Imagination of Zora Neale Hurston

3. A Question Mark Followed By An Exclamation Point 57

Grace Jones, Cannibal Consumption, and the Limits of Purrformance

4. Sacrificing Sacrifice 77

Racial Patriarchy and Animal Slaughter in Charles Burnett's *The Horse and Killer of Sheep*

Afterward 99

References 109

Bibliography 124

On Becoming Human: An Introduction

“Beyond the Limit: Gender, Sexuality, and the Animal Question in (Afro)Modernity,” argues that key texts of 20th-century African diasporic literature, performance, and visual culture generate oppositional conceptions of humanity that creatively disrupt the human-animal dichotomy that undergirds the persistence of racialization. Historically, people of the African diaspora have been racialized as “the animal within the human.” In light of this history, African diasporic cultural production has often been interpreted as a plea for human recognition. In contrast, “Beyond the Limit” highlights African American, African, and Caribbean literature, performance, and visual culture’s critique and revision of dominant conceptions of the human found in Western law, science, and philosophy.

I demonstrate that Frederick Douglass’s speeches, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The Pet Negro System*, Charles Burnett’s films *The Killer of Sheep* and *The Horse*, Jean Michel-Basquiat’s paintings *Wolf Sausage* and *Monkey*, Ezrom Legae’s *Chicken Series* drawings, and the performance art of Grace Jones expand critiques of the animalization of blackness found in established and recent accounts of racialization. Specifically, they not only challenge the racialized application of the term “animal” to humans but also question and displace the fundamental biopolitical presuppositions that define black animality in the fields of science, law, and philosophy. Using literature, film, visual art, and performance, my study achieves the double move of critique and displacement by identifying conceptions of humanity that do not rely on the animal’s negation, as repudiation of the animal has historically been essential to producing classes of marginalized humans.

While we often isolate African diasporic literary studies from the disciplines of science, law, and philosophy, I contend that the African diasporic literature, performance, and visual culture in my study make crucial interventions into legal and scientific frameworks that dominate definitions of the human: evolution, gynecology, sexology, rights, property, and legal personhood. “Beyond the Limit” reveals that science and law share many characteristics with literature and visual art despite the espoused objectivity and procedural integrity of scientific and legal discourses. In debates concerning the specificity of human identity with respect to “the animal,” science and law both possess foundational and recursive investments in figurative, and arguably literary, narratives that conceptualize African gender as trope, metaphor, and symbol.

Law, philosophy, and science are often treated as separate and unrelated sites of knowledge production, yet my study reveals their historical entanglement and shared assumptive logic with regard to black gender and sexuality. As conceived by evolutionary theory, legalistic conceptions of personhood, property, and rights, and much of Western Enlightenment philosophy, antiblack racism has sought to justify racialization by suggesting that black people are most representative of the animalistic dimensions of humanity. While many scholars have critiqued the conflation of black humans with animals found in Enlightenment discourses, I argue that prior scholarship has fundamentally misrecognized the logic behind the intersection of animality and racialization. *I reinterpret Enlightenment thought not as black “exclusion” or “denied humanity” but rather as the violent appropriation—inclusion and recognition—of African humanity in the interest of animalizing that very humanity.* It is perhaps prior

scholarship's interpretation of this tradition as "denied humanity" that has facilitated a call for greater inclusion, as a corrective to what they deem is a historical exclusion of blackness. One consequence of this orientation is that many scholars have essentially ignored alternative conceptions of humanity produced by black people.

Breaking from the preoccupations and approaches found in prior scholarship, my project is an examination of how African diasporic literary, performance, and cultural texts *generate conceptions of humanity that do not rely on the fundamental disparagement of "the animal."* The terms of African American art and literature's canonization have suggested that African diasporic cultural production does little more than refute racism and petition for assimilation into the very definition of humanity that produces racial hierarchy. The texts in my study are better understood as providing both revisions of dominant constructions and generative conceptions of humanity, which are not always framed as a critique of the dominant—thereby refusing the terms of liberal multicultural recognition, which require either the evocation of animalized depictions of blackness and the suffering these images cause or the redirection of stereotype. The chapters in this dissertation explore how *black critique and generative thought* emerges from within the contradictions of competing conceptions of modernity's crucible—the human. I argue that the cultural production examined in the pages that follow reveal a critical counter-discursive potential in afromodernism with regards to the human/animal distinction.

My study generates new possibilities for defining humanity because the texts examined neither rely on animal abjection to define the human nor reestablish "human recognition" within liberal humanism as an antidote to racialization. Therefore, they move beyond a critique of animalization that is predicated on a desire for inclusion in the normative conception of the human. By doing so, they displace the very presumptive terms of black animality.

In order to facilitate a fuller appreciation of the conceptions of humanity identified in "Beyond the Limit," I pose four arguments that fundamentally reframe the animalization of blackness. First, theoreticians and historians' emphasis on antiblack formulations of African reason and history have overlooked the centrality of gender and sexuality in the animalization of blackness. In debates concerning the specificity of human identity with respect to "the animal," science, philosophy, and law foundationally and recursively construct black female gender, maternity, and sexuality as an essential index of human animality. Furthermore, I identify in these pages that gender and sexuality are central to the autopoiesis of animalized racialization that theoreticians and historians of race hope to displace. While feminist and queer theories of race have underlined the intersectional nature of gender, race, and sexuality, few studies have ventured to identify the autopoietic operations of these very intersections (Maturana and Varela 78). Therefore, any study that attempts to provide an account of how racialization operates must offer an explanation of the intransigent, recursive, self-referential, and (re)animating power of animalizing constructs of black gender and sexuality.

Second, science, law, and philosophy's authority, arguably, rests largely on their ability to persuasively abject and disidentify with art and literature; I will show, in fact, that these fields share characteristics with visual art and literature, and these common characteristics are the territory that afromoderns critically redeploy, undermining the very epistemological precepts authorizing science, law, and philosophy's monopolization of

definitions of the human. Whereas science, philosophy, and law utilize figuration and even literary narratives and formal strategies such as narrative, metaphor, trope, synecdoche, and symbol in order to construct African women as the limit of the human, Afromoderns will redirect the literary and the visual to deconstruct the human/animal binarism of these disciplines.

Third, current scholarship in posthumanism, animal studies, and biopolitics has begun a broad inquiry into the repercussions of defining “the human” in opposition to “the animal.” Much of the recent scholarship suggests that race is a byproduct of prior negation of animals. These fields, particularly animal studies, are slowly advancing the thesis that human-animal binarism is the original paradigm for human difference, including, or even especially, racialization. In contrast, I demonstrate that the categories of *race* and *species* have coevolved and are actually *mutually reinforcing* terms. I fill a major gap in this field by uncovering the centrality of gendered sexual racialization in the very human-animal binarism that scholars are looking to problematize or displace. I demonstrate the necessity of the philosophical abjection and bestialization of black gender and sexuality for both the reproduction of the scientific matrix of classification and the law's classifications of personhood, property, and rights. Namely, both science and law's foundational authority articulate black female abjection as a prerequisite of “the human,” and this abjection helps give credence to the linear taxonomical (ontological) thinking present scholarship is trying to displace.

I argue that anxieties about conquest, slavery, and colonial expansionism provided the historical context for both the emergence of a developmental model of “universal humanity” and a newly consolidated generic “animal” that would be defined in non-human and racial terms. In this context, discourses on “the animal” and “the black” were conjoined and are now mutually reinforcing narratives in Western (post)modernity. As I demonstrate, at times, blackness prefigures and colors animal abjection. Thus, racialized formations of gender and sexuality are actually central rather than subsidiary to the very human/animal binarism these fields hope to dislodge.

And finally, breaking from a commonly held position in the study of race, I do not propose the extension of “human recognition” as a solution to the bestialization of blackness. In contrast, I demonstrate that “human recognition” does not conclusively resolve the problem of bestialization, as recognition of personhood and human affect in the law as well as the observance of biological human species membership does not annul the animalization of blackness. Rather, it reconfigures discourses that have historically animalized blackness. In the chapters that follow, forms of human recognition—the extension of rights, inclusion into post-Darwinian biological conceptions of the human, and the transition from slave to proletariat—are not at odds with animalization. Thus, animalization is not incompatible with humanization: what is commonly deemed dehumanization is more accurately interpreted as the violence of humanization or the burden of inclusion into Western humanism.

In the pages that follow, I hope to identify the contrapuntal potential of African diasporic expressions of modernity. David Theo Goldberg has defined modernity in terms of broad sweeping socio-intellectual developments: commodification and capital accumulation of market-based society, legal formation of private property and systems of contract, moral and political conception of rational self-interested subjects, and the increasing replacement of God and religious doctrine by Reason and Nature as the final

arbiters of justificatory appeal in epistemology, metaphysics, and science, as well as in morality, legality, and politics (Goldberg 3). Michael Hanchard defines Afro-Modernity in "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora:"

the selective incorporation of technologies, discourses, and institutions of the modern West within the cultural and political practices of African-derived people to create a form of relatively autonomous modernity distinct from its counterparts of Western Europe and North America. It is no mere mimicry of Western modernity but an innovation upon its precepts, forces, and features...Its contours have arisen from the encounters between people of African descent and Western colonialism... (Hanchard 247)

Afromodern cultural producers have chosen representational strategies that redirect modern technologies (film, photography, painting, and the novel) by disrupting the foundational racialized epistemological presuppositions embedded in the histories of these technologies. These are technologies that have not only reflected animalized depictions of blackness but invented them as well. Rather than rehearse debates about the ideological potential or pitfalls of technology, the cultural production in my study mobilize these technologies and produce not only critical conceptions of blackness, but of humanity, as well. African diasporic and transnational cultural production intervenes productively in rethinking the role of "the animal" or the "animalistic" in the construction of "the human" by producing non-binaristic models of human-animal relations, advancing theories of trans-species interdependency, observing trans-species precarity, and hypothesizing cross-species intersubjectivity in a manner that both preserves difference while undermining animality's abjection, an abjection that constantly rebounds on marginalized humans. I suggest that it only by expanding "the question of the animal" in the direction of cultural production authored by people who have been racialized as "the animal within the human," while also questioning rather than presupposing the virtuousness of human recognition, will we be able to reconceptualize humanity in a manner that is not only an alternative to the necropolitical but opposes it (Derrida, *The Animal* xi).

Ultimately, I suggest that the normative subject of liberal humanism is predicated on the abjection of blackness, which is *not based on figurations of blackness as "animal-like," but rather casts black people as animal; therefore, the task that lays before us is reimagining humanity in a manner that does not privilege the very normativity cohered by notions of animalized blackness.* This requires that scholars of race extend the radical questioning of humanism established by African diasporic critics of euromodernity in a direction potentially unanticipated by prior scholarship by interrogating the very construction of "the animal" beyond a condemnation of its racialized application and scope. Both critics that seek more equitable inclusion in liberal humanism or a radical transformation of the normative category of the human have commonly overlooked the centrality of the animal question for black existential matters. This dissertation extends the insights of African diasporic critics of euromodernity by demonstrating that key texts in afromodern cultural production, move beyond a demand for recognition and inclusion into the very normative humanity theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Lewis Gordon, Saidiya Hartman, Hortense Spillers, Aime Cesaire, and Sylvia Wynter, discussed here, have

shown is fundamentally antiblack while also calling into question the presumptive logic undergirding the specter of animalization.

The cultural production examined here span three continents and three centuries because antiblack animalization readily crosses national borders, where it has also been diasporically challenged and refused, making it central to what coheres the very notion of the African diaspora. It is precisely *through rather than against historically demarcated* regional, national, epistemological, and state preoccupations that this discourse reorganizes itself. Antiblackness' pliability is essential to the intransigent, complementary, and universalizing impetus of antiblack paradigms. Irrespective of the innumerable and ever-transient definitions of *black identity* across the diaspora, which by definition are ephemerally produced, all black people must contend with the burden of the animalization of the global *paradigm of blackness*, which will infringe on all articulations and political maneuverings that seek redress for present and historical violence.

Animalization is the method that has been privileged by biopolitical expressions of antiblackness; however, historians and theoreticians response to the centrality of animalization has been inadequate, as scholars have misrecognized the complexity of its operations. Binaristic frameworks such as "humanization versus dehumanization" and "human versus animal" are inadequate to understand a biopolitical regime that develops technologies of "humanization" in order to refigure blackness as "human animality" and extends human recognition in an effort to deem blackness as the animal within the human.

I seek to investigate black revisionist and counter-discursive practices in the context of liberal humanism's *selective recognition* of black people's humanity. However, there is not a blanket rejection of humanism in the chapters that follow because black people cannot simply opt out of humanism either, as liberal humanism is the primary mode of subjectification in colonial modernity. That said, I argue that the limitations of liberal humanism, the circumscribed humanity imputed to black people, has led to a radical questioning of "the human," and in particular the status assigned to animality, in key moments of afromodernist cultural expression. This questioning is suggestive of a desire for a different "genre of the human" and not simply a desire for fuller recognition within liberal humanism's terms (Wynter, "Re-Enchantment" 196-97).¹

MAKING HUMANS: ANIMALIZATION AS HUMANIZATION

...everything happens as if, in our culture, life were what cannot be defined, yet, precisely for this reason, must be ceaselessly articulated and divided. (Agamben 13)

No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, *that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman*. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—*like yours*—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. (Conrad 51)

The uncompromising nature of the Western self and its active negation of anything not itself had the counter-effect of reducing African discourse to a simple polemical reaffirmation of black humanity. *However, both the asserted denial and the reaffirmation of that humanity now look like two sterile sides of the same coin*. (Mbembe 12)

As Achille Mbembe in *On the Postcolony* would observe, discourse on Africa “is almost always deployed in the framework (or on the fringes) of a meta-text about the animal—to be exact, about the beast: its experience, its world, and its spectacle.”(2) European modernity’s architects would posit a theory of blackness’ inherent animality, based on either “the African’s” purported physical or mental likeness to non-human animals, or as a result of the undeveloped condition of African humanity. The former relied on the establishment of “laws of nature” whereby Africans and animals found on the African continent developed similar deficiencies based largely on geographical determinants. In such a model, privileging human-animal comparison, the environment is blackened, and the population reflects an inferior environment, one that stymies African humanity. Thus, African peoples are human but tentatively so, whereby hesitation is based on the African’s purported physical or mental similarity to non-human animals. In the latter case, a developmental model, humanity is marked as an achievement and teleology. Here “the African,” while of the same human species, is defined by their animality. Thus, black people are not animal-like, but rather are animals in human form. The two positions have different routes, but the same destination: in short, black people are the living border dividing forms of life such that “the animal” is a category that may apply to human and non-human animals. Thus, the category of *the animal* develops in a manner that crosses lines of species. Furthermore, in either case, in the process of animalizing “the African,” *blackness would be defined as the emblematic state of human animality*. By virtue of racialization, the category of “the animal” could even potentially racialize animals in addition to animalizing blackness. The debate over whether blackness is a genus of the human species or another type of being altogether would haunt scientific debates concerning “monogenesis versus polygenesis.” However, the line between these two approaches is only partially maintained in the thinkers discussed below. It is not always clear, not only, what side of the border “the African” is placed, but also the total number of borders posited at any given point in this debate. *What is certain, though, is that monogenesis or racially inclusive constructions of “the human” would complement rather than detract from animalized depictions of blackness*. Such debates would be instrumental in codifying and institutionalizing both popular and scientific perceptions of race.

The following provides a few examples of both positions—there are too many examples to enumerate them all—but I have chosen what I believe are the most cited cases. Much of this history is known; it is commonly referred to in critiques of humanism that advance a conception of “denied humanity,” in which “denial” is treated as sufficient shorthand for humanist thought (especially Enlightenment thought). The thinkers below provide evidence of a powerful and ever-present strand of racist Enlightenment thought. However, Enlightenment is also a debate with moving parts, and thus not reducible to its more infamous ideas.² This study attempts a sustained investigation of the interrelationships among three of humanism’s key terms: blackness, the human, and the animal. After careful investigation, I have come to some new conclusions that inform the chapters that follow: First, I replace the notion of “denied humanity” and “exclusion” with animalized humanization, because *the African’s humanity is not denied but appropriated, disfigured, and inverted in the methodology of animalization*. Universal humanity, a “specific genre of the human,” is produced by the constitutive negation and abjection of black humanity; nevertheless, the very constitutive function of this

misrecognition, reveals that black abjection is disavowed recognition and an inclusion that masks itself as an exclusion. Second, blackness is not so much derived *from* a discourse on non-human animals. Rather the discourse on *“the animal”* is *formed through enslavement and the colonial encounter encompassing both human and non-human forms of life*. Discourses on non-human animals and animalized humans are forged through each other; they reflect and refract each other for the purposes of producing a teleological conception of “the human.” Furthermore, antiblack animalization is not a symptom of “speciesism;” it is a relatively autonomous form of semio-material violence that can be leveraged against humans or animals (Singer 6, 18, 83). Similarly, “speciesism” can be mobilized to produce racial difference. Thus, the animalizations of humans and animals have contiguous and intersecting histories rather than a single narrative on “animality.” This is a crucial point, as it allows us to appreciate both the irreducibility of both antiblackness *and* species as well as investigate the respective semio-material trajectories black bodies and animal bodies take in their historical and cultural specificity.

David Hume would extrapolate from his understanding of the natural environment that “inferior” climates produce “inferior nations.” He believed that if plants and “irrational” animals were influenced by degree of heat and cold than the character of men must also be influenced by air and climate. These environmental factors would render minds “incapable of all the higher attainments of the human mind,” which prompted him to “suspect negroes and in general all other species of men to be naturally inferior to the whites...No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences” (qtd. in Eze 33). He would go as far as to infamously declare, “In Jamaica, indeed, they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning; but it is likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot who speaks a few words plainly”(qtd. in Eze 33). Hume, like most Enlightenment thinkers mentioned here, would accept the Aristotelian conception of the human as an animal, but what marked human’s uniqueness, according to Aristotle, was rationality.³ The human was a “rational animal.” Thus, humanity was not defined in strict opposition to “the animal,” but one’s humanity was determined by the nature of one’s rationality. For Hume, in the case of African rationality, it was either deficient or negligible. Therefore, the humanity of the Negro “species of men” was acknowledged but in a hierarchical and taxonomical frame.

Immanuel Kant, like Hume, would look to “the animal kingdom” as an analog for humanity, but what is astonishing is the manner in which articulations of “species” and “race” are interdependent and concentric epistemological constructions. Whether in the work of Carl Von Linne; Georges-Louis LeClerc, Comte de Buffon,⁴ or in the following statement by Kant, animal and human “race” are co-articulations:

Among the deviations—i.e., the hereditary differences of animals belonging to a single stock—those which, when transplanted (displaced to other areas), maintain themselves over protracted generation, and which also generate hybrid young whenever they interbreed with other deviations of the same stock, are called races....In this way Negroes and Whites are not different species of humans(for they belong presumably to one stock), but they are different *races*, for each perpetuates itself in every area, and they generate between them children that are necessarily hybrid, or blendings (mulattoes). (qtd. in Eze 39)

In such formulations, it is difficult to maintain that race, or the animalization of blackness, is merely symptomatic of attempts to domesticate “nature” or “animals” under an ordering system. Rather the demand for taxonomical and hierarchical races is intrinsic to the project of assimilating plants and non-human animals into a system. It would stand to reason that this would be the case, as the vastness of nature would overwhelm and exceed the limits of reigning forms of knowledge through conquest, slavery, imperialist exploration, and colonial domination.⁵ Race can only be subsidiary to the desire to animalize non-human animals or make “nature” knowable if you abstract this desire from its historical context of slavery, conquest, and imperial colonialism.⁶ Yet, the ordering of non-human nature is also not reducible to a demand for racial hierarchy, as the domination of non-human forms of life was a privileged expression of conquest. Neither “race” nor “species” is merely symptomatic, but rather they are contiguous and interdependent.

Hegel represents, perhaps, the most extreme articulation of African animality, one in which animality is thought not only to be a feature of the African, as it is for the European, but *the essence* of African life. At times, from reading Hegel (and arguably Kant’s) geographical theories, you could conclude that his theory of nature and animals is animated by a desire to fix human race, to make race knowable, and predictable. For Hegel declares:

Even the animals show the same inferiority as the human beings. The fauna of America includes lions, tigers, and crocodiles. But although they are otherwise similar to their equivalents in the Old World, they are every respect smaller, weaker, and less powerful.” (qtd in Eze 114)

In this case, it is not the native’s likeness to animals that defines human animality, rather animals’ likeness to American Indian animality defines animals in their animality. American Indian animality becomes the term through which “nature” is defined. This is not to say that his thoughts on non-humans animals are merely a justification for his theories of race, but rather it does demonstrate that we cannot assume that racism does not animate conceptions of some of our most foundational theories of nature and non-human animality. Most of the humanist thought discussed here was developed during the eighteenth-century when the slave trade came under increased scrutiny by abolitionists. Contestation had risen to unprecedented levels, and as a result, slavery increasingly required justification (Jordan 27, 231-232). These justifications relied heavily on the African’s purported animality. Even Georges Leopold Cuvier’s classification of humanity into three distinct varieties—Caucasian, Mongolian, and Ethiopian—emphasizing the superiority of the Caucasian, is elaborated in his book titled—*Animal Kingdom* (qtd. in Eze 104-108).

In “Notes on a State of Virginia,” Thomas Jefferson attempts to qualify the essence of black people’s humanity. What is crucial is that Jefferson defines black people as “animal” not based on a direct correlation to non-human animals, but in the specificity of black people’s humanity, particularly with regard to black embodiment, sexuality, intelligence, and emotions: aesthetically displeasing form, bestial sexuality, and minor intelligence. Regarding the heart and mind, he states:

They are more ardent after their female; but love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation. Their griefs are transient. Those numberless afflictions, which

render it doubtful whether heaven has given life to us in mercy or in wrath are less felt, and sooner forgotten with them.... (qtd. in Eze 98)

Jefferson's arguments recognize black humanity, but the question is what kind of humanity is imputed to the black? As he states, "It is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications" (qtd. in Eze 102).

Following Aristotle, humanity and animality are not mutually exclusive terms in Eurocentric humanistic thought but with an important qualification: the logic of conquest, slavery, and colonialism would produce a linear and relational conception of human animality. Whereas Europeans are moral/rational/political animals, the recognition of black people's humanity would not unambiguously and unidirectionally elevate black people's ontological status vis-a-vis nonhuman animals. "Being human" would instead provide a vehicle for reinforcing a striated conception of human species. Thus, the extension and recognition of shared humanity across racial lines is neither "denied" humanity nor mutual, reciprocal human recognition; rather, it is more accurately deemed animalized humanization. Instead of denying humanity, black people are humanized, but this humanity is burdened with the specter of animality. In fact, all of the thinkers above identify black people as human (to some extent or another); thus, assimilation into the category of "universal humanity" should not be equated with black freedom. Assimilation into "universal humanity" is precisely this tradition's *modus operandi*. But what are the methods? And what are the costs?

Too often, our conception of antiblackness is defined by the specter of "denied humanity" or "exclusion," yet as Saidiya Hartman has identified, the process of making the slave relied on the abjection and criminalization of slave humanity, rather than the denial of it. Hartman asks:

...suppose that the recognition of humanity held out the promise not of liberating the flesh or redeeming one's suffering but rather of intensifying it? Or what if this acknowledgment was little more than a pretext for punishment, dissimulation of the violence of chattel slavery and the sanction given it by the law and the state, and an instantiation of racial hierarchy? What if the endowments of man—conscience, sentiment, and reason—rather than assuring liberty or negating slavery acted to yoke slavery and freedom? Or what if the heart, the soul, and the mind were simply the inroads of discipline rather than that which confirmed the crime of slavery.... (5)

Hartman contends that the recognition of the enslaved's humanity did not redress slavery's abuses nor the arbitrariness of the master's power since in most instances the acknowledgement of the humanity of the enslaved was a "complement" to the arrangement of chattel property rather than its "remedy"(6). She demonstrates that recognition of the enslaved's humanity served as a pretext for punishment, dissimulation of chattel slavery's violence, and the sanction given it by the law and the state (Hartman 5). What's more, rather than fostering "equality," this acknowledgement often served as an instantiation of racial hierarchy, as the slave is "recognized" but only as a lesser human in evolutionist discourse or criminalized by state discourses. In other words, objecthood and humanization were two sides of the same coin, as ties of affection could be manipulated and will was criminalized.

The enslaved bifurcated existence as both an object of property and legal person endowed with limited rights, protections, and criminal culpability produced a context where consent, reform, and protection extended the slave's animalized status rather than ameliorated objectification. From this perspective, emancipation is less of a decisive event, but rather a reorganization of a structure of violence, an ambivalent legacy, with gains and losses, where inclusion could arguably function as an intensification of racial subjection. Echoing Hartman, I would argue for reframing black subjection not as a matter of imperfect policy nor as evidence for a spurious commitment to black rights, which is undeniably the case, but rather as necessitating a questioning of the hierarchy embedded in the universal liberal human project. "The human" and "the universal" subject of rights and entitlements assumed a highly particularized subject that is held as paradigmatic, subjugating all other conceptions of humanity and justice. Furthermore, if the following assertion by Achille Mbembe is correct, "the obsession with *hierarchy*...provides the constant impetus to count, judge, classify, and eliminate, both persons and things" in the name of "humanizing" the colonized; I ask, how can we confidently distinguish humanization from animalization? (Mbembe 192) What we have at hand is more complicated than a simple opposition, such as "exclusion versus inclusion," "human versus the animal," and "humanization versus dehumanization." Consequently, a transformative approach to *being* and a new epistemology of "the human" is needed rather than the extension of human recognition under the state's normative conception.

As long as "the animal" remains an intrinsic but abject feature of "the human," black freedom will remain elusive and black lives in peril. To disaggregate "humanity" from the dominant conception of "black humanity," one would have to either radically transform or destroy blackness. To transform or destroy blackness requires the transformation of discourses on "the animal," as "the animal" and "the black" are not only twin representations but also overlapping concepts. While there are particular anthropocentric discourses about specific animals, just as there are particular forms of antiblack racialization based on ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and national origin, for instance, these particularizing discourses are in relation to the organizing abstraction of "the animal" as "the black."

When humanization is thought to be synonymous with black freedom, or even a means to freedom, one risks inadvertently minimizing or extending the violence of "universal humanity." The "universal" is a site of contestation, a state of becoming rather than an ideal. The on-going process of universalization is purchased precisely through the ontological negation of "the African." As Hegel would argue, Africans are barred from universal humanity or spirit because they are not aware of themselves as conscious historical beings, a consequence of two intrinsic qualities: First, Africans worship themselves or animals rather than God. Second, Africans kill their king, which is a failure to recognize the superiority of a higher authority than themselves whether that of God or law.

The African character, according to Hegel, springs from a geographical climate hostile to the achievement of spirit. Hegel builds on earlier theories that suggest that climate is not simply fertile ground for the cultivation of nature, but is also the root of a teleological human character. He believed the "torrid" and "frigid" zones, "where nature is too powerful," do not provide the sufficient conditions for the dialectic of becoming, or

the attainment of “freedom by internal reflection,” whereby humanity is achieved in opposition to nature (qtd. in Eze 111). One achieves spirit by rising above nature, distinguishing oneself from one’s natural surroundings. Only by passing through this stage, is one able to recognize the presence of God as separate from the self and above Nature. Thus, God “exists in and for itself as a completely objective and absolute being of higher power” determining the course of everything in nature and humanity (qtd. in Eze 129). Hegel declares, “The Negro is an example of animal man in all his savagery and lawlessness... The African’s “primitive state of nature is in fact a state of animality” (qtd. in Eze 128).

The practice whereby Africans “worship the moon, the sun, and the rivers,” animating these natural forms “in their imagination, at the same time treating them as completely independent agents,” Hegel believes, ultimately makes the mistake of identifying Nature’s power without identifying that nature has an eternal law or providence behind it, providing universal and permanent natural order (qtd. in Eze 129). The African’s “arbitrariness” triumphs over permanent natural order. Thus, the African is not capable of the rational universality embed in the concepts of law, ethics, and morality. As free rational laws, for Hegel, are the bases of freedom, Hegel formulates most systematically a conception of “the African” that is both *of* humanity, but not *in* humanity. Thus, humanity is not strictly a biological imperative but a cultural achievement in Hegelian thought.

Hegel pronounces “the African” an animal precisely through the rejection of African political and spiritual rationality, even while denying the existence of African rational capability all together. One must ask, how can one deny the presence of African rationality through a method that acknowledges its existence? And, to what extent is black humanity “excluded” when it is central to the construction of European humanity as an achievement? Infamous pronouncements aside, Hegel’s conclusion is circular: his logic collapses against the weight of his precepts and method. This circuitous logic is one we inherit when a *difference* in Reason is interpreted as *absence, error, or chaos*.⁷

As Achille Mbembe in *On the Postcolony* notes, the problem of universal humanity shapes current conditions of ethics and justice:

Each time it came to people’s different in race, language, and culture, the idea that we have, concretely and typically, the same flesh, or that in Husserl’s word, “My flesh already has the meaning of being a flesh typical in general for us all,” became problematic. The theoretical and practical recognition of the body of “the stranger” as flesh and body just like mine, the *idea of a common human nature, a humanity shared with others*, long posed, and still poses, a problem for Western consciousness. (2)

Hegel’s theory of “universal humanity” has influenced the culture of rights and law, including human rights law, but at the cost of erasing competing conceptions of humanity and justice that *are not* rooted in the opposition between man and Nature. A conception of humanity that Hegel would dismiss as “nature-worship” animates the work of famed South African artist Ezrom Legae (Hegel qtd. in Eze 133).

Legae created artworks in ink and pencil as well as totemic bronze sculptures. In 1977, Legae expressed his feelings about the murder of Bantu anti-apartheid leader, Steve Biko, at the hands of the police through a set of pencil and ink drawings. In the drawings there are fragile domestic fowls and human-bird hybrids: broken bones, battered,

impaled, crucified, fragmented, and swollen. Tortured bodies are alongside eggs, figures of renewal. The drawings collectively speak to the torture, sacrifice, and regeneration of the South Africa's Black Consciousness movement.

The animal aspect is not simply a metaphor for the pained existence of human life under the rule of apartheid; it also illustrates the animal potential of human beings. This conception of human's animal potential is rooted in a cosmological system, a philosophy where the potency of animals may be shared with humans. Humans, especially those who are spiritually powerful, such as traditional leaders or healers, harness the spiritual and even physical characteristics of animals. For South Africans like Legae, those depicted in his work are no longer merely human, as they are transformed by the taking on of the physical and psychical potential of animals. Thus, they are not merely metaphorically animals, but are altered in a physical and psychical sense. His work is a challenge to Manichean distinctions between the physical and the spiritual as well as "human versus the animal."

When the prevailing notion of humanity becomes synonymous with "universal humanity" or "the human" in discourses of law and popular consciousness, this is an outcome of power, whereby one worldview is able to supplant another system with a different set of ethical possibilities. The more "the human" declares itself "universal," the more it imposes itself and attempts to crowd out competing conceptions of being and identity. The insistence on the "universality" of "the human" allows for the multiplication and proliferation of this abstraction's aggression. To overcome a competing model, euromodernity has historically harnessed the force of the state; this does not only take the form of direct state violence, but is also accomplished by epistemic erasure. Attacks on indigenous forms of knowledge is essential to the process of normalizing a colonial episteme. In bids for recognition and legibility of suffering, within national and global judicial bodies, one's legal identity and injury must speak the language of a particular philosophy of the human. This is so, despite the fact that universal humanity, as defined by Hegel and taken up in liberal humanist judicial bodies, is rooted in an anti-African epistemology.

Under the circumstances, Legae's artwork did benefit, *to an extent*, from its incompatibility with the state's conception of the human, as its critique was obscured from the state. Its cosmological codes, its animating conception of humanity, were rendered illegible by the same force of law that sparked his outrage and grief. The current conception of "universal humanity" does not move beyond a western cultural mode and thus misrecognizes African subjectivity. Thus, we cannot take "universal humanity" at its word that it is indeed "universal." Hegel's conception of universal humanity aggressively negates Legae's conception of humanity. Namely, Hegel's humanism misrecognizes the rationality, self-reflection, and abstraction that constitute Legae's mode of critique. According to Hegel, such a critique could never spring from "nature-worship" cosmological worldviews (qtd. in Eze 133).

Ironically, the manner with which "the human" announces its universality provides the occasion for Legae's protest to slip beneath the radar of the apartheid South African government's censorship. Representing this mode of being human also surpassed the problem of the empirical or iconographic representation of trauma through a spiritual representation of injury and the latent animal potential of those traumatized by the state's violence. Thus, Legae could provide powerful testimony to events barred from public

discourse. His conception of humanity could defend African life from the encroachment of a humanism that universalizes itself through torture, intimidation, and epistemic imperialism.⁸ Considering that most of the world does not adhere to a worldview guided by human-animal binarism, I wonder, what other modes of relating, epistemologies of the self, and ethical possibilities exist beyond the horizon of European thought?

Some believe that black people must be humanists for the “obvious” reason, that the dominant group can “give up” humanism for the simple fact that their humanity is presumed, while other communities have struggled too long for the “humanistic prize” (Gordon 39-46). But, what if the enslaved and colonized “no longer accept concepts as gift, nor merely purify and polish them, but first make and create them, present them and make them convincing?” (Nietzsche 409). The elusive “humanist prize”—the formal, symmetrical extension of European humanism—makes achieving its conception of “the human” a prerequisite of equitable recognition, yet its conception of humanity already includes the African, but as abjection. Thus, in order to *become* human without qualification, you must already *be* “the human,” yet “the human” implies whiteness and specifically non-blackness. We misdiagnose the problems of humanism when we take “universalism” at its word, seeing its failures as simply a problem of implementation or procedure. This results in a further misdiagnosis of the causes and outcomes of freedom and unfreedom. Freedom itself is an evolving practice rather than a normative ideal. As an ideal, freedom is shielded from critique by alternative conceptions rooted in another order of knowledge (Roberts 183). That said, I also believe that we have misrecognized the contrapuntal desires of black culture, which are not to assimilate but transform.

WHAT’S AFTER “THE HUMAN”?

Aime Césaire in *Discourse on Colonialism* argues that instruments of colonial violence and intimidation require the reinvention of the colonized, entailing the deliberate destruction of the colonized’s past. This process of turning the colonized into an empty vessel, a non-being, a nothing, an ontological zero, is required before the violent imposition of colonial myths and abjection. This process is what he calls “thingification,” and to which he concludes: “Europe is indefensible.” (Césaire, *Discourse* 32) This dependency on the *colonized’s absence* in order to invent *European presence* is a violent form of dependency that decays Europe itself. As Césaire explains:

...the essential thing here is to see clearly, to think clearly—that is, dangerously—and to answer clearly the innocent first question: what fundamentally, is colonization? To agree on what it is not: neither evangelization, not philanthropic enterprise, not a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, not an attempt to extend the rule of law. To admit once and for all, without flinching at the consequences, that the decisive actors here are the adventurers and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant, appetite and force, and behind them, the baleful projected shadow of a form of civilization which, at a certain point in its history, finds itself obliged, for internal reasons, to extend to a world scale the competition of its antagonistic economies. (*Discourse* 33)

For Césaire, the promise of “civilization,” the spread of reason, and the “redemption” of Christianity were hypocrisy, a ruse, for he argues, “slavering apologists came later.”

(*Discourse* 33) If European imperial humanism is indeed indefensible, it follows that a thinker like Césaire would seek a conception of “the human” beyond the colonial model. Such a conception of humanity would be animated by new definitions, alternatives, paradigms, images, symbols, metaphors, and values from a “transsocietal perspective” (Ambrose 216).⁹

Césaire was an innovative humanist and not simply a critic of Eurocentric modernity. For Césaire, euromodernity itself is pluralistic, in that Europe is the meeting place of much of the world’s expressions of Reason. This collective production has been disavowed and distilled into contradictory claims for both universality and European exceptionalism. Césaire sees both positions as a dead end:

I’m not going to confine myself to some narrow particularism. But I don’t intend either to become lost in a disembodied universalism...I have a different idea of a universal. It is a universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all. (“Letter” 6-7, 14-15)

He called for new conceptions of humanity and new epistemologies of progress that were not reliant on colonial systems of valuation or legitimacy. According to Césaire, the dawn of European modernity set in place a wave of world-historical violence, such that Europe’s claims to “human universality” was issued from the headquarters of colonial authority. In light of the violence of Eurocentric universalism, Césaire believes that it is crucial to redefine the “universal” in a way that neither excluded nor centralized Europe. In short, the subversive or disruptive humanism he calls for would be nothing short of an epistemic break with colonial humanism. For Césaire, it is not enough to criticize a “premature” universalism that disavows its exploitative interdependency; he also believes it is important for the colonized to put forth competing conceptions of their own humanity.

Sylvia Wynter contends that we need new “ceremonies” to enlarge the field of human possibility.¹⁰ These new ceremonies would initiate what appears impossible and create that which is to come. Wynter made it her central task to question the transcendental grounds of a Eurocentric formation of “the human,” revealing its “premature” universality and phantom objectivity (Headley 60). As she states, “Man” is not the human, although it represents itself as if it were. (Wynter, “Africa” 33)

This call for *epistemic daring* should not be read as a simple rejection of European thought (Kamugisha 147). As Césaire states:

We are not men for whom it is a question of “either-or.” For us, the problem is not to make a utopian and sterile attempt to repeat the past, but to go beyond. It is not a dead society that we want to revive. We leave that to those who go for exoticism. Nor is it the present colonial society that we wish to prolong. (*Discourse* 52)

Far from a simple romance with origins, Wynter, like Césaire, is interested in taking seriously the epistemologies that spring from the African diaspora, not sheltering them from questioning. Césaire did not call for a return to a pre-colonial past or a future drawn from the blueprints of Europe, but rather he wanted to forge a new path, one that emerged from critical reflection on the history of “the African” people in modernity and prior to the onset of European modernity. He calls for the creation of “a new society” with “the help of all our brother slaves, a society rich with all the productive power of modern

times, warm with all the fraternity of olden days.” (*Discourse* 52) With this, Césaire erases the racial and national hierarchies embedded in the French conception of fraternité. However, fraternité is deeply gendered, as the “Rights of Man” are imagined through the paradigm of brotherhood.¹¹ I wonder how we might, *with* Césaire, reimagine gender and sexuality as *essential* to both the demystification of Man as universal and the innovative politics Césaire describes.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY AFTER MAN

I have always been struck by the speed with which “handsome young Negro” turns into “young colt” or “stallion.” (Fanon 128)

...in the universe of unreality and exaggeration, the black female is, if anything, a creature of sex, but *sexuality* touches her nowhere...the female has so much sexual potential that she has none at all that anybody is ready to recognize at the *level of culture*. (Spillers, *Interstices* 155)

Can we employ the term “woman” and yet remain vigilant that “all women do not have the same gender?” By assuming that woman designates a known referent, an a priori unity, a precise bundle of easily recognizable characteristics, traits, and dispositions, we fail to attend to the contingent and disjunctive production of the category. ...for the work of feminist criticism is precisely the interrogation and deconstruction of this normativity rather than the determination of who is or is not woman based in accordance with this measure. (Hartman 99, 100)

Much has been written about the roles of Reason and history in the production of “dehumanization.” In such discourse, most represented by Hegel, “the African,” never attaining immanent differentiation or the clarity of self-knowledge, is imprisoned by immediacy. However, in the chapters that follow, I am most interested in the roles of gender and sexuality in the production of blackness as “animal man.” Negating discourses on African “history” and “reason” are not the only and perhaps not even the most frequently deployed concepts upon which “the African” is posited as *animal*. Gender and sexuality feature prominently in animalizing discourse, as a measure of both the quality of the mind and an index of spirit.

Gendered and sexual discourses on “the African” are inextricable from those pertaining to reason, historicity, and civilization, as purported observations of gender and sexuality were frequently used to provide “evidence” of black people’s inherent animality in the earliest days of humanist invention. Christian Europe had already privileged gender and sexuality as indicators of reason and the attainment of history, and visual observation, namely vision’s opacity, had not emerged as an epistemological problem. In this context, observation and the visual, imagined as objective rather than subjective, could overcome the practical problem of language. Thus observation of gender and sex was deployed in the interest of producing race as a visualizable fact. The body was believed to provide presence—a supplement to the immateriality of reason and historicity. In the visual anecdote, the black body’s fleshiness was turned in on the body’s interiority in the quest for Eurocentric knowledge, universality, and wealth. In such a context, the black body was set in opposition to the black mind.

As Winthrop Jordan documents in *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550-1812*, Africans and apes were linked through physiognomic comparison and sexuality. Englishmen had only encountered non-human primates vicariously through

representation. They were unfamiliar with anthropoid primates, such as gorillas, chimpanzees, and orangutans. Encounters with Sub-Saharan Africans occurred adjacent to these encounters, leading to wild speculations linking primates and Africans (Jordan 29, 229). These speculations were an outgrowth of an epistemological foundation that had already been circulating tales of mythical human-animal hybrids and humanoid animals based on a combination of ancient reports and medieval morality (Jordan 29). Africa, itself, was seen as a land of new monsters. Africans were rarely perceived as a *kind* of ape; what was more common was the suggestion that Africans and apes shared libidinous sexual characteristics or were sexually linked (Jordan 32, 227, 230-32, 237-37).

Africans, like apes, were seen as a lewd, lascivious, and wanton. Furthermore, Africans were perceived as animal-like in customs and manners, particularly with regard to their purported potent sexuality, bodily excess, and “nakedness” (Jordan 32, 39). For the English, sex was dirty and barbaric as the body was host to sin; and while they did not perceive Africans as observing the same worldview, they evaluated them negatively. Africans were linked with sins of the body, and their blackness was believed to testify to their unlawful and ungodly nature (Jordan 17-20, 36, 41). The purported carnality of the African women was thought to be exemplary of African sexuality more generally, as women were the measure of a race’s civility (Jordan 35). But what observers and commentators did not question was their own universality, their grid of intelligibility, and how it conditioned not just what they saw, or even how they observe, but how they *knew* what they saw. This is an issue that exceeds the question of what was *actually* observed and what was “made up;” instead of debating the facticity of a story, it is imperative to interrogate how we would go about evaluating any truth claim. This calls into question how we “know what we know,” not only about a world ‘out there’ but also how we ‘know ourselves.’ This is a problem not of the past, but a problem that is constituent of our being.

By the nineteenth-century, the Great Chain of Being’s physical anthropology, using human and animal physical measurements, sealed the connection between Africans to apes as scientific fact. The chain was continuous, where the lowest man, the Hottentot, was continuous with the highest ape (Jordan 228). It was held that there was only a fraction of difference between each link in the chain, and sexuality was a way of explaining the affinity between “the Hottentot” and the ape (Jordan 229). The invention of the “lowly Hottentot” and “Negro” was an alibi for the ravages of euromodernity—the carnivorousness of capitalism, slavery, and colonialism.

One must only recall the manner with which Sara Baartman, a Khoisan woman, and thus a so-called “Hottentot,” was displayed for the British and French public, as pornographic spectacle and scientific specimen (Gilman 88). Her physiognomic characteristics—posterior and genitals—were presumed to signal a difference in sexuality that was pronounced enough to divide the category of “woman:” an idealized white femininity became paradigmatic of “woman” through the abjection of the imagined African “female” (Gilman 83-85). Female, rather than woman, *African women’s gender is under the sign of absence, lack, and pathology* in order to present an idealized western European bourgeois femininity as the normative *presence* of womanhood (Gilman 85-108). Thus, it is not so much that African womanhood is “denied” as it is animalized by discourses of sexuality.

In this context, the recognition of black womanhood, and especially black femininity, is placed in tension with her sexuality. The perpetual spectre of black women's lack in the realm of culturally and historically produced femininity, which I demonstrate is both performative and physiognomic, produces "the African female" as paradigmatically masculine or androgynous. The spectacle of the posterior has perhaps blinded our critical attention to the manner with which "primary" racial characteristics not only stratify gender but also question the very meaning of sex.

We can no longer presume that gender is a metonym for "woman" and sexuality a metonym for "queer" as the manipulation of gendered and sexual codes is essential to the production of blackness generally—irrespective of self-identification. As queer theory scholars have noted, the masculine-feminine dynamic is on the register of the symbolic, rather than the biological, even though it masquerades as if the borders dividing masculine from feminine map neatly onto the "natural" polarity of sex.¹² What feminism has not sufficiently interrogated is the manner with which the masculine-feminine dichotomy is racialized. We have not adequately identified that racialization is intrinsic to the legibility of its codes and grammar, namely that race queers heteronormative gender constructs. As Lewis Gordon states:

Whiteness is regarded as presence, as being. Blackness is regarded as absence of being...In the presence of a white man, a black man stands as a gaping black hole of being to be filled by white presence. Thus, black men may even symbolize femininity. ...The confrontation would not necessarily be homosexual; it could also be misogynist. This would mean that the black male or male of color may be situated as woman or the symbol of the feminine in an antiblack world. (125-126)

Such a predicament creates conditions of gendered and sexual anxiety, inversion, and instability. As Hortense Spillers states, "in the historic outline of dominance, the respective subject-positions of "female" and "male" adhere to no symbolic integrity," as their meaning can be stripped or appropriated arbitrarily by power, as black women's claim to "womanhood and femininity still tends to rest too solidly on the subtle and shifting calibrations of a liberal ideology" (204, 223). The black body, held captive as a "resource for metaphor," has been discussed in the work of Frantz Fanon, in which he contends that black men's bodies are projection screens for white anxiety about sexuality (Spillers 205). But, instead of recognizing their projections, as just that—projection, they see the black man as a sexual threat: a powerful sexual menace, provider of sexual activity unrestricted by morality or prohibition, or one who monopolizes sexual pleasure. The result is envy, punishment, or masochistic pleasure; for the black is not *the symbol* of sexual threat but *is* sexual threat; the penis becomes the synecdoche of black manhood (Fanon 170, 177). Thus, while these codes are cultural rather than pre-discursive, one must also attend to the fact of the body, as the body's materiality is thought to provide the observable "fact" of animality.

The African's "failure" to achieve humanity has historically been thought to be rooted in "the body," in an insatiable appetite that made it impossible for the African to rise above "the body," "the organ," in order to come back to itself in self-reflection, never achieving the distance required in order to contemplate the self (Mbembe 190). Gender, and especially sexuality, were leveraged against counter-claims acknowledging black reason and civility. For thinkers such as Jefferson, black gender and black kinship stood

as an impediment to black progress. So, while it seems that the human must be rethought, a critical engagement with the discourses of gender and sexuality must be coincident to our interrogation of both dominant and emergent *practices, rather than paradigms*, of humanity.

At this time, most scholars can agree that an “intersectional” approach to the question of subjectivity is required, but what scholars have not clarified is how the different elements of subjectivity braid together historically and culturally. In the chapters that follow, I hope to provide more precise thinking in this area. Our task would be to take seriously the particularity of black gender and sexuality in the context of a humanism that in its desire to be universalize, ritualistically posits blackness as opacity, inversion, and limit. In such a context, the black body is characterized by a plasticity, whereby euromodernity arbitrarily remaps black gender and sexuality, non-teleologically and non-binaristically, with no adherence to normative or pre-existing codes. In such a context of gendering, and by gendering I mean humanization, power only takes direction from its own shifting exigencies—a predicament that can only be described as chaos. This chaos by design is used to marginalize black genders and sexualities *as* the border of the sociological, a condition that I refer to as plasticity.

Liberal humanism’s basic unit of analysis, “Man,” produces an untenable dichotomy—“the human” versus “the animal.” Marginalized humans—women, queers, the colonized and racialized—fall into the abyss dividing organic life into “human” or “animal” based on wholly unsound philosophical premises. Thus, as a result of being animalized, those marginalized have had to bear the burden of a failed philosophy. My dissertation will further afromodernism’s interrogation of humanism by identifying our shared being with animals without suggesting that some members of humanity bear the burden of the animal.

ANIMAL SUBJECTS

As argued in recent humanistic and scientific scholarship, what we deem “animal” includes forms of non-human life that have widely divergent physiognomic, cognitive, and phenomenal experiences, thereby casting doubt over any notion of an “animal” essence.¹³ So why do we need the generic construction of “the animal”? What forms of knowledge and power is it stabilizing? As I have shown, the bifurcation of forms of life as primarily or exclusively human or animal is a flashpoint in European anxieties about slavery and colonial expansionism, and neither is simply a justification for exploitation of non-human animals nor a mere metaphorical instrument of racism. In the history of (post)modernity, “the animal” and “the black” became conjoined and mutually reinforcing tropes in liberal humanist discourse and practice, as one term lends credibility to the other.

Yet most critics of racism posit the extension of universal humanity as the solution to this predicament. Many anti-racist theorists have responded to the ontological uncertainty of people of color by reasserting the humanity of the colonized, enslaved, and racialized, but at the risk of reinforcing the dominant framework of normative humanity, including its disjunctive construction of people of color’s humanity. In this scholarship, animalization is seen as merely an accent of racialization rather than constitutive to the epistemological ground of the very liberal humanism they seek to extend. By seeing animalization solely as error of categorization, it has left a remainder in our theory: the fundamental role that the animal question plays in producing modern blackness. By

accepting Man as the model for normative humanity, even inadvertently, they have authorized the exclusions of that subject, which are historical and ever present. “The “human” is dehistoricized and its colonial and enslaving legacies are obscured from view by a premature politics that putatively extends black people’s access to normative humanity. Such an approach leaves the subject of “universal humanity” insufficiently interrogated, and it insulates that subject from critique, without guaranteeing black people shelter from further animalization.

Furthermore, I argue that *inclusion rather than exclusion* is the primary modality of reproducing blackness as “the animal” within the human: black people as the lived border dividing human and animal forms of life. Thus, if we want to seriously interrogate our culture’s continual investment in anti-blackness, we must go beyond perceiving ‘bestialization’ as an unfortunate legacy of racism that can be resolved *conclusively* through the expansion of universal humanity. Instead, we must include an interrogation of the discourse of “the animal” *as such*, as “the discourse of species” is central to the logic and practice of animalizing black gender and sexuality in the discourses examined here—law, philosophy, science, neoliberalism, and popular culture—even when black people are not referred to as animals outright (Wolfe, *Animal* 2, 6-8). I argue that our failure to interrogate “the discourse of species” has allowed blackness to remain vulnerable to its appropriation by species discourse, a discourse in which animality can function explicitly or by dissimulation. This is work we must do in the interest of reimagining humanity, which is exactly what the African diasporic thinkers highlighted in this project have identified as the central task that lies before us, that is if we want to see a fundamental shift in the organization of the politics of life.

Animal studies is an emerging and increasingly influential field in critical theory. In animal studies, interdisciplinary scholars examine human-animal relations, animality in philosophy, and the role of animals in society in both U.S. and transnational context. Animal studies emphasizes the semio-material production of “the animal,” as it pertains to questions of ethics and alterity amongst humans and across lines of species. My work brings intersectional thinking to animal studies. In some currents within Afro-modernity, such as the ones mentioned in this introduction, “the human” is taken as a problematic to be questioned rather than a desirable destination or entitlement. Black culture and thought has been a location where “universal humanity” is perceived as a paradigm to be interrogated rather than assumed. Yet, many have not asked what afromoderns have to say about discourses concerning species formation, despite the fact that black people have not only been metaphorically linked to “nature” and “animal,” but have been posited *as animal* and *as nature* in the history of race.

Building on the emergence of recent scholarship in animal studies—especially the work of Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, Cary Wolfe, Kelly Oliver, and Donna Haraway—I contribute an analysis of the animalization of racial embodiment that reveals the political stakes of “the animal turn” for current expressions of race and queer theory, feminism, biopolitics, and postcoloniality (Weil 1; Ritvo 1). This project does not start with the presupposition that the aim of animal studies is to rethink how we conceptualize and treat non-human animals, although this certainly should happen. Rather, echoing the animal studies scholars mentioned, this dissertation prioritizes an interrogation of the function of animality (human and non-human) in differential conceptions of humanity and their accompanying knowledge claims.¹⁴ If we agree that *the animal* is a biopolitical

discourse and a necropolitical reality, where power designates one “animal” in order to subject the heart, mind, and body to unquestioned violence, then the stakes of sheltering discourses on “the animal” from interrogation are enormous.

This dissertation emphasizes cultural production that philosophically challenges the abjection of animality and highlights alternative modes of being human, rather than limit itself to a critique of anthropocentrism, as is common in animal studies, for the following reasons: First, the cultural production examined here does not figure the challenge of reimagining animality as separate from the urgent need to reimagine humanity because the semio-material burden of living as black virtually forecloses the “on behalf of” structure that characterizes so much of animal studies and, especially, its antecedents—animal ethics and animal rights philosophy. As I have established thus far, modernity has not produced African diasporic subjectivity in a manner that would permit black people to decisively remove themselves from being subjected to violence against “the animal.” *For the euromodern humanists mentioned above, “the African” does not symbolize “the animal;” “the African” is “the animal.”* The afromodern cultural interventions highlighted in this dissertation speak to the “affinity” and biopolitical entanglement of discourses on animals, environment, and African diasporic peoples. Thus, critical afromodernism must challenge animalization on two fronts: animalizing discourse that is directed primarily at people of African descent, and animalizing discourse that reproduces the abject abstraction of “the animal,” more generally, because such an abstraction is not an empirical reality but a technology of necropolitics applied to life arbitrarily.

Second, critics of anthropocentrism will have to confront the transspecies reality of perspective, of being situated. Human(s) have a perspective; overcoming perspective should not be the aim of any critical practice, even when projection and misrecognition are intrinsic to our being. (Euro)(andro)anthropocentrism has attempted to avoid confronting the problem of perspective through a misguided quest for transcendentalism, in which it tried to elevate itself above perspective. The effect, if not the aim, permitted Eurocentric anthropocentrism to impose its reality and ethics on those it sought to discipline, dominate, and “help.” Calls to move beyond anthropocentrism come very close to returning to an old transcendentalism by disavowing the very difference they seek to address.

Third, my project is not limited to a critique of anthropocentrism because I do not assume that “the human” is always privileged over “the non-human.” Relations across lines species is not one of unidirectional dominance. Viruses, parasites, and insects often dominate human populations. And as I have suggested here and will elaborate in the pages that follow, antiblackness’ arbitrary uses of power do not comply with the hierarchies presumed by critics of anthropocentrism. Thus, critics such as Derrida and Wolfe have foregrounded a need for a critical and accountable humanism rather than have sought ever-vigilant forms of anti-anthropocentricisms.¹⁵ However, as critical thinkers, it is crucial to look inwards and outwards, an on-going critical self-reflection on what it means to be human in a biopolitical context that includes animals, environment, and humans is an essential part of that work. *This criticality would interrogate the epistemology of “the human” and not just its ethico-political practices.*

Four, a critique of anthropocentrism is not necessarily a critique of liberal humanism. Critics have advocated “on behalf of” animals without questioning the

epistemic and material project of humanism. Many critics of anthropocentrism have mistakenly perceived that the problem of our time is anthropocentrism rather than a failed humanism. Such critics of anthropocentrism often proceed by “humanizing” animals in the form of rights, welfare, and protections without questioning how advocates are constructing themselves in the process. In other words, they do not subject the very “human” they want to decenter or expand to sufficient interrogation. And as a result, they authorize the violence of the state, one that protects, criminalizes, enforces and prosecutes differentially based on race, class, gender, sexuality, national origin, religion, ability, and immigration status. For example, advocacy projects that seek greater legal protection for the Great Apes and more strenuous criminal prosecution for those who transgress protective laws find themselves at odds with poor people in African nations that have been burdened by IMF and World Bank policies. Such nations may not be able to provide even limited protections for their human citizens and even fewer economic opportunities for the people that would be prosecuted under international animal protection legislation. An impoverished person may participate in capturing animals for pay, given that the illegal wildlife trade is the world’s second largest transnational trading industry, estimated to be worth 20 billion dollars annually, second only to drugs. Yet, poor people do not gain the majority of the monetary value derived from the trade; the captured animals and the wealth generated from their labor spirals upward to the West.¹⁶ In this context, it is not difficult to glean, how such international (read universalist) legislation drafted by exponents from more powerful and stable nations places strain on already fragile postcolonial state resources. One really does have to wonder what we mean by justice and rights when states and their citizens are put in such untenable positions?

At present, animal studies scholarship tends to presume a humanity that is secure within the logic of liberal humanism rather than engage with a humanity that is often cast as debatable or precarious by liberal humanism. To render one’s humanity provisional, where the specter of negation looms large, is precisely the work that racism does. Yet when the authors of this field speak of a “human,” they speak of one that is characterized by ontological certainty, even when ultimately the goal of animal studies is to interrogate or undermine that certainty. For this field to do accurate, fully theorized, and principled work, it must show how “the question of the animal” bears on the question of human diversity. In the pages that follow, I investigate blackness’ relation to animality rather than presume black people’s relative power and privilege *as humans*, vis-a-vis nonhuman animals. Thus, my work focuses on humans whose humanity is a subject of controversy, debate, and dissension in order to reveal the broader political stakes of “the animal turn.” In what follows, I hope to demonstrate that the African diaspora does indeed have a stake in rethinking or troubling “the animal.” However, the economies of value presumed in animal studies need to be rethought and historicized, namely, the presumption that all humans are privileged over all animals by virtue of being *included* in humanity, or that racism is a matter of suggesting that black people are “like-animals” based on a prior and therefore precedential form of violence rooted in speciesism. The chapters that follow are an attempt to clarify, historicize, and more precisely situate black humanity vis-a-vis animal lives. The theory I engage with reflects consideration of contemporary modes of critical engagement including biopolitics, posthumanism, and animal studies. However,

my intent is to critically and reflectively build on these fields' subject matters and methodologies, *not* to replicate them.

That said, even before the field officially announced its arrival, animal studies scholar Donna Haraway produced scholarship that is intersectional in its approach to the problem animalization. Haraway argues for thinking of “affinity” rather than identity, placing the emphasis on making coalitions with those whom we have a community of interest, rather than basing our politics on the sameness of essential character. She encourages us to think about bonding outside of the terms of family and kinship, where concern, consideration, and respect do not stem from the politics of identity and reproduction (Haraway, *Reader* 13-15). Her work, especially *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the Modern World of Science*, is a model for how we might rethink the animal question as a problem of gender, sexuality, race, and imperialism, which by no means is reducible to human exceptionalism or anthropocentrism. By placing scholarship on Afro-modernity in dialogue with animal studies, I am able to more fully theorize the binaristic and hierarchical logics that structure relations among humans and between animals and humans. I show that antiblackness is actually central to the very construction of “animals” that animal studies scholars want to interrogate and move beyond.

BEYOND THE LIMIT

Black humanity has been a continual source of controversy in (post)modernity. The persistent doubt that accompanies black claims to humanity, I insist, is an existential burden all peoples of the African diaphora must confront. As Achille Mbembe puts it: “What we have said about the slave also holds for the *native*. From the point of view of African history, the notion of the native belongs to the grammar of animality” (236).¹⁷ In the Enlightenment thought mentioned above, “the African” is a discourse that develops out of the specific historical context of expansionism beyond the so-called temperate zones, an expansion into what would come to be called Africa. The discourses that developed to narrate Africa as a land of abject subjectivity would spiral out and seek to take possession of all African diasporic peoples beyond the geo/ethno/linguistic specificities of the “the African” and “the Hottentot.” Thus, while the black people in this dissertation are born in different nations— South Africa, Jamaica, and the United States—all must define themselves in a globalized racial order that raises “the animal question” as ultimately an existential one.

In this project, I am interested in how African diasporic writers, artists, and filmmakers not only critique animalization but also exceed critique by actually intervening in and reconfiguring epistemic regimes that seek to define blackness through the prism of animality. And, by doing so, they present possibilities that point our attention to the potential of an epistemic environ that is more advantageous to life writ large, to sustainability and a positive biopolitics. I chose the epistemic locations of science, law, philosophy, economy, and popular culture because these are the sites that modernity has privileged in a contest over the meaning and truth. Instead of aiming for a comprehensive approach to African diasporic perspectives on the animal question, this project is more modest in scope and methodology. This study does not claim to be all-inclusive, but it does claim that the strategies examined here offer a representative set of cases that are salient or pivotal to the question of race and animality. They provide a

snapshot of how African diasporic actors *negotiate* modernity, reflecting and revealing past and future possibilities.

The forms of black-self fashioning examined in this dissertation do not advocate a politics based on rights and entitlements under the law, precisely because their forms are undergirded by demands that are either criminalized, pathologized, or rendered illegible by law; these demands emerge from a different conception of humanity than the one codified in law. They articulate interventions and contestation that invest in practice and culture as sites of critique. They put forth transient and fleeting expressions of possibility in the context of the incongruity between substantial freedom and legal emancipation as well as colonialism and decolonization. These forms of possibility are often incomplete, but point to a desire that is not currently recognized in the social orders that gave rise to them.

The arc of *Beyond the Limit* starts with the founding historical reference of slavery by examining Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Frederick Douglass's literary and philosophical intervention into slavery's legal constraints and proto-scientific rationalizations; it then identifies the reorganization of black animality under the banner of rights and property in the post-emancipation period in Hurston's *The Pet Negro System* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Finally, the dissertation concludes with Jones, Burnett, and Basquiat, whose cultural productions bring to the forefront the problem of race in contemporary expressions of (popular) evolutionary discourse in light of the increased visibility of black people in media and cultural institutions. However, all of the texts in my study underscore the recursive trajectory of discourses on black animality.

Chapter one, "Losing Manhood: Epistemology, Animality, and the Ethics of Uncertainty in *Beloved*," begins with Frederick Douglass's provocation from his 1845 *Narrative*, "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man" (389). Slavery, in particular the slave narrative, established the terms through which we commonly understand the bestialization of blackness. Douglass's 1845 *Narrative* has been central to interpretations that read African American literature through the framework of human recognition. Douglass, himself, grounds his critique of slavery in natural law. However, Douglass's speeches reverse his commitment to the natural rights tradition found in his 1845 narrative, by disrupting its racially exclusive conception of humanity and challenging the animal abjection that is foundational to it. *Beloved* extends Douglass's intervention by subjecting animality's abjection to further interrogation by foregrounding non-human animal perspective, destabilizing the epistemological authority of enslaving modernity, including its gendered and sexual logics. Morrison's *Beloved* traces how black genders and sexualities have been produced queerly by power. *Beloved* suggests that this queerness stems from arbitrary uses of the black body in the field of power rather than resides in the body—in its animality. However, I further this idea by arguing that Morrison's text disrupts the epistemic conceit of a humanism that would presume "the animal" lacks a perspective and interiority. And, by doing so, *Beloved* destabilizes the very binaristic and teleological epistemic presumptions that authorize the black body as border.

In chapter two, "The Law is Your Mother: (Animal) Metaphor, Reproduction, and Dissimulative Acts in Law and the Literary Imagination of Zora Neale Hurston," I argue that Hurston writes against the gendered figurative, even literary, aspects of property law and the crucible of rights. Slave law's matrilineal principle recognizes black maternity

but negates black motherhood. Once black motherhood is negated, the law then appropriates and performs black motherhood symbolically by using the slave as a precursor, analogue, and proxy for the establishment of new forms of legal life with the introduction of animal welfare law. The introduction of animal welfare law rehearsed the enslaved's animalization, as it would use slave welfare laws and the slave's burdened condition as a proxy for the cause of animal protection. Thus, welfare laws designed to "humanize" the enslaved could also be used to "animalize" humans, as animal welfare law relied on an analogy between the suffering of the enslaved with that of the non-human animal; animal "humanization" would be purchased at the expense of further animalizing humans. The instrumentalization of the slave as a proxy for non-human animals is the kind of bestializing metaphoricity that Hurston alerts us to in the "The Pet Negro System." However, I argue that in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, she proposes forms of relating between humans and animals that would disrupt the animalizing rhetoric of law.

Chapter three, "A Question Mark Followed By An Exclamation Point: Grace Jones, Cannibal Consumption, and the Limits of Purrformance," takes up the relationship between transnational trade routes and black performance in the performance art of Jamaican cosmopolitan Grace Jones. Jones's African wildcat costumes attained their allure as a result of the establishment of two interrelated developments: One, traders of "exotic animals" and "exotic people" used the same trans-Atlantic trade routes and relationships. Two, colonial expansionism cultivated a desire for the spectacle of human and nonhuman animality among Western consumers. I argue Grace Jones attempts to reclaim this history disruptively and deconstructively. She "borrows" the purported eroticized femininity of the cat, and by doing so, she is able to represent feminine desirability. Namely, Jones attempted to make her gendered persona a desirable commodity by appropriating and redirecting popular sexualized conflations of black women with African wild cats in an attempt to subvert antiblack and sexist forms of marginalization in the popular cultural marketplace. The appropriation of the cat's desirability is a form of negotiation rather than a clear-cut opposition. I argue that the discursive and material effects of Jones's performance of feline femininity, what I refer to as "purrformance," in the context of the history of representation and consumption, reveal both the stakes and challenges of the black female body's performativity. The performing black body would seem to always recall the racialization it often seeks to dislodge. The reception of her physiognomy—hair, facial features, muscular structure, and complexion—revealed the racial presumptions of normative gendered codes of womanhood and female sex. Jones's alternating performances of feline femininity and androgyny are impinged upon by racial science and sexological discourses that posit the African female's gender as aporia, lack, or taxonomical crisis. Jones responds to this by exposing and rejecting scientific and anthropological codes.

In the fourth and final chapter, "Sacrificing Sacrifice: Racial Patriarchy and Animal Slaughter in Charles Burnett's *The Horse and Killer of Sheep*," I return to the beginning in a sense. I argue that the transition from slave to proletariat, a form of humanization, might actually refigure rather than displace representations of black animality. I argue that Charles Burnett, like Legae, innovates metaphoricity. While metaphor has been central to both the misrecognition of black humanity and non-human animal modes of being, I argue that Burnett is able to creatively reconceptualize

metaphor as critique. Unlike, the case of the animalized racialization involved in “petting a negro” described by Hurston in chapter two, in Burnett’s hands, black human-animal metaphoricity is a process of acknowledging both the specificity of modes of living while also testifying to the violent entanglement of humans and non-humans under biopolitical regimes. Again, as we shall see, the recognition of humanity involved in the conversion of “the slave” into the “proletariat” does not cure animalization but reorganizes it under the conditions of the emergence of neo-liberalism.

I do not suggest consensus across the texts, rather I am highlighting evidence of a disturbance within modernity’s epistemologies and horizon of meaning. These instances of disturbance are suggestive of how Afro-modernism theorizes the contradictions of regimes of knowledge and signification that gave rise to enslaving and colonial modernity. Furthermore, they are highly innovative, offering possibilities for how we might see human and non-human animals differently. I am less interested in finding a singular posture toward humanism, or a law, in the form of a prescription on how we should be human or treat animals. I do not want to trade in a universalism by simply inverting the paradigmatic universal subject. That would run the risk of obscuring the particular situatedness of my subject(s) by reproducing the normative logic of euromodernity, one that equates western subjectivity with universal law, and universal law with justice. And, as we have seen, law may obscure ethics and justice because laws always point to a specific lived, historical, and embodied humanity—one that is not universally shared. I approach the topic without investing in any foundational authority whether in philosophy, law, or science because I do not believe it is necessary for ethical action; instead, this study takes as its central task the unsettling of foundational authority. It is precisely the condition of the absence of foundational authority that has commonly grounded black ethics. Historically, foundational authority has either been hostile to or denied the possibility of black intellectualism and disqualified black, colonized, conquered, and queer people from ethical consideration. The seeds highlighted in the pages that follow spring from the embattled epistemology of peoples living in between direct domination and hegemony, but who nevertheless generate a centrifugal and disruptive epistemology.

¹ The phrase “genre of the human” was developed by Sylvia Wynter in order to provincialize Enlightenment-based humanism, despite its claims to “universality.” Sylvia Wynter and David Scott, “The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter,” *Small Axe*, no. 8 (September 2000): 183-97. Print

² For more on how this debate has been discussed from either a philosophical or historical perspective, see: Winthrop Jordan *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550-1812*. Pelican Books, 1968. David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*. Blackwell Publishing, 1993. Lewis R. Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. Routledge, 1995. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press, 2001. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze. *Race and Enlightenment: A Reader*. Blackwell, 2008. Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*. University of Chicago Press, 1999. Enlightenment thinkers were not univocal in their views on imperialism. Arguably, there are many Enlightenments rather than a singular imperial modernity. For texts that highlight anti-imperial tendency within Enlightenment see: Sankar Muthu *Enlightenment against Empire*. Princeton University Press, 2003. Jennifer Pitts. *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*. Princeton University Press, 2006.

³ An excellent introduction to Aristotelian theories of human animality: Alasdair MacIntyre. *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*. Open Court, 2001.

⁴ Linne, Carl von. *The System of Nature*, vol.1, London: Lackington, Allen and Co., 1806. Buffon, G.-L. Leclerc, Comte de. *A Natural History, General and Particular*, vol.1. Trans. W. Smellie, 1860.

⁵ See Sylvia Wynter’s *1492: A New World View*

⁶ I argue that this is the case even in Aristotle’s conception of dependent and rational animals, as Aristotle developed his theory of human animality in the context and as a justification of his society’s practice of slavery.

⁷ Hegel critiques African rationality for its “arbitrary” nature, but this is because he conflated his conception of rationality with Reason.

⁸ See Iconic autopsy: postmortem portraits of Bantu Stephen Biko. (political instincts) in *African Arts*, September 2005. I am thankful for John Pepper’s excellent *Art and the End of Apartheid* for bringing my attention to Legae’s *Chicken* series. My engagement with this work draws considerably from Pepper’s astute historicization. See John Pepper. *Art and the End of Apartheid*. University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

⁹ Here I borrow Jason R. Ambrose’s term. I use it in a matter that is not rooted in a false transcendental universalism but acknowledges societal distinctions are not just territories to be conquered but societies with different conceptions of humanity. See Jason R. Ambrose “Biocentrism, Neo-Ptolemaicism, and E.O. Wilson’s *Consilience*: An Example of ‘Saving the Phenomenon’ of Man, in the Name of the *Human in After Man/Towards the Human: Critical Essays on Sylvia Wynter* Ian Randle Press, 2006. pg 216.

¹⁰ Sylvia Wynter, “The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism” (1984) *Boundary II*, 12:3 & 13:1

¹¹ See Joan W. Scott

¹² See Butler

¹³ A sampling of the scientific research in this area: Paola Cavalieri and Peter Singer eds. *The Great Ape Project: Equality Beyond Humanity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993). Marian Stamp Dawkin, *Through Our Eyes Only? The Search for Animal Consciousness* (New York: W.H. Freeman/Spektrum, 1993) Donald R. Griffin, *Animal Minds* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) Marc Bekoff and Dale Jamieson, eds., *Interpretation and Explanation in the Study of Animal Behavior*; vol. I (Boulder: Colorado: Westview Press, 1990. Dale Peterson *The Moral Lives of Animals*, Bloomsbury Press, 2011. Mark Bekoff and Jessica Pierce, *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals*, University of Chicago Press, 2010. Marc Bekoff and Jane Goodall, *The Emotional Lives of Animals: A Leading Scientist Explores Animal Joy, Sorrow, and Empathy—And Why They Matter*, New World Library, 2008. In light of developments in ethology, cognitive science, and other fields, it is difficult to suggest that theoretical, ethical, and political questions should be coterminous with a species distinction with the human on one side and everyone else on the other. I am not so much interested in reinforcing scienticism as re-opening the question of humanity. These texts help us recognize a world of multiple intelligences and communicative beings.

¹⁴ Rights approaches end up recentring a specific genre of the human rather than decentering humans by engaging in a political project where proponents fight to extend the scope of universal humanity rather than call said humanity into question. Animal rights have been heavily critiqued in animal studies for the following reasons: 1) Rights based approaches re-center humanity because rights can only be extended to animals to the extent that animal capacities (intelligence, consciousness, language, pain) resemble human capacity. Rights rooted in ethically-significant abilities or capacities take humans as normative. In such a scenario, animals will always be seen as lacking and inferior. 2) Related point, animal rights side-steps difference. The actual phenomenal experience of having a body across species lines striates forms of life in ways that are multiple and non-analogous at the register of subjectivity. 3) Animal rights avoids a much more central question: the manner with which the human has constructed the self. Universal humanity fundamentally misrecognizes both human diversity and human ability. For instance, not all humans share the capabilities that are ethically relevant, a capabilities approach risks being ableist. Furthermore, given that human exceptionalism rests largely on the conceit of language, scholars such as Derrida and Cary Wolfe have troubled the assumed stability and presence accorded to language. And even if we are to articulate a more “accurate” narrative of “actual” animals that still does not resolve the distorting effects of language, nor the politics of speech. See for instance, Kelly Oliver, *Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us to Be Human*. Columbia University Press, New York, 2009. Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: Amercian Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. University of Chicago Press, 2003. Jacques Derrida, “The Animal Therefore I Am (More to Follow)” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, no 2, Winter 2002. “Eating Well, or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida” in *Who Comes After the Subject*. edited by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy. Routledge, 1991.

¹⁵ See Cary Wolfe *What is Posthumanism* and *Animal Rights* and Derrida's “Eating Well.”

¹⁶ TRAFFIC (2008) What's Driving the Wildlife Trade? A Review of Expert

Opinion on Economic and Social Drivers of the Wildlife Trade and Trade Control Efforts in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR and Vietnam. East Asia and Pacific Region Sustainable Development Discussion Papers. East Asia and Pacific Region Sustainable Development Department, World Bank, Washington, DC.

Vince, G. (2002) Organised gangs target wildlife trade. New Scientist, June 17, 2002.

¹⁷ However, I am inclined to quibble (a bit) with what follows. He states, “ What we have said about the slave also holds true for *native*. From the point of view of African history, the notion of the native at first belongs to the grammar of animality. It is from this angle that it penetrates, later into a grammar of servility.” I side with Cesaire on the question of the historical development of antiblackness. Cesaire argues that “slaving apologists” would come later. That discourses, such as Hegel’s, are a justification not the origin of colonization and enslavement While I recognize that Mbembe’s statement can be read as the development of the argument in Hegel’s text, I believe it is crucially to disaggregate that from history.

Chapter One

Losing Manhood: Animality, Sexuality, and the Ethics of Uncertainty in *Beloved*

You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man. (Douglass 389)

The very essence of the male animal, from the bantam rooster to the four-star general is to strut. (Moynihan 197)

Slavery and colonialism marked not only the conscription of black people into modernity, but inaugurated modernity's condition of possibility, initiating a chain of events that have given rise to a transnational capitalist order. In light of this history, it stands to reason that this study should critically remember New World Slavery as epochal rupture. Slavery's archival fingerprint is a ledger system that placed black humans, horses, cattle, and household items all on the same bill of purchase. This ledger's necropolitical arithmetic, its calculation of humanity, disfigured, depersonalized, and collapsed difference, except in the area of market value. The life of ledger promised the social death of those enslaved. "Slave humanity" is an ontological paradox and an epistemological aporia with which we have yet to reckon. Rather than view the paradoxical nature of enslaved humanity through the lens of lack or absence, I contend that humanity itself is fractured and relational, instead of a single trajectory or a unitary sign. In place of assuming the virtuousness of human recognition or humanization, I interrogate the methods upon which modernity attempted to "humanize" blackness. In the case of slavery, humanization and captivity go hand-in-hand. Thus, humanization is not an antidote to slavery; rather, slavery is a technology for producing a *kind* of human.

In this dissertation, I highlight black people's critical engagement with this history. However, my interest is in drawing attention to not only the manner with which black people have been excluded from the "life and liberty" of universal rights and entitlements, but also the conditions under which black people have been selectively incorporated into the humanist project. Blackness has been central to liberal humanism rather than excluded: the black body is an essential index for the calculation of degree of humanity and the measure of human progress. Yet, Eurocentric humanism frequently disavows that it needs blackness as a prop in order to erect whiteness: to define its own limits and to designate humanity as an achievement. From the aporetic space of this inclusion that nevertheless masks itself as exclusion, I query, how have black people disarticulated humanism while negotiating the status of serving as limit between the ever-shifting grounds of "the human versus the animal"? *Beloved's* questioning of liberal humanism's selective recognition of blackness is suggestive of a desire for a different "genre of the human" and not simply a desire for a desire for fuller recognition within liberal humanism's terms (Wynter 196-97).

Beloved, Toni Morrison's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, takes place in the years immediately following the formal end of slavery. It is inspired by Margaret Garner, a fugitive slave woman who commits the unspeakable act of infanticide—one that defied the Fugitive Slave Act (Reinhardt ix-x).¹⁸ This law retrieved Garner and her remaining child before promptly returning them to the dominion of the master. In *Beloved*, Sethe is Garner's "literary avatar" (Scott 2). The character named Beloved is a specter of what is passed but not past: Sethe's slain daughter; a child who survived the Middle Passage only to be "locked up by some whiteman for his own purposes, and never let out the door;" the "sixty million and more" lost to the Middle Passage, the "disremembered and

unaccounted for” whose names will never be known, and more (Morrison, *Beloved* 140, 324). Scholars have been most intrigued by the complex mother-daughter dyad in Morrison’s text.¹⁹ While I, too, find this aspect of the text compelling, I think it may have overshadowed another crucial dimension of Morrison’s rich exposition of the paradoxical construction that is black humanity; namely, the entanglement of racialized gendered and sexual discourse with those concerning animality. The text creatively exposes the animalization of black female reproduction in early science and medicine, and black male sexuality and embodiment under the conditions of enslavement. This chapter will largely focus on the latter, but I argue that the animalization of black gender and sexuality forges identification between Paul D and Sethe in the novel, even while pushing them apart. Furthermore, Morrison’s novel treats gender as an analytic category. This replaces the presumption that women are the proper locus of gendered discourse. The text also nudges readers to queer their understanding of black masculinity, as the slave was dispossessed of his body and his pleasure. The slave’s captive embodiment often placed his pleasure and his will at odds with one another; throughout the novel Paul D’s pleasure does not temporally or spatially coincide with his desire, not only because satiation is impossible but also because his will is “locked up and chained down,” dramatically undercutting his ability to participate in the metonymic chain of desire (Morrison, *Beloved* 21). The physical and psychical limitations constitutive of his enslavement alienate him from his pleasure and desire; this alienation queers him. I investigate how the captive’s gender and sexuality are constructed in relationship to humanity *and* animality in the text.

Paul D’s encounter with Mister the rooster brings Paul D’s alienation and ontologically debilitating circumstances into stark relief. Critics of *Beloved* have either ignored the presence of Mister the rooster or summarily minimized his significance for the text’s existential theme. These patterns of interpretation read Mister either as a metaphor for Paul D’s abjection or as a projection of a mind traumatized by patriarchal slavery. These patterns have persisted despite the text’s insistent return to Mister’s gaze in scenes that make and undue the significance of both humanity and manhood—where gender, sexual, and historical violence produce and mark the limits of manhood for Paul D. Taking up the narrative’s insistence on Mister’s gaze, this chapter considers the implications of Mister’s elliptical return for key moments in the novel. I investigate what Mister’s gaze might reveal about alterity, epistemology, and ethics in modern thought. By interpreting the rooster as both figurative actor *and empirical presence* in the novel, I demonstrate that the gaze of Mister—the exchange of glances between Mister and Paul D—is an epistemological crisis for prevailing categories of gender and knowledge, as well as forms of ethical action in modernity.

The animalization of blackness has been central, even essential, to the salience and reanimations of antiblack discourse from the days of the early American republic until today, whereby the evocation of black animality is either unquestioningly restated or criticized for reinforcing antiblackness. Morrison avoids both approaches; instead, she subverts these strategies by inhabiting and redirecting antiblack animal imagery. Morrison interrogates racialization from *within* the discourse of animalized representation, rather than negate it from a distance. Instead of performing a straightforward rejection of racially oppressive imagery, Morrison’s text exposes the complexity and contradictions of animalized racialization, not through the refutation of bestial imagery, but rather through its amplification. It is Morrison’s magnification that

reveals the convolutedness of animalized racialization as an essential feature of the historical institution of euro-modernity, including its lexical possibilities.

Beloved does not so much resolve the ethical blindness of modernity through empathy between reader and the narrative's characters or between Paul D and Mister, but instead reopens the field of ethics by reminding readers of alterity's intractable insistence.²⁰ Instead of offering a dialectical solution or providing an "answer" or prescription on ethical action, the text stubbornly insists on the problem of ethics that accompanies asymmetrical relations of self and Other, in this case between Paul D and Mister.²¹

Beloved underlines a potential crisis for the epistemological project of humanistic perspective—what is behind Mister's gaze. More accurately, *Beloved* magnifies "animal perspective," a disruption that is already there—latent and repressed—in modernity's textuality. As a result, the novel facilitates reconsideration of perspective's consequence for ethics, given liberal humanism's stubborn refusal to grant the animal or the animalized a perspective, while also failing to attend to its own limitations. This is the result of at least three contiguous presuppositions: Firstly, "the animal" lacks perspective. Secondly, "the African" is animal in the form of a human and, thus, is devoid of the achievement of knowledge or the full realization of perspective. Thirdly, because "the animal"—human and non-human—is lacking, it is disqualified from ethical consideration. Mister's gaze calls into question the ethical authority of this formulation by countering the epistemological certainty upon which principled judgment is made, questioning rather than presuming the ontological distinctions upon which just judgments rest. *Beloved* articulates, rather than resolves, the problem of ethics across embodied difference, and, thus, destabilizes the certainty of an episteme that would perpetually seek to subject Mister the rooster to scientific taxonomical imprisonment and avert Man's gaze from the knowledge behind animal eyes. The gaze of an animal threatens an episteme that would position black manhood as an interminably precarious construction based on black men's purported animality. This position on knowledge relies on euro-masculine authority and empiricist certainty; *Beloved* invites a critical reopening of both, not as the context of investigation, but as that with which we critically reexamine. I hope to demonstrate the novel prompts us to reconsider, rather than foreclose that the possibility of animal perspective undermines one of race's most formative epistemic presumptions.

HOW A SLAVE WAS MADE A MAN: FREDERICK DOUGLASS AND THE ANIMALIZATION OF BLACKNESS

Frederick Douglass's 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* has been canonized in the literary study of blackness. For many, Douglass's narration of his life was their introduction to the routine bestialization experienced by those enslaved in the southern United States. Douglass's text relies heavily on the explanatory power of bestializing images. Such images and juxtapositions of human and animal degradation were designed as a rhetorical device: a strategy for moral persuasion or ethical outrage at a system that would equate black humanity with brute beasts. For instance, in Douglass's 1845 *Narrative*, upon the death of a master, the enslaved were divided and appraised:

Men and women, old and young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep, and swine. There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all holding the same rank in the scale of being... We had

no more voice in that decision than the brutes among whom we were ranked. (374)

The “scale of being” to which Douglass refers is predicated on the commonplace view that all living beings could be placed on the rungs of a hierarchical, linear, and continuous ladder that extended from Earth to Heaven (373). Each step of the ladder corresponded to one’s measure of perfection: God was at the top, humans were suspended between angels and animals, and inanimate things occupied the lowest rung. Yet the adoption of the Chain of Being framework is not a strategy designed to embolden or affirm the slave’s authority over their condition. The Chain of Being, while it may have suggested that placing humans and animals on the same rank was discordant with God’s law, it did not provide a stable place for black people to argue for humanist recognition, much less autonomy or authority, as the enslaved were a rung away from animals in the scale, or worse, conjoined with their animal neighbors as “animal humans.” Once humanity could be coincident with animality, recognition of one’s humanity as such would not provide a respite from violence based on race, as humans were measured by their capacity to be more or less “animal.”²² As in this case, if black people were human but represented the lowest human rung of the ladder, embodying the specter of “the animal” within the human, then the extension of human recognition dissimulated rather than simply abated animalizing racial discourse. Arguably, applying the term “race” here is a misnomer, as “race” implies horizontal ontological relations, albeit in asymmetrical economies of value and power. Slavery’s animalized racialization stratified humanity, preemptively barring or excluding black participation in the symbolic order, while establishing or including black humanity as an object in the semio-material institution of proto-scientific humanism. Here, human recognition is extended but only to serve further objectification. The recognition of the slave’s humanity cast black humanity as a debate over what *kind* of human the enslaved represented. The slave’s disputed humanity would ground claims about what was proper to Man.

The Chain of Being framework was a compromise between the increasing authority of science and the powerful sway of Christianity. Christian Abolitionists who hoped to provide black suffering legibility deployed the Chain of Being strategy. The legibility they hoped to provide was to a largely white, Christian American readership, they believed would be aroused to ethical action by such rhetorical strategies. At the time, most Euro-Christian dominations sanctioned slavery based on a reactionary interpretation of Scripture. Abolitionists, in turn, countered this by producing interpretations that repurposed biblical authority. Both pro- and anti-slavery fractions, by appropriating an established discourse, potentially obscured the extent, texture, and form of slavery’s disfiguring violence (Ring 126-127).²³

For those formerly enslaved, like Douglass, there was pressure from within abolitionist circles to make one’s personally nuanced experience of slavery conform to recognizable characters and plot devices because the slave narrative had become a genre. And like all genres, it had narrative strictures. It is likely that the slave’s perspective was often only obliquely present in the texts’ inconsistencies and constrained speech. The writing of subsequent versions of Douglass’s narrative reveals the text’s opacity and instability as “origin.” So, it would be naïve to read the slave narrative as a realistic mode. As a number of scholars have demonstrated, reading slave narratives as works of realism not only reinforces the problematic conflation between black authors and their

texts, but also potentially undermines our ability to critically examine both their content and the historical context of their production, considering that they arose within a literary cultural industry.²⁴

The point here is not to criticize Douglass's use of the Chain of Being framework. Those voices voided of value by the prevailing episteme of their time may never find the words to describe their experience, or their speech may be rendered illegible or inaudible by power—literally and figuratively out of time. This is so even when their voices are bold and eloquent, like Douglass's. That said, the insistence that slavery's violation be articulated as a mistake of categorization (rendering humans as beasts) or application undercuts our ability to subject racialization's justifications to fuller critique. This approach undermines our capacity for a more thorough assessment of the biopolitical stakes of slavery's equation that black humanity was a state of animality. A fuller critique would risk calling into question not only its application but also its foundations. In the years following Douglass's publication of his narrative, slavery as an epistemology maintained not only its stranglehold on symbolic blackness but on black life as well, reanimating itself in incalculable formations of the necropolitical. I argue this is at least partially the case because antiracism has too often limited our critique of "animalization" to a critique of the term's scope instead of disrupting its authority in the management of life. Power has legitimated itself by taking refuge in the presumed necessity of managing, disciplining, criminalizing, and extinguishing "the animal." The debate or controversy over black humanity is itself a form of necropolitics. I am interested in how we can undermine the presumed terms of the debate rather than reinforce its starting places.

What I am suggesting is that "freedom" is an epistemological project and not just one of policy or material relations; "the animal" as symbol, as trope, as locus of possibility must be rethought; otherwise, it will continue to animate antiblack discourse and institute itself necropolitically. And it is precisely in black thought that we can both learn the importance of fully interrogating "the discourse of species" for the politics of life and glean new forms of relating based on alternative figurations of humanity.²⁵ Forms of relating that are less consumable by current regimes of necropolitics do not justify themselves by returning to the specter of the flesh, of the bestial, of the passions, of nature in need of human domination.

It is here that I want to suggest that it may not be the case that Douglass's 1845 *Narrative* is representative of how the enslaved saw their place in relation to animals. Humanist frameworks have blinded us to other possible forms of relating to animals authored by Douglass himself—forms of relating that may destabilize necropolitical arrangements. For instance, there are other statements attributed to Douglass, ones that depart from the natural rights tradition:

There is no denying that slavery had a direct and positive tendency to produce coarseness and brutality in the treatment and management of domestic animals, especially those most useful to the agricultural industry. Not only the slave, but the horse, the ox and the mule shared the general feeling of indifference to the right naturally engendered by a state of slavery ... It should be the study of every farmer to make his horse his companion and friend, and to do this, there is but one rule, and that is, uniform sympathy and kindness ... All loud and boisterous commands, a brutal flogging should be banished from the field, and only words of cheer

and encouragement should be tolerated. A horse is in many respects like a man. He has the five senses, and has memory, affection, and reason....²⁶
(Brotz 292)

Here, Douglass suggests that slavery introduces brutality into the lives of humans and animals, and he advocates for interspecies cooperation in farming in place of competition or brutalization. More than that, his understanding of humanity is not in opposition to animals, as a “horse is in many respects like a man.” His “many respects like” is not an attempt to foreclose difference between humans and animals, by imposing sameness; instead, animals cease to be radically other (Brotz 292).²⁷ What would it mean for black humanity if humanity was not binaristically or teleologically positioned with respect to “the animal?” On what basis would we then define black humanity as lacking or absent?

LOCKED UP AND CHAINED DOWN: SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ANIMALIZATION IN *BELOVED*

The ascension to a liberated black male identity must involve not only the recovery of the memory of the black male body’s violation but also the recovery of the painfully acquired knowledge of other modes of being male than the model of phallocentric mastery. (Scott, *Extravagant* 150)

In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison revises the slave narrative convention of juxtaposing the degradation of slaves with that of animals in order to draw our attention not to the violence of dehumanization, but rather to the violence of humanization. More specifically, *Beloved* suggests that animalization and humanization of the slave’s personhood are not mutually exclusive but mutually constitutive. In other words, *the slave’s humanity (the heart, the mind, and the body) are not denied or excluded but manipulated and rendered animal*. Morrison renovates the slave narrative genre by opening up a new way to interpret the genre, not as one that exposes slavery’s dehumanization, but rather as one that details the violence of humanism’s attempts at humanization. *Beloved* identifies the crime of slavery not in an unnatural ordering of man and beast, but in its transmogrification of human form and personality.

Transmogrification is the act of changing into a different form or appearance (especially a fantastic or grotesque one). Morrison’s text suggests that slavery’s violence is not reducing humans to the rank of animals, but is transmogrifying the African’s humanity. More accurately, the black body, in its humanity, is turned into a form of infinitely malleable lexical and biological matter, a plastic, upon which projects of animalized humanization rest. This is accomplished by the ontological position of symbolic blackness, not as a sociological subjectivity or identity but as a matrix for forms of modern subjecthood and subjectivity. *Beloved* not only questions the authority of the trope of “the animal” as applied to humans—and animals—but also offers a new orientation to the question: What is a man?

Sweet Home is the name of the fictional plantation that provides the setting for much of *Beloved*. The practice of gender at Sweet Home would appear to break from the generalized principles that characterized slavery. At Sweet Home, male slaves are considered men, breaking with the commonplace slaveholder logic, which typically withheld acknowledgement of manhood or even adulthood among those enslaved. It was believed that reciprocal recognition among men would disrupt the natural order of plantation life. Normative modes of gender such as authority and filial recognition are the entitlements of manhood in the Oedipal symbolic economies of the U.S. South, but

manhood and enslavement were commonly viewed as incommensurate terms by proponents of slavery. Yet, Mr. Garner breaks with this tradition; that is, until Paul D has an encounter with a male rooster that destabilizes his sense of his own manhood. It is when Paul D comes face-to-face with Mister the rooster that Paul D can no longer disavow what is in plain view; he is not a man in the eyes of Garner but instead a form of manipulated matter—a plastic.

While Garner believes himself man enough to consider his male slaves “men,” for Paul D, there is nevertheless something left wanting by Sweet Home’s notion of enslaved manhood. That the six male slaves “belonged” to Sweet Home, rather than the other way around, alerts readers to their non-normative relation to property (*Beloved* 11). Owning property is an emblem of masculinity; in contrast, Paul D belongs to property. Saidiya Hartman has identified the slave’s fungibility, which is both economic and legalistic, as a major characteristic of the institution. Hartman describes fungibility as the “abstractness and immateriality of blackness characterized by the replaceability and interchangeability of black people within the logic of the commodifying practices of enslavement” (21). The enslaved men’s fungibility was built into their names. There are three Pauls at Sweet Home with Garner’s surname. His surname does not announce their entitlement to patrilineal wealth, as it would seem to suggest, but marks them, brands them as his property. Another is named after a number, Sixo—the wild man. And then there is Halle Suggs, Sethe’s husband and the father of her children—only he disappears, going “wild eyed” after witnessing Sethe’s mammary rape by Schoolteacher. Readers learn that loved ones, more often than not, were either “run off, hanged, rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized” at Sweet Home (Morrison, *Beloved* 28). Sweet Home men were “checkers” and not men in the sense that Paul D had hoped and Sixo had the courage to avow (Morrison, *Beloved* 27).

Paul D wonders when Garner refers to them as men, if he is naming what he sees or creating what he does not. Garner “didn’t stud his boys” or “rent his [Paul D’s] sex out,” and Paul D is grateful for being spared that form of sexual violence and exploitation (Morrison, *Beloved* 165). Yet Paul D cannot come to a clear conclusion about whether that was Garner’s gift or his own free will. He wonders if his manhood rests entirely on the word of a white man. He asks himself, is manhood a “wonderful lie?” (Morrison, *Beloved* 260). Paul D continues to wrestle with his unease concerning his own manhood. He is “allowed” or “encouraged” to correct Garner; defiance is even tolerated. He can invent ways of doing things and can “attack” problems without permission. He can buy a mother, choose a horse or a wife, handle guns, and “even learn reading” (Morrison, *Beloved* 147). But yet, even these forms of masculine prowess still leave him with the feeling that Sweet Home men are “trespassers among the human race.” They are “watchdogs without teeth, steer bulls without horns; gelded workhorses whose neigh and whinny could not be translated into a language responsible humans spoke” (Morrison, *Beloved* 148).

What becomes increasingly apparent to Paul D is that Garner has recognized Paul D’s mutual humanity but then continues to manipulate and exploit it. What was commonly believed to distinguish human from animal, for Garner, are merely opportunities for manipulation; Human capability—sentiment, sexuality, rationality, intention, and intelligence—are instrumentalized in order to animalize Paul D’s humanity rather than guarantee a just intersubjectivity. Again, Garner recognizes Paul D’s

humanity but inverts it in the interest of property and ego, rather than affirmatively recognize their shared humanity as the grounds of a principled intersubjectivity. Garner transgresses behavioral polarities that normatively characterized the master-slave relation, not as recognition of the injustice of denied intersubjectivity, but as a performance of his dominance. In other words, he invites the disruption of hierarchical coded behavior without sacrificing his dominance over the enslaved, precisely because he solicited the transgression. Thus, by inviting the slave to transgress slavery's limitations, he displays the arbitrariness of his power; and Garner's "superior" manhood rests on the arbitrariness of his power. As Achille Mbembe argues:

to enslave is to deploy a subjectivity freed of any limit, a subjectivity seeing itself as absolute but which, to experience that absolute, must constantly reveal its omnipotence initiating a cycle of creation, destruction, and desire for the thing, the animal, that it has previously summoned into existence. (189)

Paul D has no substantive authority over himself or the definition of manhood at Sweet Home, in Alfred, Georgia; Ohio, or Delaware. He could respond to Garner's definition, but he has no power to generate a definition to his liking; at least, not in a "language responsible people spoke (Morrison, *Beloved* 148)." That Garner's slaveholding estate is named "Sweet Home" points to the manner in which language is used ironically in the text. Language, the deadly play of signification over terms like "manhood," is exactly what the narrative alerts us to, as Paul D qualifies of Sweet Home: "It wasn't sweet, and it sure wasn't home" (Morrison, *Beloved* 16). Garner, as patriarch, is so powerful that the enslaved can hardly believe he could die. He is elevated beyond flesh. The extent to which his life defined theirs is revealed in his death—when Schoolteacher arrives.

It is Schoolteacher and his necropolitical pedagogy, but especially Mister's gaze, which destabilize the illusion Garner had worked so hard to create. Paul D desperately tries to cling to his genre of manhood by recalling his past demonstrations of corporeal masculinity:

He, he. He who had eaten raw meat barely dead, who under plum trees bursting with blossoms had crushed through a dove's breast before its heart stopped beating. Because he was a man and a man could do what he would: be still for six hours in a dry well while night dropped; fight raccoon with his hands and win; watch another man, whom he loved better than his brothers, roast without a tear just so the roasters would know what a man was like. And it was he, *that* man, who had walked from Georgia to Delaware, who could not go or stay put where he wanted in 124—shame. (Morrison, *Beloved* 148)

The stuttering initiating the passage above testifies to both a stubborn pursuit and an uncertain arrival. Paul D wants to believe that he is a fully autonomous man, coherent, and whole. Ironically, the more Paul D clings to rugged expressions of masculinity—curtailed emotion, mastery over bodily sensation, and killing if need be—the more he is boxed into not simply animality but plasticity: he can be manipulated and poured into a mold designed by Garner, and later by Beloved, but not by himself. Masculinity is a symbol of his *presence* as a human. *But, it was the power of naming, of defining his actions, of making things so, that he was denied.* His manhood is decidedly qualified at

Sweet Home because he is not an architect of a language under the aegis of power, but rather, he is subjected to its mocking grammar.

The expressions of masculinity that he offers as evidence of his manhood are easily appropriated as evidence of his savagery; yet these ambivalent symbols of manhood are the only aspects of masculinity available to him. Garner's manhood is neither secured by his ability to represent physical masculinity nor kill animals; his dominance is rooted in his ability to destroy life writ large. Autonomy and a rugged code of masculinity have failed Paul D. Whereas they might provide white masculinity solace, they only mock him. Remembering that he had tamed nature, he hopes it will be the consoling proof that will stop his darting thoughts. But instead of a steadiness in the conviction of his manhood, he is flushed with shame and disquietude, the kind of shame that produces nausea and repulsion.

Paul D's shame recursively surfaces throughout the novel as an affective reminder of the trauma induced by multiple episodes of sexual violation during the course of his life, including ritualized rape on the chain gang and sexual subordination at the hands of Beloved. Paul D once tries to escape from slavery, only to be sold to a new owner, who he eventually tries to kill. Foiled in his attempt, his ankles and wrists are shackled before being tethered to a buckboard by rope. Paul D would eventually find himself on a chain gang.

Within the eyes of the law, black people's will was recognized but limited to criminal guilt, and did not encompass rights and protections (Hartman 79-115).²⁸ For the enslaved that resisted slavery, this form of agency was extralegal, and could lead to state-sanctioned murder or "civil death" in the form of the chain gang (Dayan 6).²⁹ The chain gang quarters that greet Paul D are "wooden boxes," for the convicts have "a door of bars that you could lift on hinges like a *cage* [emphasis added]" which "opened into three walls and a roof of scrap lumber and red dirt" (Morrison, *Beloved* 125). The "grave" is two feet over his head; Paul D is five feet underground in a ditch (Morrison, *Beloved* 125).

The jailer's placement of Paul D *in* the earth, potentially implies that he has descended below the rank of animals and has become insect—his cage, an exoskeleton. But the cage does not fulfill vital functions, as the exoskeleton typically does, including excretion, sensing, feeding, protection of the muscles, and barrier against predatory organisms. For Paul D, the cage as exoskeleton failed in its essential function: it was not a form of protection at all. Literally lower than dirt, Morrison notes, "anything that crawled or scurried" can join him; and what can join Paul D would likely feast on him and/or the excrement Paul cannot remove from the cage that has now become part of his body (Morrison, *Beloved* 125). This skeleton, instead of protecting his muscles, actually atrophies his bodily strength along with his mind. Commonly for arthropods, when the time comes, if they do not shed their exoskeleton, they will die from suffocation. For Paul D, his exoskeleton is a redundant symbol of and means by which he experiences his "captive embodiment" and living death (Hartman 86).

Every morning, Paul D is awakened by a single rifle shot. The men chain themselves together. Kneeling down, the convicted are forced to wait for rape. The morning of Paul D's escape, a guard disguises a command in the form of a question: "Breakfast? Want some breakfast, nigger?" When faced with a choice between a "yes sir" or a rifle shot to the head, some men make do with "taking a bit of foreskin with him to

Jesus.” Convinced he was next, Paul D goes to vomit, but nothing comes up. The rapist skips Paul D rather than risk his pants and shoes be soiled by “nigger puke.” Paul D is sexually subordinated and forced to witness and bear the threat of rape that morning (Morrison, *Beloved* 127).³⁰ His hands shake so badly that he arguably loses possession of them.³¹ The shaking begins as a flutter and then turns “wild” (Morrison, *Beloved* 125).

Darieck Scott has suggested that this scene of male-on-male rape is a literary reimagining of the primal scene of black masculinity: one where black men are traumatized by witnessing black women’s rape. Rather, here black men are also traumatized by the experience of their own vulnerability to the master’s expression of power and violent sexual gratification. As Scott states regarding the emasculation trope:

...the emasculation reading of the founding scene of blackness and African American male subjectivity—supposes that there is a natural, real, untainted, uncompromised black maleness which can be recovered if the effects of emasculation are reversed; the trope emphasizes memory, but only to a degree. It recognizes the history of the exploitation of black bodies to the extent that it subsumes that history under the sign of a threatened manhood which can be recovered and defended. (149)

Shifting the focus away from the fear and pleasure of the hyperbolic black phallus in the dominant cultural imagination and to the vulnerability of black men’s “captive embodiment,” what Scott calls the “the forgotten possibility,” black men’s vulnerability to systemic (sexual) subordination, immediately problematizes both black heteronormativity and the presumed radicality of queerness (D. Scott 132). Morrison inserts this scene in the narrative, like every other scene of sexual violence in *Beloved*, elusively—“undramatically represented” yet overflowing with innuendo (D. Scott 133).

Maurice O’Wallace and Hortense Spillers have also noted similarly veiled exposures of same-sex sexual subordination of men and women, respectively, in Harriet Jacob’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.³² In the eyes of a culture that chooses to hide its “guilty pleasures” intrusively, the black body is queered prior to its gendered or sexual performance. Whether directly or intertextually citing Jacobs, Morrison’s indirect speech is a symptom of what must be remembered non-homophobically. Remembering black men’s vulnerability to sexual violence is an essential prerequisite of healing black gendered relations, despite the risk of a total loss of self in the trauma of remembering: “the vertigo that accompanies death, the cessation of the existence of the subject (even if what momentarily ceases is really only an ego more masculine than feminine)” (Scott 133). Furthermore, it is generally Morrison’s practice to undercut racially sadomasochistic forms of looking at black suffering, preferring instead to “shape a silence while breaking it” (*The Bluest Eye* 215-6). Irrespective of the reasons that inform Morrison’s style of narration, confronting this trauma is essential to understanding that, according to the novel, black gender and sexuality have different referents and meaning. As Scott argues, what is at stake is “the very manliness of black men as a matter of fact and history: what is in jeopardy is African Americans’ own investments in the “truth” of black manhood” (D. Scott 134).

Once the men on the gang successfully organize a collective escape, and Paul D leaves Alfred, Georgia, he locks the town in the tobacco tin where his heart used to be. Not only is Alfred, Georgia locked away, but so is Sixo, Schoolteacher, Halle, his brothers, Sethe, Mister, the taste of iron, the sight of butter, the smell of hickory, and

notebook paper; in essence, Sweet Home (Morrison, *Beloved* 133). The tin protects his sanity—keeps him from going wild eyed—as well as his ideal. Even after escaping Alfred, Paul D re-erects his hollow ideal. He awaits confirmation of a manhood never promised to arrive, and if it did, it is not suited for his needs. Paul D, not yet aware of the futility of his ideal, guards it by successively placing all traumatic episodes into a tobacco tin box (that ironically will be pried open during a scene between Paul D and Beloved that revisits the novel's theme of sexual violence and subordination as subject (de)forming).

Years later, in the home he shares with Sethe, Beloved, and Denver, he hears the door open behind him, but he does not turn around to look. He knows exactly who is there—Beloved. Feeling haunted and hunted by her simultaneously, he suspects that the girl has some inexplicable power over him. So, it is strangely fitting that he can neither hear her breath nor footsteps, although under normal circumstances he should have been able to. Possessed by her, his will slips from his fingers; she “moves” him. Avoiding her “empty eyes” and forbidding himself the “womanish” curiosity to look sin in the eye, he refuses to apologize or make amends for his transgression of courtesy. He withholds sympathy for the girl's trespass (Morrison, *Beloved* 137). Rather than respond with compassion to Paul D's pleas for mercy masked as a paternalistic chide, Beloved commands, “You have to touch me. On the inside part. And you have to call my name” (Morrison, *Beloved* 137). The tobacco tin in Paul D's chest is reopened when he reaches the inside part. He hears himself say, “Red heart. Red heart” louder and louder, successively as he climaxes (Morrison, *Beloved* 138). In this scene, Beloved by some unknown means “moves” Paul D to have sex with her. Beloved is both a figure of the threat of sexual violence and slavery's objectifying power.

Beloved's “rape” of Paul D forces him to return to the embodied psychic space where he has stored his trauma; and from there, he lifts the lid of the tobacco tin and releases his “red heart” (Morrison, *Beloved* 137). By revisiting the trauma of sexual subordination and slavery, he is able to transform it—to confront himself, even if just momentarily, in the absence of a mocking masculine ego. As Scott argues, Beloved's sexual subordination of Paul D provides the context for him “to fall back into the empty gap of possibilities which he is” and to recognize that “he is a man differently than the norm” (D. Scott 148). In the aftermath, Paul D still struggles to reconcile his investment in normative manhood with the reality of his manhood's difference from the norm.³³

Yet, his sexual subordination by Beloved not only makes him wonder if he is an “animal” as Schoolteacher had described but also a thing. The fact that he sexually responded to Beloved, that his physicality seemed to triumph over his rationality, inspires shame and the terrible worry that Schoolteacher was right all along about his animality. Shame was the common effect of a culture where sexuality and desire was without a proper domain: there was no sanctioned or licit avenue to embody desire. Bonds of affection or desire were not formally recognized or customarily perceived as legitimate; thus, all sexual activity was illicit. Shame would give shape to recognition of one's abjection, devaluation, and subjection to another (Hartman 109). While the slave's reproductive capabilities could be mined endlessly in the interests of accruing human capital, their bodies were not their own; slavery sought to deny black people even the pleasure of the body.

With regard to his thingness, Paul D thinks, “It was being moved, placed where she [Beloved] wanted him, and there was nothing he could do about it” (Morrison, *Beloved* 148). Having been moved like a “rag doll” by a “girl” young enough to be his daughter troubles him; it seems to reinforce his thingness (Morrison, *Beloved* 148). It is Schoolteacher and his notebook that turn thingifying blackness into a pedagogy and science: “Schoolteacher arrived to put *things* in order” (Morrison, *Beloved* 11).

Schoolteacher comes to Sweet Home after Garner passes not to farm, because those enslaved at Sweet Home could certainly accomplish that, but rather under the pretense of protecting Mrs. Garner. In reality, it is the *performance* of protection rather than its accomplishment that is required by a code of gentility upon which white gendering rests. With the arrival of Schoolteacher, sexual violence as a technology of thingification shapes not only the gendering of black men in the text, Paul D’s in particular, but also black womanhood as well. Sethe, too, is subjected to rape in the narrative. At Sweet Home, Schoolteacher and his nephews commit mammary rape (Morrison, *Beloved* 44).³⁴

DISSECTED AND DIVIDED: MAMMARY RAPE, SCIENCE, AND ANIMALIZATION

I was, it seems, a strong and likely subject to be experimented upon, and the Doctor having fixed the thing in his mind, asked Stevens to lend me to him. This he did at once, never caring to know what was going to be done to me. I myself did not know. Even if I had been made aware of the nature of the trials I was about to undergo, I could not have helped myself. There was nothing for it but passive resignation, and I gave myself up in ignorance and in much fear. (Brown, *Slave* 36)

Schoolteacher is described as a man who “talked soft and spit in a handkerchief,” has “pretty manners,” and “who always wore a collar, even in the fields;” “the kind who knew Jesus by His first name” (Morrison, *Beloved* 44). Schoolteacher is always in possession of his notebook. He writes in it often and collects data based on observation of and interviews with those enslaved at Sweet Home; ultimately, he wants to write a book on the governance of slaves. He intends to “reeducate” them through “correction;” to show them “definitions belonged to the definers—not the defined” (Morrison, *Beloved* 190). Paul D is convinced that many of the enslaved that fled Sweet Home did so rather than endure Schoolteacher’s reeducation. Schoolteacher asks questions that “tore Sixo up, Tore him up for all time” and then writes down the answers (Morrison, *Beloved* 44). Sethe makes his ink for his notebook. While it was Mrs. Garner’s recipe, he likes how Sethe mixes it.

Sethe eventually learns to what purpose the ink is employed; in Schoolteacher’s notebook, Sethe is the fulcrum upon which human characteristics are divided from those deemed animal. One day, Sethe eavesdrops on one of Schoolteacher’s lessons to his pupils. Upon hearing her name, she stops and listens before peaking in on the lesson. Schoolteacher is instructing one of his students on how to properly divide Sethe’s “animal characteristics” from her “human characteristics.” He corrects his pupil, instructing the student to “put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don’t forget to line them up” (Morrison, *Beloved* 228). If you can bifurcate and “line up” human from animal characteristics, this implies that either where there are equitable numbers on both sides then both terms cancel each other out; or where there are equal numbers then both terms apply equally. According to Schoolteacher, Sethe would

either be an ontological zero or a hybrid species. Schoolteacher has measured and quantified Sethe's physical "features" in an empirical tabulation of what *kind* of being she is.

Sethe's purported animality, in the terms of her reproductive capability and secretion of milk, are what is commonly believed to link the female body, and especially the captive female body, to "the animal" in euro-patriarchal, anti-nature discourses, as the captive female is believed to possess excessive but highly profitable reproductive capacities. Sethe recalls that Schoolteacher's nephews "handled me like I was a cow, no, the goat, back behind the stable because it was too nasty to stay in with the horses" (Morrison, *Beloved* 236-7). Schoolteacher's nephews steal Sethe's breast milk, drinking directly from her breasts, milk that according to Sethe "belonged to my baby" (Morrison, *Beloved* 236).³⁵ While his nephews steal her milk, Schoolteacher records her response in his notebook. Her child and the ink she produces now inscribe her animality. The taking of Sethe's milk is designed as performance of a superior humanity in contrast to Sethe's base animality; but instead, what Morrison highlights is the grotesque exploitation of black women's reproductive labor. Morrison exposes and redirects the abjection of the female body in service to a critique of the depravity of slavery. While white motherhood is elevated, in contrast, black motherhood stands on the shaky ground of the master's arbitrary power; a power that takes the animalization of black maternity as its condition of possibility. Sethe's generative potential is now twice robbed by an act that would endeavor to delimit to what extent her body was a bearer of human ways of knowing and being. Black female humanity is a topic, debate, controversy, and research question that would fill an incalculable amount of notebooks. Schoolteacher's scientific investigation is inextricable from both rape and reproductive violence. With Sethe dissected and divided, slavery would appear to be a laboratory for experiments in the macabre. Behind the stable is modern science's disavowed primal scene, as even "official" genealogical accounts of science and medicine are haunted by grotesque uses of the black female body.

According to Harriet Washington's *Medical Apartheid*, the medical partnership between physician and planter engendered involuntary experimentation on black women's reproductive organs. She argues that forced medical experimentation was the scientific personification of enslavement; more so than "scientific racism, more than heroic purges, bleedings, and cathartics, and more than the punitive use of therapeutics" (Washington 54). In the slaveholder-physician dyad, or for the planter *as* physician, the slave was left outside, "unconsulted, uniformed, and with no recourse if she was unsatisfied, injured, or killed—She was a medical nonentity" (Washington 46). Dr. Marion Sims, who many consider "The Father of American Gynecology," bought and raised slaves for the express purpose of using them for experimentation (Washington 55). Slave quarters and backyard shacks were the setting for painful reproductive experiments: vesicovaginal fistula, cesareans, bladder stones, and ovariometry, for example. In a recapitulation of Descartes's ticking-clock-animal-automata thesis, the enslaved were believed to not feel pain or anxiety. Descartes believed that animals felt pain, but that pain was a mechanical response to stimulation, rather than an indicator of actual suffering. Black suffering was bypassed by extending this theory to the captive's body, such that black pain was not *really* pain, or black people's ability to endure pain was exaggerated. Once such a theory was established, physicians were able to evade

confronting the suffering they caused. Regarding forced gynecological experiments on enslaved women, Dr. James Johnson, editor of the *London Medical and Chirurgical Review*, comments on the “wondrous” capacity of the “Negro” to bear what would be insurmountable pain in whites: “When we come to reflect that all the women operated upon in Kentucky, except one, were Negresses and that these people will bear anything with nearly if not quite as much impunity as dogs and rabbits, our wonder is lessened” (qtd. in Washington 58). As Washington notes, in the context of forced experimentation, the mandate was profit rather than cure; profit came in the form of restoring the slave’s body as vital property, notoriety, or the recovered health and life of whites that directly benefited from these experiments while not being subject to them. The semio-material profiteers of such experiments would justify their practice largely based on the idea that black people’s purported low intelligence and hypersexuality was evidence of their animality. Once the link was established, it was much easier to apply Descartes’s theory of automata to the enslaved. But doctors, themselves, mandated the very immodesty that purportedly defined black women. During the Victorian period, layers of dress symbolized sexual chastity. While doctors maintained white femininity’s modesty by covering women during gynecological surgeries, averting their eyes from even modestly dressed women, relying on their sense of touch beneath voluminous Victorian skirts, it was common to ask black women to undress completely in front of multiple male doctors. Beliefs about black women’s sexuality provided doctors the opportunity to explore new forms of looking at women’s disrobed bodies and to peer inside the female body (Washington 64).

The mammary rape of Sethe forges a connection between scientific and medical knowledge and sexual violation; a connection that is obscured when science is unquestionably the arbiter in debates on what makes us human. What Morrison does is remind us that black women’s sexual violation based on a purported animality is the condition of possibility for said knowledge. Schoolteacher’s pedagogy gives articulation to a conception of the human where Sethe’s characteristics can be bifurcated and tabulated, as if the value of her humanity were a mathematical equation, revealing the correspondence between empiricist formulations of humanity and the slaveholder’s ledger.³⁶

There is a slippage between characteristics and character, the words intersect and diverge, as character would belong to a human being, whereas characteristics would apply to all beings in humanist discourse. What Schoolteacher’s research and lessons are designed to accomplish is the severing of black ontology from sociology. Perhaps worse than denying the slave’s internal consciousness, he appropriates it and alters it to prove his theories. Intersubjectivity is polluted by race; the slave’s capacity for human speech is subverted and rejected rather than guarantees humanity.³⁷ Thus, “speech” or even “language” is really not the determinate of whether one is human rather than animal, as animal advocates often presume, but rather power determines the quality of one’s being and the measure of one’s speech.

Schoolteacher’s pedagogical dissection of Sethe reveals the contingency upon which discourses of gender and sexuality rest. His experiments threaten to unmoor blackness from humanity, by severing gender from sex. From behind the stable, it is difficult to imagine by what terms gender can be assumed, as property threatens to overcome not just sociology, but sociality. If the recognition of captive humanity dims as

a condition and effect of slavery, on what grounds can we reasonably presume the assumption of gender? When sexuality is pitted against gender, and reproduction is poisoned in order to pathologize one's humanity, normative femininity and its stultifying protections are not what are at stake. Rather, what is at stake is how readers make sense of this scene. To what extent do feminist frameworks have a vocabulary and grammar to think of *this woman*? How do feminists imagine the "womanhood" this moment establishes?

Schoolteacher's humanism not only presumes a specious dichotomy—"the human versus the animal"—where the abject part of humanity is rooted in the human body's animality; but also asks that women bear the burden of the body's abjection. The speciousness of this dichotomy rests on a fundamental misunderstanding of both terms due to Enlightenment Man's over confidence about what he possesses while misrecognizing and undervaluing what animals or animalized humans possess. Humans, *alongside* animals, are shaped by the limitations of embodied perspective; the variability of embodiment both within and across lines of species challenge the legitimacy of hierarchy based on species, as comparisons have typically presumed "the human" rather than interrogate Man's suitability as a standard for life writ large. By first idealizing European Man and then taking that idealization as the standard and pinnacle of humanity, euro-humanism misrecognizes the precariousness of that very humanity and projects "lack" onto a whole field of others.

Morrison does not establish that humanity's (black or otherwise) kinship with animals or the natural environment is offensive or problematic.³⁸ Rather, what is deadly is the way in which blackness is burdened with representing human animality in order to provide an alibi for antiblackness and anthropocentrism in an episteme that abjects both humans and animals. In such an episteme, the construction of "black animality" becomes a redundant emblem of abjection by an epistemology that grounds the debasement of one term on the intimacy it shares with the other—in order to advance necropolitical aims. And, by intimacy, I am not just suggesting the symbolic slippage between one term and the other—black and animal—but also the forms of phenomenological bodily contact that, as Paul D describes of his own experience, brings wildness into the eyes and severs one from sociality. He describes how animalized blackness eclipsed his and other black people's participation in human sociality: "Who, like him, had hidden in caves and fought owls for food; who like him, stole from pigs; who, like him, had buried themselves in slop and jumped in wells to avoid regulators, raiders, paterollers, veterans, hill men, posses and merry-makers" (Morrison, *Beloved* 78). He even describes coming across a feral teenager "who lived by himself in the woods and said he couldn't remember living anywhere else" and saw a "witless colored woman jailed and hanged for stealing ducks she believed were her own babies" (Morrison, *Beloved* 78). This is the kind of violence that put the "wildness" into the eyes.

The specter of "wildness" presents itself strongly when Paul D hears of Sethe's act of infanticide from Stamp Paid. In many respects, his much-recalled response to the news, "You got two feet, Sethe, not four," was a response to the specter of wildness that it represented for Paul D (Morrison, *Beloved* 194). After the moment of confrontation: "He did not put his hat on right away. First he fingered it, deciding how his going would be, how to make it an exit not an escape. And it was very important not to leave without looking...He didn't rush to the door" (Morrison, *Beloved* 194). Paul D is not responding

based on gendered difference in a manner that simply points to an entitlement or a failure of his ability to put himself in Sethe's shoes; but rather, he is carefully managing his trauma and a circuitous identification with Sethe. Their shared condition is one that he wants to rush away from or escape, but he cannot. But, what he can do, specifically as a man, is leave. Racial patriarchy has already estranged black men from the roles of husband and father, so Paul D can leave the domestic sphere, but he cannot escape, and rushing is pointless. He is taught that he should want to rule, to be king, but he is not. Feet are attached to legs, and as Paul D thinks about his own legs and the legs of Sethe's sons: "If a Negro got legs he ought to use them. Sit down too long, somebody will figure out a way to tie them up" (Morrison, *Beloved* 11). The "if" at the beginning of the sentence, the conditional clause, points to both the manner with which the body is both the contested site of possession and emblematic of the injurious state of enslavement, where even one's legs could be claimed by another.

Being on the run perpetually is part of Paul D's strategy for survival—a particularly gendered one. Paul D's constant rehearsal of escape positions black women as captors, because it is black women's homes that he walks away from in order to prove his freedom. Because black women remain stationary in the home, they represent the privileges of a patriarchal home but also the dangers of patriarchal expectations of his manhood (Carden 407). Yet, Paul D's manhood does not signify head of household, protector of wife and children, giver of law, guardian of culture; he had no such foundation to base his humanity. His manhood was not a progression toward "settlement, ownership, and stability" but of perpetual fugitivity (Carden 407). He cannot sit still; stillness is perilous. He must offer his gaze and confront her gaze in order to not be accused of running, but Sethe is clear that is exactly what he is doing. However, when Paul D derisively counts Sethe's feet, it is not due to his inability to identify with Sethe. Rather, it is a moment of disidentification that reveals itself as an identification that masquerades as a failure of the self same logics of identification; it is a disavowed indentification (Butler 75). It is Paul D's fear of the "wildness" that disturbs him. He sees it in Sethe, and he sees it in himself. So it is less that he is running from a woman per se, but rather he seeks to escape "wildness," which for Paul D is inextricable from the vulnerability of sexual violence. And this precarity is one he wants to overcome at least partially because it problematizes his notion of masculinity, which is heavily invested in control over the self, over the body, over the threat of "wildness."

Moreover, it is not simply the difference between black men and women's experiences that undermines Paul D's empathy; Paul D is disturbed by his devastating and irresistible identification with Sethe's vulnerability. For as Saidiya Hartman describes:

...enslaved men were no less vulnerable to the wanton abuses of their owners, although the extent of their sexual exploitation will probably never be known, and because of the elusiveness or instability of gender in relation to the slave as property and the erotics of terror in the racist imaginary, which range from the terrible spectacle of Aunt Hester at the whipping post to the postbellum specter of lynching. (81)

Thus, black gendering occurred in a context where extreme violence, submission, and the rights over property determined to what extent one could practice gendered differentiation. The enjoyment of the slave would delimit the slave's gendered self-

fashioning. By “enjoyment,” I refer to Saidiya Hartman’s notion that under relations of enslavement, enjoyment includes everything from the use of one’s possession to the immaterial capital gained from the rights of possession, such as whiteness as a form of cultural capital (Hartman 23-4). So, enjoyment would include not only the body of those enslaved or the fruits of the slave’s labor, but also the psychological and symbolic capital accrued from the privileges of ownership by an “unbounded authority and totalizing consumption of the body in its myriad capacities” (Hartman 87). That black subjectivity was constructed as sexually insatiable, will-less, and instrumental not only compounded vulnerability but also made sexual violence a crime without a perpetrator, as no one was accountable to non-being. Considering gender formation in relation to property relations, reveals that the rights of property produced contingent and disjunctive gendered formations. If gender is taken as an analytic rather than a presumed set of traits, characteristics, circumstances, and vulnerabilities, then we can begin to recognize that gender was produced not in relation to an Oedipal-domestic sphere according rights, protections, and domesticity; but rather, gender was forged through the nexus of the rights of ownership and the contingency, circumscription, abjection, and criminalization of black humanity. In this context gender and sexuality are not so much possessed by the enslaved, but are instead pathways to produce the abject and pained conditions of living as human property. The enslaved constructed definitions of the self that were meaningful to them. However, these gendered constructions were neither sanctioned nor recognized by the master beyond their instrumental use in the property relation. It is towards the end of the novel that Paul D starts to realize that he does not have to make Sethe or her suffering abject in order for him to achieve his manhood. He begins to realize that there might be another possibility; one that may very well be behind the gaze of an animal.

BETWEEN MEN: MANHOOD, TRANS-SPECIES INTERSUBJECTIVITY, AND ETHICS

By introducing animal perspective, Morrison appropriates and redirects conventional interpretations of slave narratives’ figurations of black humanity in relation to animal alterity. In the novel’s scene where Mister and Paul D come face-to-face, eye-to-eye, male-to-male, Morrison facilitates a reevaluation of the common claim that antiblack animalization is only a mistake of categorization. *Beloved* makes possible an intervention into an episteme and not simply its application by raising the possibility of cross-species intersubjectivity. The animal as negative referent rests largely on the presumption that “the animal” lacks perspective. In this episteme, black people are situated as “animal man.” In other words, the African is animal in the form of a human, and is thus devoid of the achievement of knowledge and perspective. The body and black gender and sexuality are presumed to provide evidence of the black’s bestial nature. *Beloved* facilitates a reconsideration of the possibility of animal perspective, and from this questioning readers can alter how we define our humanity—black or otherwise. *Beloved*’s figuration of animal perspective disrupts humanism’s ability to cast “animal”—human or non-human—as the negative referent in the production of the human self. Thus, the scene underlines not only the questionable nature of euro-patriarchal, anthropocentric constructions of the self but also “the animal,” and by doing so, undermines humanism’s claim that black people are representative of failed humanity, of being animals.

Paul D’s narration of his encounter with Mister is prompted by Sethe’s inability to fully appreciate the violence experienced by Sweet Home men, due to her resentment

of her husband's unexplained disappearance. Paul D feels compelled to recount not only the events that led to Halle's disappearance but also the events that indelibly shaped his own history. Paul D, despite himself, recounts unspeakable events. He recalls how he found himself with a bit between his jaws, the bit immobilizing his tongue, tearing the corners of his mouth, forcing it open, misshaping his mouth violently by pulling and ripping. As explained in the narrative, he could soothe the corners of his mouth with goose fat, but the wildness in the eyes remained. *Beloved* suggests that the forcing of a bit into a human mouth puts wildness into the eyes rather than reveals the wildness that is presumed to already characterize black people. But for Paul D, the bit is not the worst part. "Wild eyed," it is seeing himself being seen in the gaze of an Other, a rooster named Mister. More accurately, it is Paul D's reflection that is the worst part. In Mister's eyes, he sees for the first time the extent to which his masculinity and his humanity have been distorted by slavery. He is ashamed that Mister is witness to all of it.

Intersubjectivity, rather than an ability to hide his shame, is the worst part: that somehow Mister knows, that Mister has seen what Paul D cannot. Paul D watches Mister walk from the fence post before ultimately choosing his favorite spot. Now perched on a tub, Mister is one of the five roosters and at least fifty hens Paul D believes are observing him. However, Paul D fixates on Mister because, perhaps, it is Mister that appears to possess the masculinity that Paul D believes is rightfully his. Despite Mister's bad feet, "he whup(ed) everything in the yard" (Morrison, *Beloved* 85). Whereas Mister could overcome his bad feet and triumph over every opponent in the yard to become a "Mister," Paul D cannot untie his hands.³⁹ A large red comb, Mister's phallus, is as big as Paul D's hand. Staring at Paul D, Mister smiles in the face of Paul D's torture, or so Paul D believes.⁴⁰

Paul D, with his hands tied behind his back and hobbled, begins to envy Mister who "looked" so "free. Better than me" (Morrison, *Beloved* 86). Mister is better because he represents aspects of humanity that Paul D is denied: autonomy over the body, over movement, over one's sexuality—freedom. Slavery has somehow accorded Mister aspects of life and liberty as well as manhood. Paul D can no longer be appeased by the relative freedoms afforded Sweet Home men, ones that are diminishing quickly by Schoolteacher's rule. To Paul D, Mister is king. Paul D states, "Mister was allowed to be and stay what he was. But I wasn't allowed to be and stay what I was" (Morrison, *Beloved* 86). Here Paul D not only describes a scene of interspecies male rivalry characterized by a melancholic longing for the purported whole of the mythical phallus, but he also identifies an ontological scandal, one that is so foundational that it reverberates across the entire horizon of discourses governing the subject. "I wasn't allowed to stay and *be* [emphasis added] as I was," says Paul D (Morrison, *Beloved* 86).

So what is the *being* of blackness? Ultimately, in this scene, blackness appears to be a matrix. A matrix has a range of meanings including a situation or surrounding substance within which something else originates, develops, or is contained; a mold, a womb, a binding substance, a network of intersections, functioning as an encoder or decoder. All of these meanings suggest that a matrix is an essential condition of possibility for something of, but distinguishable from, its origins. Thus, if blackness is a matrix, then the normative conception of "the human" has its origins in blackness but distinguishes itself from blackness, while nevertheless bearing the shadowy traces of its black origins. If described as a womb, then blackness is symbolically a form of maternity,

a function that gives birth to an “Other” rather than an identity. Possibly, Paul D hints at this when he recounts the fact that it was he and not the hen that had helped Mister crack his shell. Paul D, himself, took Mister out of his shell. The hen Paul D recalls had walked off with all her hatched chicks trailing behind her (Morrison, *Beloved* 85).

So if blackness is a (maternal) function rather than an identity or experience, then what/who are black people? The slash conjoining who and what is not there to offend but to open up the question as widely as needed, which Morrison invites us to do, in order to identify whatever answer arises in the narrative. Paul D states, “Even if you cooked him [Mister] you’d be cooking a rooster named Mister. But wasn’t no way I’d ever be Paul D again, living or dead” (Morrison, *Beloved* 86). Paul D is irrevocably changed by the terms of enslavement, but into what? The statement about the cooking of Mister recalls the cooking of Sixo—a Sweet Home man burned to death by Schoolteacher. However, Paul D is establishing something more specific, a difference that distinguishes these two forms of roasting an Other. He is pointing to the way that the black body and mind are twisted and contorted in a manner indifferent to the form the embodied mind took prior to appropriation. So, it is not only a body that is stolen but also the becoming of the slave: the slave’s future perfect state of being.

The enslaved are not only conscripted by hierarchical economies of commodification, property, and killing, which would position Paul D and Mister on the same level, but also Paul D’s consciousness and body are forced to take whatever forms the master effects. *The black body is therefore rendered a plastic*. While Mister might be skinned, cooked, and his reproductive capability exploited, he is relatively self-determining at Sweet Home. Paul D’s body, hobbled with a bit his mouth is subject to be transmogrified. Human personality is made wild; the coordinates of the human body are changed into a different shape or form—bizarre and fantastic. The “blackened” body can only be defined as a plastic: impressionable, stretchable, and misshapen to the point that the mind does not survive—it goes wild. We are well beyond alienation, exploitation, subjection, domestication, and even animalization; we can only describe such transmogrification as a form of engineering. After all, as Paul D learns, slavery is not “like paid labor.”⁴¹ (Morrison, *Beloved* 165). The laboring body is only one of the many forms that Paul D is forced to take, but not the sole form, as the slave’s body was always subjected to something else, to forms of domination that were in excess of forced labor. At Sweet Home, the slave is a form of life that can be molded into whatever is demanded with no regard for whether or not the enslaved is the same afterward—that is the essence of slavery. The ellipses in Paul D’s retelling emblemize the lexical gaps in language, the impossibility of a language predicated equally on bloodlust and forgetting to give voice to the severing of person from personality that Paul D describes. *Slavery’s technologies were not the denial of humanity but the seizure of humanity*.

Paul D’s envying of Mister sitting on the tub “like a throne” combines both his existential insight, which I have just described, with a myopic, patriarchal, humanist entitlement and envy (Morrison, *Beloved* 85). However, we should resist moralizing and dismissing his envy. As Siane Ngai points out, Envy is not a

“term describing a *subject* that lacks, but rather the subject’s affective *response* to perceived inequality...envy lacks cultural recognition as a valid mode of publicly recognizing or responding to social disparities,

even though it remains the *only* agnostic emotion defined as having a perceived inequality as its object. (126,128)

Envy, whether pointing to phantasmatic or actual disparities, is undervalued as a political diagnosis because it has been so thoroughly pathologized as an error of individualized passions (Jameson 202, 268). Helmut Schoeck asks, “Why is a subject’s enviousness automatically assumed to be unwarranted or petty? Or dismissed as an overreaction, as delusional or even hysterical—a reflection of the ego’s inner workings rather than a polemical mode of engagement with the world?” (172). Even the imaginary sources of envy can be a form of oppositional consciousness to what are indeed objective asymmetries. That one so often feels shame as a result of one’s envy points to how successfully envy has been pathologized and stripped of its critical value. Envy has been so over-determined as a passion that belongs to the individual psychological failures of the poor and especially the feminine; it is no coincidence that envy is so frequently rendered a symptom of hysteria. Once cast as feminine, representative of a disreputable economic class, and the hysterical, envy is devalued for its critical implications (Ngai 126-173).

Mister is in many respects a phantasm: an emblem of the desired but denied pleasures of patriarchy. His red comb makes him simultaneously a demonic apparition and a potent symbol of eroticism, as Mister has access to “at least fifty hens” that he can mate with as he chooses. Paul D has been thoroughly dispossessed of his sexuality by sexual trauma and Garner’s control. Paul D’s seemingly intractable investment in the pursuit of a heteromasculine recognition that never arrives suggests normative manhood’s racial exclusion. Nevertheless, Paul D’s investments in that manhood blinds him to the manner with which said manhood establishes itself based on his vulnerability to gendered and sexual violence. Tragically, he fails to see how such an investment places him in a paradoxical relation to his freedom. This is tragic for two reasons: Firstly, he does not understand that patriarchal desire is counterproductive to a politics of black freedom, as the pursuit of patriarchy is debilitating for black freedom because it binds black people to a model that can only reinforce black gender as failed or fraudulent. Not only are the material conditions absent for heteronormative genders, but also attempting to embody such genders will be seen as reinforcing whiteness as their natural home and point of origin. Secondly, this fraudulence is predicated on the projection of animal lack, such that slave as “animal man” will never experience ontologically symmetrical intersubjectivity with the master without displacing this epistemic premise.

Mister’s freedom to move across the expanse of the plantation, juxtaposed to Paul D’s tightly bound hands and forcibly mute tongue, makes Mister an object of Paul D’s envy. However, Paul D’s envy is not simply a passive condition or psychological flaw; it is the means by which he recognizes and responds to an objective relation of power where antagonism may be an appropriate response. Instead of directing his antagonistic feelings toward enslavement, he turns them in on the self before misdirecting them at Sethe and Mister—misdirected at Sethe based on his identification with the feminine and the specter of wildness that she represents, and at Mister based on a rivalry engendered by white patriarchal slavery. That slavery could inspire such debilitating envy and traumatic desire is astounding given Mister’s position as animal in the order of things. Mister’s low rank among sentient life makes him a surprising symbol of phallogentric power, but at Sweet Home, Mister enjoys a measure of freedom withheld from Paul D. In

Beloved, Mister and Paul D's traumatized intersubjectivity is neither a romanticization of nature nor a fantasy of mastery over nature, which would characterize so much of the Western humanist tradition. Eye-to-eye with Mister, Paul D is traumatized by his identification with the rooster, fracturing his sense of identity and radically destabilizing his sense of himself. Paul D, bit in mouth and in a traumatized state, cannot lay claim to a position of mastery that is supported by orders of knowledge, culture, and being. Paul D has no epistemological, economic, or material capital to do that. All he can do is try to hold on to his mind while carefully formed illusions of the self shatter. Embedded in that encounter is an existential truth: he has not determined the meaning of his own manhood; the manhood he claims is the property of another. Traumatized and ashamed, he is envious.

The pain of the bit was certainly incalculably horrible, yet it was Paul D's violent and traumatizing introduction into trans-species intersubjectivity that threatened a total loss of self. If Mister has a perspective, how would Paul D define his humanity? What *Beloved* establishes is that antiblack racialization exists within a biopolitical sphere that exceeds the master-slave relation and is interdependent with the sphere of trans-species relations. However, human-animal binarism is shaped by the historical development of slavery. The slave's plasticity neither conforms to a predetermined human exceptionalism nor maintains fidelity to the general principle of human privilege with respect to the animal. The arbitrary powers of the master complicate formulations that presume human's symbolic and material power over the animal. The slave's status is uncertain and provisional with respect to animals even when slaves such as Paul D desire anthropocentric privilege. The interruption of animal perspective is a crisis for the slaveholder's conception of humanity and manhood—a conception Paul D inherits. However what if this painful and traumatizing interruption is more than a personal crisis for Paul D? What if this crisis is the precipice of a conception of the self that would rechart the fate of black masculinity—one where humanity would be defined in a manner other than as teleology or hierarchy?

THE ETHICS OF UNCERTAINTY

Who is a human being and who is not, and by what authority is such a distinction made? If one is not a human being, what is one? And what is the relationship human beings should or can have with that on which it has not been possible to confer the attribute of humanity, or to which it has been denied? (Mbembe 174)

In our culture man has always been the result of a simultaneous division and articulation of the animal and the human, in which one of the two terms of the operation was also what was at stake in it. To render inoperative the machine that governs our conception of man will therefore mean no longer to seek new—more effective or more authentic—articulations, but rather to show the central emptiness, the hiatus that – within man—separates man and animal, and to risk ourselves in this emptiness: the suspension of the suspension, Shabbat of both animal and man. (Agamben 92)

Mister's gaze elliptically returns in *Beloved*. Arguably, it stalks Paul D. If we limit our analysis to the *figure* of Mister, whereby his gaze is merely a symptom of Paul D's trauma, then we potentially miss that Mister's presence in the novel is also an invitation,

an opening, to question some of our most basic assumptions about who we are and what defines our humanity. Reading Mister as a character in the novel—deconstructively—calls into question the terms that have defined the binarism and antagonism subtending the human/animal border. Mister's gaze is a provocation, inviting us to reconsider how we define ourselves, especially with regard to our humanity and gender. In place of reading Mister's presence as only a symbol of slavery's animalization of black humanity, or as an emblem of the denial of manhood afforded to black men in modernity, we can read Mister's presence as the epistemic rupture that it is. Paul D sees Mister as a castrating figure, one that mocks him, showing him how low and unmanly he is. But not even Paul D, who is so invested in normative codes of masculinity, can resist wondering what else is there behind Mister's eyes: what thoughts and what phenomenological experience of the body might exist for a rooster. In this sense, Morrison could potentially help us revise conventional interpretations of slave narratives in which the genre simply reinforces a presumed hierarchy of humanity over an already known and unitary "animal." Morrison's text questions on what terms we define beasts—human or otherwise.

Paul D's tortured speculation about Mister's smile and his constant return to it raises some questions about epistemology and being—key themes in the text. Paul D's conviction that Mister has a gaze and is not simply there, mechanically recording like a camcorder, but rather sees, shakes Paul D. Mister is a spectator of his humiliation neither as "the human" nor as Descartes's automaton. Paul D is sure Mister has access to knowledge and meaning. Instead of directly representing or narrating Mister's mode of address, Morrison alerts us to it but does not represent it. As a result, it is able to exist as a disruption of epistemology while honoring its difference. Thus, Morrison's narration avoids the problem of anthropomorphism.

Paul D's commodification in signification is what ails him. He has thoughts but no say. According to the ideology of slavery, the slave is essentially a human animal. And as "animal man," reason, rationality, morality, or any of the exalted characteristics that mark humanity—as more than species membership but a cultivated achievement—are either absent or wholly deficient. Furthermore, it is held that this mental deficiency is coupled with an excessive embodiment. How might Paul D's pained recognition and intersubjectivity with Mister the Rooster complicate the very episteme and language of evaluation that animalize both? Could slave-animal intersubjectivity provide an entry point to another horizon of possibility and make way for another code or another mode of relating? That Paul D likely projects the mocking face of white authority onto Mister does not in itself negate the moment as a form of intersubjectivity. As intersubjectivity is never perfect, it is never a condition where one receives an unambiguous message from the Other. The Other will always exist in relation to one's own history and preoccupations. Mister has a perspective; otherwise Paul D would not have been so ashamed by Mister's spectatorship. In that moment, Mister is no longer simply an animal, and if Mister is not simply an animal, what does "animal" mean? Moreover, if Mister's gaze produces instability into the category of the animal, it also destabilizes the purported animality of the enslaved. Perhaps a different mode of relating and different vocabulary of value is behind Mister's eyes.

The trauma of having a bit in his mouth may have been so great that it may have inhibited Paul D's ability to accept an address from an Other on any other terms than his

traumatized own. Trauma captures a person in its grip, arresting time; it tends to forestall mental capabilities. Seeing Mister seeing him, Paul D is suspended somewhere between what used to be “the animal” and an entirely different set of possibilities. Paul D’s traumatized identification with Mister is an epistemic rupture. No longer “the animal” nor “the human,” Paul D’s plasticity potentially gives way to forms that would never turn “wild.”

Instead of offering an elaboration of an alternative epistemology that would return us to foundational forms of knowledge rooted in science or biblical authority, *Beloved* appears to query without hastily concocting answers. Openness to alterity is the prerequisite of ethical relations. In *Beloved*, alterity remains open because difference is not to be overcome or domesticated for it must be allowed to remain that with which is present but is not fully apprehended. I refer to this as the text’s ethics of uncertainty. The text does not seek to definitively answer ethical questions, but raises their profile as questions, problematizing regimes of knowledge rather than competing with them. This opens up a space for us to ask questions that may not have solutions or the solutions may not be legitimated by hegemonic regimes of knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The uncompromising nature of the Western self and its active negation of anything not itself had the counter-effect of reducing African discourse to a simple polemical reaffirmation of black humanity. *However, both the asserted denial and the reaffirmation of that humanity now look like two sterile sides of the same coin.* (Mbembe 12)

With the character Stamp Paid, the slave’s questioned humanity is turned back on “the definer.” Stamp Paid finds what he thinks is a cardinal feather in the river, only to find that it is a young girl’s hair ribbon knotted around “a curl of wet woolly hair” and a “bit of scalp.” (Morrison, *Beloved* 208) Reading about the murderous events detailed in the *North Star*, a newspaper founded by Frederick Douglass after his independence from Garrisonian abolitionism, and the ribbon are more than he can take. He exclaims the following:

Eighteen seventy-four and whitefolk were still on the loose. Whole town wiped clean of Negroes; eighty-seven lynchings in one year alone in Kentucky; four colored schools burned to the ground; grown men whipped like children; children whipped like adults; black women raped by the crew; property taken, necks broken. He smelled skin, skin and hot blood. The skin was one thing, but human blood cooked in a lynch fire was a whole other thing. The stench stank. Stank up the pages of the *North Star*, out of the mouths of witnesses, etched in crooked handwriting in letters delivered by hand...But none of that had worn out his marrow. None of that. It was the ribbon. (Morrison, *Beloved* 213)

The violence described made the *North Star* reek of death. Historically, “on the loose” is an animalizing metaphor that would more commonly be used to describe black people. “Whitefolk were still on the loose” directs the reader’s attention to the inherent projection, loss of reality, and hypocrisy that characterizes the myth of the animal. He subsequently exclaims: “What *are* these people? You tell me, Jesus? What *are* they?” (Morrison, *Beloved* 213). With these words, Morrison disarticulates recourse to animal abjection as a mode of relating to the evaluation of humanity. In place of hiding

humanity's violence in a phantasmatic animal, human violence is returned to its source. Moreover, unlike the animalization of blackness, Stamp Paid's "on the loose" describes *behavior* rather than the very ontology of white people. In contrast, the discourse of black animality did not always rely on historical accounts of antisocial behavior, as black ontology was deemed "animal" prior to any particular transgression of social mores. The black body itself was the transgression. For Stamp Paid, when it came to *actual* white violence, white people's ontology is not negated. None of the acts of ruthless violence detailed in the *North Star* negates "whitefolk's" status as fellow humans. While Stamp Paid effectively "returns the gaze" he does not simply invert the racial semiotics of "the animal." This scene is crucial because Stamp Paid makes the point that the "black animal" is a cultural fantasy and projection of the mob's criminal guilt while stopping short of adopting the mob's disfiguring grammar as his own.

Stamp Paid summarizes the devastating epistemological and psychological consequences of black people's desire to be recognized as "human" within the prevailing episteme, even for those "educated colored" (Morrison, *Beloved* 234). The long-school people, the doctors, the teachers, the paper-writers and the businessman—who it would appear have proved themselves through manners and education:

Whitepeople believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood. In a way, he thought, they were right. The more coloredpeople spent their strength trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, how human, the more they used themselves up to persuade whites of something Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and more tangled the jungle grew inside. But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle whitefolks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who made it. Touched them every one.

Changed and altered them. Made them bloody, silly, worse than even they wanted to be, so scared were they of the jungle they had made. The screaming baboon lived under their own white skin; the red gums were their own. (Morrison, *Beloved* 234)

What Stamp Paid identifies here is that euro-modernity has generated a conception of the human that is not simply biased. Not only does it privilege European subjectivities, aesthetics, and epistemologies, but it also fundamentally misrecognizes itself. Whiteness, itself, is a projection, the human a phantasy, which all are supposed to aspire to, but none will achieve, even if blackness is made the abject emblem of failure. According to Stamp Paid, the process of producing black people as most representative of humanist failure or the lowest point to which the human could fall, has distorted those the idea was designed to privilege. It has revealed whiteness's potential to behave bestially, even according to its own terms. For black people, the gift of human recognition is violently leveraged against them because humanity is organized within a developmental model that extols whiteness through logical inconsistencies and an idealization that is unobtainable by all. In such a framework, blackness qualifies one for interminable tutelage by whites, pathologization, or criminalization.

However, once both ends of the polarity are deconstructed—Mister’s base animality and whiteness as the mythical achievement of humanity—as Morrison does, on what basis would blackness be subhuman or interstitial? How do we apply a reductive, linear, continuous, and hierarchical popular Darwinism to human diversity if both ends of the spectrum have been revealed for the reactionary epistemological conceptions that they are? So, if even “educated colored” are always going to be read as fraudulent humans, if they are always going to be seen as lacking with respect to whiteness, if the pursuit of humanist recognition courts madness and generates “wildness,” we might, and I argue should, take seriously what conceptions of the human arise from black people’s creative response to this predicament. (Morrison, *Beloved* 234).

Morrison’s text does not point to the unnatural ordering of man and beasts, a form of knowledge that itself would ritualistically animalize the enslaved. With Morrison’s pen, Mister has a gaze, thereby acknowledging Mister’s status as an Other, even if it is traumatizing for Paul D to do so. Namely, the novel suggests that Mister has the capacity to situate and decenter Paul D’s understanding of the self. If we consider that Paul D’s perspective, his conception of himself, has already been intruded upon by Garner and Schoolteacher’s Eurocentric and teleological understanding of the human, where “animal” is the negative referent that defines euro-humanity as an achievement; then Morrison’s insistence on the situating power of animal perspective undermines one of race’s most formative epistemic presumptions.

Mister’s status as an Other is not possible in the Chain of Being framework found in Douglass’s 1845 *Narrative*. But what eludes anthropocentric humanism is not only that Mister has a perspective but also that the presence of Mister’s perspective requires that we rethink the limitations of our inherited views on “the animal” and how our presumptions undermine self-reflexive thought on human identity. For purpose of clarity, it is not that Morrison’s text is suggesting that Mister, a male rooster, and Paul D, a male slave, are existentially the same; questioning or contesting The Chain of Being’s epistemological grounding in a faulty humanism does not require a disavowal of phenomenological differences of embodiment or existence. However, it suggests that both Mister and Paul D may be recipients of a newfound ontological authority and presence as a result of questioning the legacy of Enlightenment humanism.

Chapter Two

The Law is Your Mother: (Animal) Metaphor, Reproduction, and Dissimulative Acts in Law and the Literary Imagination of Zora Neale Hurston

The young of slaves...stand on the same footing as other animals...

(*M'Vaughters vs. Elder*)

To my daughter Anne one slave boy named Jack and a slave girle named Flora and her increase and ten cows and calves and their increase. (Harris 17)

Despite being the best-known woman writer of the Harlem Renaissance, Zora Neale Hurston remains a controversial figure; her political ambivalence and her cultivated folksiness—emblemized by her use of black vernacular and an informal writing style—has caused some to misread her work as apolitical sentimentalism of black Southern life.⁴² Such readings not only belie a gendered bias against the romantic or emotional aspects of human experience, but also miss that articulation itself is a philosophical act, a hermeneutical reflection. For Hurston, speech and writing are not simply a matter of personal expression but rather an act of politics.

In “Characteristics of Negro Expression,” Hurston argues that the uses of metaphor and simile, the double descriptive, and verbal nouns are all central features of African American rhetorical tradition, one that she contends has altered American English writ large. Metaphor, she argues, is one of African American folk culture’s greatest gifts. According to Hurston, African diasporic oral tradition was imbued with an African sensibility and was expressive of an African worldview and philosophy (Plant 42).⁴³ Critics have noted a certain idealization of blackness in her pronouncements about Negro folk culture, such as her comments regarding the genius of Negro metaphor. Hurston’s detractors contend that she reinforces a set of assumptions that typified that era’s folkloric studies and what Bryan Wagner terms “romantic racialists” (33). Wagner summarizes the era’s more problematic assumptions, which includes the following ideas: the black tradition is a culturally inherited adaptation of a unitary African origin; it is distinct and purely authored by the black race; it stands in opposition to or is uninformed by technologies of mechanical reproduction; and that singing and storytelling are its most representative forms (27-33). In short, expression was not hybrid or borrowed but rather indexed to its producers.

However, in the context that Hurston wrote, avowing hybridity could very easily reinforce notions of black lack, absence, or mimicry during a period when the nation was reassessing the meaning of American democracy; black people’s contribution to the nation (including cultural contribution) and the quality of black humanity were fiercely debated at a time when the nation was reorganizing itself in the aftermath of The Civil War and the formal end of slavery. The “Negro problem” was frequently framed as the problem of black people. Thus, the demonstration of a distinctive, black civilized culture buttressed by rational thought was not something that the “Negro” could easily opt out of demonstrating. While Hurston’s work risked reinforcing racial essentialism, its political implications are not reducible to mere reification of primitivist cultural fantasy.

If we consider Hurston’s political essays, alongside her fiction and ethnographic works, we get a more complicated and ambivalent picture of her views on Negro folklore. This chapter reveals that Hurston, in her political essays, was highly critical of the use of animal metaphor in African American folklore. Instead of disavowing Negro folk

culture's hybridity, she argues that Negro folk culture's use of animal metaphor is an index of a contest between competing notions of black humanity in light of the racialization of the human/animal border; this contest points to ideologically fractured and relationally positioned folk cultures. Thus, for Hurston, "folk" sheds its essentialist class, rural, and racial connotations. Rather than abandon animal metaphors due to their potentially racializing effect, she repurposes them as critique of Eurocentric humanism's use of "the animal." She rejects its exploited status as negative referent for Eurocentric fabulations of the self. Hurston clearly understood that the significance of blackness rested on its meaning in an expanded economy of dichotomies and negations including the ontological line between humans and animals, which largely hinges on assessments of the presence and degree of sophistication of African diasporic uses of language. Thus, the evaluation of people of African descent's linguistic intelligence was framed in ontological as well as aesthetic terms. Many have written about Hurston's use of vernacular, ethnography, and folk culture as keys to understanding her attempts to reposition blackness in the field of knowledge, so that black people are neither excluded nor marginalized by the normative conception of "the human."

What has gone unnoticed are the stakes, dynamics, and consequences of Hurston's specific articulation of humanity. Centrally at stake is Hurston's potential to redefine humanity in a manner that disrupts disjunctive conceptions of black women's humanity that animalize and thingify black womanhood both on the registers of symbol and body. Many have noted that the black body has been animalized by the economic logic of slavery, but what has gone unnoticed is the manner with which legal representations of enslaved women served as precursor and *metaphor* in the expansion of property law in two areas that cast a shadow on Hurston's most famous work *Their Eyes Were Watching God*—intellectual property and animal law.⁴⁴ Intellectual property, animal, and slave law intrude upon Hurston's folkloric writing as both the extra-textual historical context for Hurston's most famous metaphor "de nigger woman is de mule of the world," and they provide the conditions of possibility for *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as literary event. Metaphor, Hurston argues, is one of African American folk culture's greatest gifts. However, it is also a strategy employed by racializing legal rhetoric. Thus, I am less interested in "the gift" of black metaphor and more concerned with the implications of Hurston's specific use of metaphor for the gendered, reproductive, and sexual politics of animalized racialization and the biopolitics of law.

Slave law severed black maternity from the recognition of rights, only to metaphorically appropriate it in the establishment of an expanded field of property rights, in particular, animal welfare and intellectual property. In the nineteenth-century, "the slave" and *her* injury, as articulated by slave law's matrilineal principle, was leveraged as proxy in the establishment of animal welfare laws—thus rhetorically extending the currency of a discourse on black women's animality. Scholars of both animal and intellectual property law have overlooked that the law's prior negation of black motherhood was the threshold of possibility for the subsequent metaphorical transfers of the slave's status. This chapter endeavors to identify the role of gendered racialization in the reproduction of property law. As I will soon demonstrate, legal discourse, abolitionism, and nineteenth-century animal advocacy presumed black women's animality and rendered enslavement figuratively through tropology and metaphor. Despite the law's specious metaphorical substitutions, Hurston, in *Their Eyes Were*

Watching God, is able to resituate metaphor in the interest of de-ontologized intersubjectivity and black women's sexual autonomy.

Both those who laud *and* criticize Hurston have sometimes missed that it is not simply a matter of exclusion that perpetuates the reproduction of race, but rather the logics that govern black *inclusion* in "universal humanity." While racial equality in the law is often presumed to be predicated on the movement from status to contract law, I argue that contract law recognized the former slave's humanity but within the cultural context of racial subordination organized by tropes of animality. Contract law inherited status law's prior Hegelian conceptualization of blackness as "animal man"—a conception that was not annulled but rather extended through dissimulation and ambivalence (Hegel qtd. in Eze 127). In other words, slave law issued obligations (and fleeting protections) based on the slave's status as person and legal property. However, the personhood of the slave could not interfere with chattel relations. Contract law further humanized the emancipated by recognizing that the now former slave was a rational and volitional subject suited for the privileges and responsibilities of entering into a contract; thus, extending the sphere of the former slave's personhood. However, the cultural context of contractual relations and the enforcement of contracts still reflected an adherence to the paradoxical construction of black humanity as "animal man." Thus, race still shaped the semio-material practice of contract law, including intellectual property—a genre of contract law that Hurston entered into when she conducted her ethnographic research in Eatonville, Florida, which culminated in the ethnographic study *Mules and Men* and the literary ethnography *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

That Hurston so frequently relied on patronage and contractual employment in order to conduct her folkloric studies, including *Mules and Men*, should inform both our treatment of her authorship and frequently noted flair for performance. Hurston takes up patronage—ambivalently—in her political essay "The 'Pet' Negro System." Her ambivalence or inconsistency should be placed in the context of the racialization of intellectual property law and the gendered animalization of blackness in status law. *As argued here, this animalization in both its metaphoricity and historicity is essential to the expansion of property law.*

It is perhaps scholars' preoccupation with the status of "voice" in Hurston's writing that has distracted readers from fully appreciating Hurston's work as a critique of animal abjection and revision of the biopolitics of nature: a revision that refuses the binaries that have given rise to black women's animality as the threshold of humanism's possibility. That Hurston so often penned animal metaphors seems to invite a closer reading of the use of metaphor in her work. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston redirects animal metaphors in a disarticulation of liberal humanism's instrumentalization of those animalized by our society, human and non-human alike.

By reinterpreting Hurston's non-fiction political essay "The 'Pet' Negro System" as well as her best-known novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, this chapter shows Hurston's critique and redirection of animal metaphors. In "The 'Pet' Negro System," Hurston analyzes the relationship between black professionals and artists with their wealthy white patrons. She is critical of the manner in which some black professionals—artists or otherwise—accommodate, from her perspective, patronizing views of black people. For Hurston, these views are tantamount to turning black people into the "pets"

of the white establishment. It is modernity's disavowal or suspension of humanism that frustrates her, leading to the question: how is it that the dominant society can hold an absolute ontological line between humans and animals, yet when confronted with the presence of the Negro, disavow its own logic—a logic that Hurston herself would question in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*? In *Their Eyes*, her critique of hypocrisy is broadened into a denunciation of the brute use of black female and animal (mule's) bodies. Instead of limiting her criticism to black exclusion from normative humanity, the novel critiques liberal humanism's instrumentalization of those animalized by our society, human and non-human alike.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston reimagines humanity not as oppositional to the animal but as sharing the condition of bodily vulnerability and interdependence. For Hurston, the so-called animalistic, the body and its pleasures, is not something to abjure. Rather the embodied mind is a part of nature and the Divine even in the human body's specificity. What Hurston accomplishes in *Their Eyes* is a reconceptualization of humanity that does not abject animality—human or otherwise—or nature. Thus, Hurston undermines one of status law's most enduring legacies: that of abject black animality.

Hurston understood that African diasporic culture potentially provides black people with powerful resources for self-definition and affirmation denied by the dominant episteme and its system of valuation. Hurston's views on language, as an anthropologist and student of Franz Boas, were formulated during her graduate work. Words, phrases and metaphors, he believed, "are symbols of cultural attitudes" (Boas 142-3).⁴⁵ With this theory in mind, Hurston came to a powerful conclusion: language, particularly the spoken word, was the medium through which African Americans recreated and transformed themselves and their world. Her critiques of language and cultural bias speak to her intellectual acumen; she clearly understood that the significance of blackness rests on its meaning in a larger economy of dichotomies and negations for which blackness, I will argue, is an essential template for the organization of human and non-human difference.

BEYOND METAPHOR: ANIMALIZATION AND REPRODUCTIVE VIOLENCE

Slaveowners "coupled" men and women, named them husband and wife, and foresaw their own future in the bellies of enslaved workers.

Childbirth, then, needs to stand alongside the more ubiquitously evoked scene of violence and brutality at the end of a slaveowner's lash or branding iron. (Morgan 105)

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, sex and marriage are enclosures that inhibit black women's personal growth, Janie Crawford's in particular. The narrative, a bildungsroman, establishes the centrality of Janie's grandmother, Nanny. More specifically, Nanny's narration of black women's gendered and sexual subjection frames Janie's passage from girlhood to womanhood. Nanny's extended metaphor on black female sexuality problematizes the presumed ontology of metaphor, as the walls that divide symbolic and material as well as human and animal are eroded by the socio-economic and legal arrangement of slavery. The slave's status as "vital property" subverts the substitution principle that both defines and marks the limits of metaphor. The historical production of the slave—her reproduction and her sexuality—is a foundational aporia that reverberates across the entire field of U.S. property law.

Nanny was born into slavery. She and her granddaughter Janie live on the same land as the Washburn family who employs her. Their family history is one of rape. Nanny was raped by her white master and gave birth to a daughter, Leafey, who was raped by her black male schoolteacher, after which Leafey becomes pregnant with Janie. Shortly after Janie's birth, Leafey consumes herself in alcohol and is frequently absent from family life before eventually leaving Janie with Nanny. At the young age of sixteen, Nanny spies Janie engaging in the teenage ritual of a first kiss with a neighborhood boy, Johnny Taylor. Nanny is overcome with dread of what she fears is the inevitable sexual exploitation of black women, as sexual exploitation is literally inseparable from the biological reproduction of the female line in her family. At that moment, she becomes determined that Janie not be a "mule" for any man. So, she arranges for Janie to marry Logan Hicks—a man Janie does not love. Nanny delivers perhaps the most well-known description of the sexual and racial existential conditions of black women, in the form of an extended metaphor:

Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don't know nuthin' but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see... 'Tain't Logan Killicks Ah wants you to have, baby, it's protection...

You know, honey, us colored folks is branches without roots, and that makes things come around in queer ways... Ah was born back during slavery so it wasn't for me to fulfill my dreams of what a woman out to be and to do. Dat's one of de hold-backs of slavery. But, nothing can't stop you from wishin'. You can't beat nobody down so low till you can rob 'em of they will. Ah didn't want to be used for a work-ox or a brood-sow and Ah didn't want mah daughter used that way neither. It sho wasn't mah will for things to happen lak they did. Ah wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sittin' on high, but they wasn't no pulpit for me. Freedom found me wid a baby daughter in mah arms, so Ah said Ah'd take a broom and a cook-pot and throw up a highway through de wilderness for her... But, somehow she got lost offa de highway. (Hurstons, *Their Eyes* 14-16)

What is notable here is Hurston's polyvalent use of metaphor. The substitution principle that both defines and marks the limits of metaphor is subverted by the anxiety-ridden existential truths professed by Janie's grandmother. Nanny's anxious speech articulates historical precedent. In *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*, Jennifer Morgan argues that black women's reproductive potential was central to their labor in New World slavery. In fact, black women's reproductive capabilities were a locus not only for the exclusive racial and gendered symbolics of "family," where both terms are prefigured as the property of whiteness, but also for the rise of the plantation economy.⁴⁶ The cost-benefit calculations of colonial slaveholders routinely included the speculative value of black women's reproductive potential.

As Morgan notes, contemporary readers often presume two falsehoods about slavery and gender: First, male experience in the fields was representative of slavery; and

second, most women performed domestic labor in the home (Morgan 10, 145-147). However, the enslaved and the master class were not united by a continuous and unitary “separate spheres” gender arrangement; rather, gender was bifurcated, relational, and stratified along lines of race. Women had higher numerical representation in the slave populations and constituted an even higher percentage of those toiling in the fields in comparison to their male counterparts (Morgan 147). It was generally women and not men who cleared, sowed, and reaped the fields, performing jobs that included heavy-lifting, the wielding of rudimentary tools, and road and fortress construction (Morgan 4). Enslaved women were overwhelmingly excluded from the “skilled” labor force, which provided respite from back-breaking field work (Morgan 149).

The projected unique capacity of black women to toil endlessly was coextensive with the ideology supporting racial slavery, as black women’s “natural” affinity with toil suggested that slavery complimented all black people (Morgan 146). While ideology would suggest that male laborers were more valuable, slave owners in fact recognized the dual value of black women as manual laborers and biological reproducers of property/wealth, thereby inverting the normative symbolics of gendered valuation. The presence or absence of enough fertile women affected the rate at which slave owners sought the importation of African slaves (Morgan 6).

Thus, the potential of black mothering was ensnared in the arithmetic of the slave economy. However, the fecundity of black women was greatly undercut by the conditions of their labor: mortality rates were high among laborers as many workers survived less than a decade (Morgan 108). Environmental toxins such as lead, and diseases such as malaria, whooping cough, tetanus, pneumonia, and malnutrition often interrupted or foreclosed enslaved women’s reproductive potential (Morgan 110-111).⁴⁷ Far from having an abundance of biological reproduction, New World slavery was characterized by barrenness due to the combination of the physical (and arguably psychological) toll that slavery had on the body, and black women’s attempts to control their own reproduction. That being said, terms that suggest that black female reproduction was a locus of the economy such as “increase” and “produce” were commonplace among slave owners (Morgan 82).⁴⁸

Slave owners anticipated wealth in the form of slave children and bequeathed black women’s reproductive potential as inheritable property (Morgan 86). Black women’s reproductive potential was invested with the promise of replenishing diminished wealth, or insuring the promise of wealth for the family’s future generations (Morgan 83). Morgan states that “[b]lack women’s bodies became the vessels in which slaveowners manifested their hopes for the future; they were, in effect, conduits of stability and wealth to the white community” (Morgan 83). The mathematics of slavery would insure that all future progeny would enlarge the fortunes of not only slave owners but also of nations.

Property law would be the vehicle that entitled and protected wealth accrued from enslaved women’s subjection. In the first act to legislate racial difference, black women’s work was defined as permanent and tithable—regardless of any change in her status from slave to free—whereas white women’s labor in the fields was seen as out-of-step with Euro-continental attitudes for women, and white female indentureship was seen as regrettable and temporary (K. Brown 116-120). In 1662, Virginia established the legal precedent that all children of black (or “mulatto”) women were subject to slavery

irrespective of their father's race. Slavery was now racialized. Slave law penetrated and took possession not just of black women's descendants, but also its conditions of possibility, as one became a slave in utero; through the act of being born, one became property. Planters often preferred to trade the enslaved in male-female pairings, but these pairings were not dictated by the desires of those in coupling (Morgan 86). The trade made no accommodation for black desire, but rather, these couplings were a form of proto-eugenics as they provided "seed" for future wealth (Morgan 101). As Morgan so succinctly puts it, "all women must procreate, but some women procreate for the social and economic good of their own community and others do so for the social and economic good of someone else's community" (Morgan 75).

Although the fuller significance of Nanny's metaphor is gained through historical contextualization, Nanny's striking metaphor also provides knowledge that resists historical synthesis and linguistic translation. Her epistemic insight presses the boundaries of an account of historical events or sociological reality yet encompasses both. Thus, it is not a historical description but an existential truth, one that is inherited, even if carried through the guise of a structural violence that is characterized by dynamism, reorganization, and metamorphosis, erasing epochal lines of demarcation. It is *through* historicization, rather than in opposition to history, that the existential condition of black animality is carried over from one generation to the next. For as Hurston notes, even in twentieth-century Jamaica, black women were still treated as beasts of burden; note the following passage from *Tell My Horse*, Hurston's ethnography on voodoo in Jamaica and Haiti:

She can do the same labors as a man or mule and nobody thinks anything about it. In Jamaica it is a common sight to see skinny-looking but muscular black women sitting on top of a pile of rocks with a hammer making little ones out of big ones. They look so wretched with their bare black feet all gnarled and distorted from walking barefooted over rocks. The nails on their big toes thickened like a hoof from a lifetime of knocking against stones...It is very hard, but women in Jamaica must eat like everywhere else. And everywhere in the Caribbean women carry a donkey's load on their heads and walk up and down mountains with it.
(59)

What Hurston describes is an existential predicament that is so threatening that Nanny usurps Janie's will by issuing a command—marriage—for fear that Janie will be swallowed by forces impervious to even the *potential* of a black female desire. What is remarkable about Nanny's metaphor is that its epistemological innovation cannot be conveyed satisfactorily through speech. In her metaphor, the litany of abuses and its repetitive cadence attempt to convey what exceeds speech. The highly affective charge of the metaphor, which exists at the nexus of emotion and memory, along with discursive and conscious potential, creatively exceeds the boundary between fact and emotion. This boundary represents the contested space between objectivity and experience that characterizes debates over the fraught territory of "history" to this day. In short, Nanny's metaphor is more than historical account; it is an analysis of the existential condition of black women in the New World that unites reason, memory, and emotion.

History presses upon legal frameworks to expand the realm of property and rights, but in the process of doing so, the law as a self-reflexive and self-referential institution

builds on and reestablishes the animalization and abjection of black female reproduction.⁴⁹ Property law (especially intellectual property law) is both the subject and context of Hurston's "The 'Pet' Negro System." Placing Hurston's "The 'Pet' Negro System," in conversation with law and history allows us to identify how the law's ritualistic return to negated black motherhood shapes the development of animal welfare law and intellectual property. Hurston's "pet Negro" is both a historical fact, as the enslaved were purchased as pets, as well as a symbolic function in law. The relation between blackness and animality was not limited to the symbolic use of animal metaphors in the justifications for slavery's disfiguring practices, for which no doubt analogies between humans and animals were used as justification. Additionally, cultural and legal representations of the slave were used to regulate animals as property under the law. In the establishment of animal welfare laws, animal advocates and juridical bodies relied on "the slave" and slave welfare law as a proxy for the problem of animal exploitation. By doing so, they humanized the animal within the eyes of the law (albeit only marginally), but at the expense of both taking for granted and reinforcing the slave's animality and degraded status. The introduction of pets into law followed in the footsteps of slave law.

THE ~~PATERNAL~~ MATERNAL FUNCTION IN LAW: PETTING AND DISSIMULATIVE PERFORMANCE IN "THE 'PET' NEGRO SYSTEM"

...every man has property in his own Person [and thus] the Labour of his body and the work of his hands is properly his. (Locke 12)

Both Lockean and Hegelian theories of property are stories of the birth of an autonomous self. Instead of "I think, therefore I am," both Locke and Hegel imply "I own, therefore I am." (Guan 41)⁵⁰

The question persists as to whether it is possible to unleash freedom from the history of property that secured it, for the security of property that undergirded the abstract equality of rights bearers was achieved, in large measure through black bondage. (Hartman 119)

Hurston was considered to be, by many of her contemporaries, the "pet Negro" of Mrs. Charlotte Osgood Mason.⁵¹ Mason was the wealthy patron who funded Hurston's research and travel expenses for her ethnographic research in her childhood hometown of Eatonville, Florida. Mason provided financial support for several New Negro artists including Aaron Douglas, Claude McKay, and Hurston, not out of an unambiguous desire to support racial progress, but because she believed African Americans were "America's great link with the primitive" (Hughes 316). Alain Locke, editor of the *New Negro* and a well-known curator, supplied her with artists that he believed would satisfy her taste for a "black primitivist" aesthetic (Hughes 315).

Mason took particular interest in Hurston and fellow writer Langston Hughes, but her financial support came with steep stipulations. She exerted control over her beneficiaries' art and life. In Hughes' autobiography, *A Big Sea*, he describes his frustration with Mason's attempts to dictate his art and relationships. Mason even went so far as to require Hurston to sign a contract that forbade her from publishing any African American folkloric material she gathered without Mason's express permission. The contract implied that Mason was the true collector, and Hurston was merely Mason's representative (Hemenway 117-134).

The claim of intellectual property that Mason held over Hurston's head has embedded within it a racial redundancy, as intellectual property itself is indebted to slave law, and as such, reterritorializes slave personhood in the law. Slave law, and fugitive law in particular, are intellectual property law's antecedents, co-conspirators, and conditions of possibility, as Stephen Best has shown. In *The Fugitive's Properties*, Best demonstrates that the specter of escaped human property and fragmented persona was the analogue for the law's conceptualization of intellectual property. Namely, anxiety regarding the slave's fugitivity was the precursor and proxy upon which intellectual property was able to establish. Best argues that the alienation of the slave's body from their labor, and the slave's disjunctive status as both persons and property within the law made possible the emergence of intellectual property. He contends that conceptions of slave property and personhood, which vitalized rights and foregrounds duties, bear surprising consequences for the emergence of intellectual property, particularly as a form of law that seeks to protect aspects of personhood including voice, ideas, and countenance as property (Best 14-16). Best shows that during the nineteenth-century, the law increasingly turned its attention from rights to duties, obligations, and burdens, as the law of chattel slavery, specifically law concerned with fugitive slaves, emerged as a stress point on the legal fiction of personhood (15). As abolitionists placed pressure on slaveholders by accusing slavery of being an institution that confused property and personhood, the law responded by shifting its conceptualization of slavery to one that emphasized the slaveholder's rights to the slave's labor and obedience, rather than the right of ownership of the slave's body (Best 8). Best argues that this alienation within the law, between a person and their labor, makes possible the emergence of intellectual property. As he states:

The issues of personhood and property that slavery elaborates and the issues emanating from the emerging law on intellectual property are part of a fundamental historical continuity in the life of the United States in which the idea of personhood is increasingly subject to the domain of property. Slavery is not simply an antebellum institution that the United States has surpassed but a particular historical *form* of an ongoing crisis involving the subjection of personhood to property. (270)

Best's arguments trace the law's increasing commodification of personhood during the nineteenth-century, as property expanded to absorb those dimensions of life commonly understood as the province of personhood. Personhood and abstractions like ideas became forms of property spurred by the new legal fiction of "intellectual property." Intellectual property resonated in the nineteenth-century moral imagination as theft, dispossession, and unjust expropriation (Best 38). That slavery was an analogue for the unjust conscription of an individual's personal or intellectual property, while mostly serving as an unconscious spectator, was explicitly named in some cases. For example, in *Pavesich v. New England Life Insurance*, the Georgia Supreme Court ruled in favor of a plaintiff whose image was used in a company advertisement without a contractual agreement (Best 52). The Court ruled that such usage:

brings...the individual of ordinary sensibility, to a realization that his liberty has been taken away from him...He cannot be otherwise than conscious of the fact that he is no longer free, and that he is a slave, without hope of freedom, held to service by a merciless master; and if a

man of true instincts, or even of ordinary sensibilities, no one can be more conscious of his enthrallment than he is. (qtd. in Post 671)

What Best suggests is that this “moral imagination” is substantiated by the specious legal maneuverings that produced the Fugitive Slave Law (38). Slavery’s treatment of persons as things and things as persons provides the opportunity and justification for the law to personify corporation and ideas, as is found in intellectual property laws (Best 38). Best states, “The borrowing of forms and metaphoric transfer are strategies common to legal reasoning, and within property law in particular these strategies find expression in the drawing of analogies between emergent property forms and old ones” (38). This is so, despite a jurisprudential desire to rid itself from the literary methods of analogy, metaphor, and personification; figuration is positioned as non-jurisprudential in the dogged pursuit of legal positivism (Fish 156). “Dissimulated metaphor” thus characterizes the concealed figurative logic of a purportedly positivist jurisprudence (Best 39). In the aftermath of slavery, aspects of personhood have been conceived of as properties that can be stolen. Best traces how the mechanical reproduction of personhood returns the law to slavery as a proxy formation to intellectual property, whereby previously protected attributes of personhood such as voice are subjected to the logic of slavery. The “informal associations, subterranean affiliations made ‘law’ by repeated association” nevertheless surfaced as conscious affiliations in particular moments (Best 36). Thus, intellectual property and slavery emerge as an “uneasy alliance” under the law (Best 53).

According to Best, what this means is that any consideration of the protections imbued in intellectual property law must consider the theft of personhood, as slave personhood serves a heuristic function as analogue, precursor, and specter to the theft of another’s intellectual property. The slave’s personhood is dispossessed and reimagined as a marketable good, a good governed by the promise of contract. The contract, like the promise, is the manipulation of the theft of the slave’s personhood (Best 41). The fugitive’s theft is a retroactive construction of a breach of a contract that the enslaved never consented to be obligated by, as the slave’s consent and positive possession of will is preemptively negated by slave law through a criminalization of the slave’s agency (Best 82). The enslaved is nevertheless a recipient of a debt despite being excluded from participation in a contract. Thus, the slave’s contractual agreement is an abstraction that is enforced in the material terms of bondage and punishment; this is carried out by the “Other,” a citizen endowed with rights to and over property (Best 82). The fugitive reneges on an imagined contract. The immaterial, evanescent, and ephemeral properties of intellectual property are most legible to the law in the form of the written word and the fiction of authorship as being the solitary origin of a textual event, thus the book is a privileged form in the history of the law. (M. Rose, *Authors and Owners* 7).

While Hurston was doing the research that would culminate in the book *Mules and Men*, Mason and Hurston spoke frequently through letters, and Mason took every opportunity to direct the project from afar, making a wide variety of suggestions in terms of the construction of the text. For instance, Mason insisted that Hurston minimize the “dirty words” in order to make the text “more presentable” (qtd. in Hemenway 129). Mason maintained strict control over every penny that Hurston spent. Hurston had to keep itemized justifications for her finances, including carfare, medicine for a chronic stomach ailment, and even a box of Kotex; she would have to ask repeatedly for money

for a pair of shoes (Washington 13). Hurston tried to be financially self-sufficient by commercializing her talents in the form of public concerts and plays, and even attempted to capitalize on her culinary talents while on the road by advertising herself as a “chicken specialist,” but this was not lucrative enough for her to survive on the road. (Washington 13)

As a representative of Mason, rather than operating as an independent researcher and author of her own study, Hurston forfeited the right to publish her work. (Hemenway 117-134). As K.J. Greene notes, “Black artists as a class consistently received inadequate compensation, credit, and recognition for original works. Part of the reason for the endemic exploitation of Black artists is the interaction of the copyright regime and the contract regime” (341).⁵² Black artists have historically been denied compensation and recognition for their cultural contributions based on factors that have undermined black acquisition of wealth and property more generally (Greene 341). At the time of the enactment of the first intellectual property statutes, most black people in the U.S. remained enslaved (Greene 346). Race and class exclusions, the oral predicate of Black culture, higher rates of illiteracy, the devaluation of black contribution to the arts, and the inequities of bargaining power made black artists as a class vulnerable to economic exploitation without due compensation (Greene 356).

Because intellectual property rights have not only reflected but enacted societal inequity, “talk about rights in intellectual property should be replaced by talk about privilege” (Drahos 200, 222). Furthermore, Wendy Brown clarifies the meaning of liberal equality, stating that it “guarantees only that all individuals will be treated as if they were sovereign and isolated individuals...and that the state will regard us all as equally abstracted from the social powers constituting our existence, equally decontextualized from the unequal conditions of our lives” (110). Thus, equality and individualism stand in contrast to the way social inequalities are lived based on membership in one’s respective class. Despite the explicit articulation of racial stratification in the Constitution, the law equates ahistorical individualism with liberty. Copyright law replicated the larger society’s emphasis on individualism and formalism, which stood in contrast not only to communal production of African American folk-culture but to the collectivities that produce all forms of knowledge (Greene 359). That said, African American folklore’s communal and informal construction made it especially vulnerable to appropriation and exploitation. From this vantage point, liberty of contract is revealed as a ruse and a dissimulative technology of black subordination that legitimates the coercive measures of Mason. As Hartman puts it, “consent cloaked coercion” (147).

Ironically, in *Mules and Men*, Hurston characterizes Mason as a “Great Soul” and “the world’s most gallant woman.” (Hurston, *Mules* xx) Yet, all of the fruits of Hurston’s labor belonged to Mason, and behind the pages, tension brewed between the two women largely due to Mason’s rigid attachment to a fetishistic image of blackness. As Hurston explained:

There she was sitting up there at the table over the capon, caviar and gleaming silver, eager to hear every word on every phase of life on a saw-mill ‘job.’ I must tell the tales, sing the songs, do the dances, and repeat the raucous sayings and doings of the Negro furthest down. (Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road* 145)

Similarly, Langston Hughes recounts of Mason:

She wanted me to be primitive and know and feel the intuitions of the primitive. But, unfortunately, I did not feel the rhythms of the primitive surging through me, and so I could not live and write as though I did. I was only an American Negro—who had loved the surface of Africa and the rhythms of Africa—but I was not Africa. (317)

If Hurston's stories failed to meet Mason's expectations, her funding would be cut. Hurston and Hughes eventually reacted against Mason's measures, and by 1932, the relationship had been severed between the artists and their patron.⁵³ This marks the decline of Mason's interest in New Negro artists. Hurston published *Mules and Men* after Hurston and Mason parted ways. It is in this context that "The 'Pet' Negro System" should be read. I want to suggest that "The 'Pet' Negro System" is instructive if read as a critical negotiation of both the gendered, racialized structure of contractual relations governing "the book" as intellectual property and the uncertain territory of black women artists' status as race leaders during the Harlem Renaissance.

Hurston was dismissed by some members of Harlem's black literati because of her purported "simplicity," apolitical writing, and eagerness to please "white folks" (Wright 22-23).⁵⁴ These critiques have in some ways hidden Hurston's contribution to African American literature. Hurston's contemporaries accused her of pandering to primitivist fantasy; this sentiment is evidenced in statements made by Langston Hughes: "In her youth she was always getting scholarships and things from wealthy white people, some of whom simply paid her just to sit around and represent the Negro race for them." Hurston performed blackness by telling "side-splitting anecdotes, humorous tales, and tragicomic stories" being to "many of her white friends... a perfect 'darkie' that is a naïve, childlike, sweet, humorous, and highly colored Negro" (Hughes 239). Hurston's reputation as a performer undermined her credibility to many of her peers. Such criticisms seemed to reinforce rather than question the conflation of femininity with performance, woman with masquerade, in a manner that sidestepped that black artists generally had to negotiate what Hurston would call the "pet Negro system," including its implicit requirement of black subservience.

In "The 'Pet' Negro System," Hurston's use of performance is not a strategy designed to acquire resources from powerful white patrons, but one could conjecture that its dissimulation was also an attempt to avoid alienating potential patrons as well. As reclamation of black vernacular and as a form of intra-black criticism, she uses performance to critique the performativity of black politics in her contemporary period. She is especially critical of those who would uncritically become the "pets" of whites, which is exactly the accusation leveled at her by her critics.

"The 'Pet' Negro System" is a homily on the ambivalent and unequal social dynamics that characterize Southern life since slavery. Hurston often uses the performance of the folk preacher to demonstrate the value of reclaiming and reevaluating the African American folkloric tradition. Hurston was impressed by the elocutionary virtuosity of the preacher; she would describe the preacher as "essentially a poet" (*Dust Tracks on a Road* 91). The sermonic form in particular was especially leveraged in Hurston's critical essays in rhetoric, style, and force.⁵⁵ The folklore preacher as a symbol of intelligence and resistance became a vehicle through which Hurston could inspire critical thought and empowerment in the face of non-reciprocal social relations. Hurston assumes the voice of a lowly but wise observer of Southern race relations; she is a

commentator with intimate but objective knowledge of the nuances of Southern life (Plant 7). The narrator, while formally educated, nevertheless identifies with the “bookless” (Hurstun, *My People* 720). Her identification with them implies that she too is part of the folk in that she is targeted by black elite prescriptions for and critiques of poor and uneducated Southern blacks.

In *Every Tub Must Sit on It's Own Bottom: The Philosophy of Zora Neale Hurston*, Plant points out that the strategy's real design is to place Hurston in an outside but superior position to both the folk and the black intellectual elite. Hurston's narrator, presumably a double for Hurston herself, takes on the masculine authority bestowed to male preachers, as women were historically excluded from the call, and leverages it in her critique. The androgynous performance destabilizes the male privilege that undergirds the decidedly male authority of the folk preacher.

Hurstun begins “The ‘Pet’ Negro System” in the voice of this folk preacher, proclaiming:

BROTHERS and Sisters, I take my text this morning from the Book of Dixie. I take my text and I take my time. Now it says here, "And every white man shall be allowed to pet himself a Negro. Yea, he shall take a black man unto himself to pet and to cherish, and this same Negro shall be perfect in his sight. Nor shall hatred among the races of men, nor conditions of strife in the walled cities, cause his pride and pleasure in his own Negro to wane. (*Folklore* 915)

According to Jim Crow, the law of Dixie is tantamount to God's law, as whiteness has sought to elevate itself above races of all colors. By doing so, whiteness bestows itself with absolute authority and demands subservience in all things from those blackened by the law; a law rooted in slavery wherein a white man is given the right to “take a black man unto himself” (Hurstun, *Folklore* 915). In slavery and pet ownership, it becomes apparent that humans express their humanity through their possessions, animate and inanimate.

The ability to have privileged possessions not only reflects but also constructs the nature of individuals. As Susan Staves argues, “to think of property as ‘things’ owned by ‘persons’ may be to miss a more interesting relation in which personhood itself can be constructed out of ownership rights, especially out of what a particular person is privileged or forbidden to own” (123). Consequently, whites' attributes were also at stake in the petting relationship, where they were no longer figured as intrinsic but relational. Eurocentric “humane-ity” issues from the relationship between people and the animalized (human and non-human alike); that is, “humane-ity” cannot be absolutely located within the individual person as a possessive trait, but instead, must be expressed in deeds that expose one's nature through the treatment of blacks and animals. As Ivan Kreilkamp puts it, “Animals are like things or objects in that they may be owned, but unlike objects in that they can be killed; like human beings in that they are sentient, but unlike humans beings in that they *may* be killed” (91-92). However, “rights” fracture the category of “the human” that provides coherence to Kreilkamp's succinct description of the human/animal borderland, as the animals that *may* be killed were often black humans. “The human,” unmarked in his abbreviated account, is historically a rather specific subjectivity, buttressed by a particular philosophy of human exceptionalism that is not

only “Euro,” “andro,” and “anthropo”-centric, but specifically anti-black, one that petted Negroes.

The practice of keeping Africans as pets has a long history. Africans seized for the slave trade were also sold as pets, domestic slaves, and exotic possessions. African children were especially prized emblems of privilege amongst the English aristocracy in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England.⁵⁶ In England, William III’s “favorite” black slave was fitted for a “carved white marble collar, with a padlock, in every respect like a dog’s collar.” In the same period, newspapers advertised silver padlocks “for blacks and dogs.” Often for the enslaved, the difference between the field slave and the domestic slave was branding of the flesh, as was common for cows, or a silver or gold collar stamped with the owner’s name, initials, and coat of arms (Aravamudan 38-40).⁵⁷

In “Petting Oroonoko,” Srinivas Aravamudan argues that the enslaved of the Americas fit into one of the following categories: domestic pet, domestic laborer, privatized fetish, or public commodity (38). In this context, Hurston’s submission to the petting relation may have been a negotiation of white categorical proprietary claims over blackness and/or black people within the context of a racial economy of value that was predicated on the exoticism, subordination, and theatricality. While wealthy white women, such as Mason, were themselves treated as domestic properties by institutions such as marriage, they also were able to produce Africans as *things*; for instance, as a lady’s fashion accessory. As Aravamudan describes, pets, once acquired and privatized, can be suspended from their earlier circulation in the public sphere as objects, taking on an honorary subjectivity (44). However, as in the case of Hurston’s petting, the status of the pet is virtualized because it depends on the contingent and fetishized investment of Mason. In Mason’s petting of Hurston, Hurston’s human personality is animalized and then paradoxically retrieved as a pet in order to fulfill Mason’s fantasy of herself as a “friend of the Negro.”

The patron’s disinvestment in Hurston, once she resists Mason’s control over her research, returns Hurston to a marketplace that objectifies her as a commodity: a marketplace that, according to Hurston, is only interested in blackness as a type or problem (“What White Publishers” 953). Mason’s desire to maintain her rights to ownership over Hurston’s book reinforces intellectual property law’s spurious notion of authorship precisely by exploiting the immateriality and hyper illegibility of (black) (female) thought, and black women’s rightless but indebted personhood in the law.

In “The ‘Pet’ Negro System,” the preacher-narrator inquires, “Do not the sons of Japheth drive the Hammites before them like beasts? Do they not lodge them in shacks and hovels and force them to share the crops? Is not the condition of black men in the South most horrible?” (Hurston, “Pet” 914). Hurston uses mockery and sarcasm in order to signal that she will question the “common sense” presumed by such statements. The preacher cautions, “Now, my beloved, before you explode in fury you might look to see if you know your facts or if you merely know your phrases” (Hurston, “Pet” 914). It is here that she argues that people miscalculate the temporality and spatial dimension of slavery if they limit slavery’s purview to the South or the antebellum period. They make the mistake of taking liberal humanist historicism at its word. A word that takes for granted an Aristotelian dramatic structure: one epoch is displaced by another in a process characterized by conflict and resolution, but nevertheless, advancing in the forward march of progress. Contrarily, Hurston argues, that Northern and contemporary practices

of white patronage exploit a culture steeped in the not-yet past of slavery. The forms that Southern racism has taken and continues to take are ghastly for sure, but they do not exhaust slavery's (re)incarnations. Hurston's words confound what is for some common sense: "Slavery is past." By referring to slavery as a foundational and ever-present dimension of American society, she opens up a reading that would suggest that slavery is reincarnated in infinite disguises, including the petting system. The ideology to which she refers would wed blackness to metaphorical and material animality. Both the racialized petting relation and the casting of black women as "beast of burden" crosses historicist lines of demarcation.

The patron to whom she refers in "The 'Pet' Negro System" is both the individual wealthy patron and the publishing industry in their "New York offices." However well-meaning the wealthy patron and the publishing industry in New York may be, they do exert a problematic influence over "the race adjustment" business (Hurston, "Pet" 914). According to Hurston, this is something that is not openly discussed in white public discourse and black counter publics; the narrator states that "the actual conditions do not jibe with the fulminations of the so-called spokesmen of the white South, nor with the rhetoric of the champions of the Negro cause either" (Hurston, "Pet" 915). In saying this, Hurston illuminates that conviviality can accompany dominance, for the staunch proponents of white segregation and those that trumpet black progress in white-dominated fields obscure the actual conditions of interracial co-presence in American institutional life.

Hurston is a writer from the segregated U.S. South but was educated in the relatively integrated North. From her early twentieth-century view, black success comes at the cost of being a pet for others. Yet, Southern whites disavow their reliance on blackness as the "lapdog" of Southern society despite the fact that "petting" has historically been essential to the reproduction of whiteness and class privilege. As Hurston states, Southern white defenders of segregation may degrade blackness as a whole while rewarding individual black people as racial policemen. It is the affective and "mutual dependencies" of the "actual conditions" that reveal the ideological nature of what she sees as two sides of the same "pet Negro" coin (Hurston, "Pet" 914-915). She hopes to arouse the reader, perhaps her fellow artistic compatriots, to not find white sponsorship so "cosy," and to forego the lure of white praise and institutional affiliation (Hurston, "Pet" 915). Her goal is not to encourage black artists to reject these relations all together, but rather, to avoid the seduction of petting's rewards in order to maintain some artistic autonomy.⁵⁸ She states:

The pet Negro, belov-ed, is someone whom a particular white person or persons wants to have and to do all the things forbidden to other Negroes. It can be Aunt Sue, Uncle Stump, or the black man at the head of some Negro organization. Let us call him John Harper. John is the pet of Colonel Cary and his lady, and Colonel Cary swings a lot of weight in his community. ("Pet" 915)

The "uncle" is the proverbial lapdog of the plantation South: the neutered, loyal, obedient slave. Hurston evokes this mythical figure to dramatize what she sees as an accommodationist posture among both Southern blacks and "the head of some Negro organization" ("Pet" 915). She is critical of black people who are unwilling to confront that they are working for "strainers." In this act, they disavow that they are viewed as

exceptions to a rule that nevertheless defines them, for the exception is inextricable from the rule ("Pet" 917). She sees black acquiescence as an "angle," a form of compliance with white moral authority ("Pet" 914). The patronizing attitude of white pet owners allows them to "suspend or retain" their racial attitudes in treatment towards their pets, but ultimately their attitudes and practices remain unmoved when it comes to the black masses.

As Hurston notes, there are two sides to the pet relationship—subservience and pleasure—what she calls "pet" and "cherish," respectively ("Pet" 914). In *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, Saidiya Hartman refers to enjoyment as the process of making use of the captive's body, affect, and psychic capabilities (24). Enjoyment is the process of capturing or annexing the being of blackness in order to extract use value. The enjoyment of "the slave" extends into the post-Emancipation period and into the renaissance of black culture, threatening the rebirth of the Negro and the vitality of the New Negro. The aesthetic value of the pet is purchased at the cost of black subservience. Black sublimity is blindingly beautiful; the "pet Negro" is exalted above all other blacks of the "walled cities" and the critics of obsequiousness (Hurston, "Pet" 915). The Negro of the walled cities in the Jim Crow South, and especially in the urban North, are pathologized in popular discourse, but for the pet owner/master, their negro pet is not directly implicated by racial pathology, but instead shrouded from it due to the enjoyment they provide to their white patron. The pet is removed from the scene of black pathology but exists in the shadows of its effects. The pet is objectified not in the experience of abjection, but in worship: the pet is a fetish object, arguably a totemic figure that obscures the actual brutal (economic) relations of white power.

The narrator states, "And mind you, the Negroes have their pet whites, so to speak. It works both ways" (Hurston, "Pet" 916-917). The "so to speak" acts as a rather large qualification, despite being coyly hidden behind a comma. Hurston underscores the symbiosis and the mutuality—but not the parity—in power or effect; she argues that protecting the master's authority is perhaps a strategic choice, even if regrettable, in a cultural context invested in uninterrupted white dominance; safeguarding one's pride of place in the racial class hierarchy often requires protecting white authority (Hurston, "Pet" 917). According to Hurston, in the American South, black people can rely on these interpersonal relations to retain black class standing; the North, on the other hand, is "cold" and "impersonal" ("Pet" 918). The Southern black elite class of "opulence and education" complicates rhetorical claims of Northern white antiracists, who would like to distance themselves from white supremacy by focusing on only one aspect of white terror—lynching (Hurston, "Pet" 918). They would rather ignore that Southern white supremacy is maintained through other aspects of power, which include those not so unlike what they propose as solutions: the education and privileging of a select class of black people. In identifying liberal white patrons as being implicit in petting and thus taking part in systemic racism, Hurston is pushing against the desire for a singular monolithic Southern black experience from which the wealthy white patron or liberal Northerner can come to define the extent of their own exceptionalism. Their exceptionalism requires that black people display their wounds, wherein blacks perform a permanent, exposed state of injury, so that the white patrons can define themselves as

innocent bystanders or champions of the Negro cause. Hurston resents that these articulations of white antiracism rely on such an exploitative relationship to suffering.

So, while some of her contemporaries critiqued Hurston for creating “pseudo-primitives” and idyllic images of happy Negroes, she critiques her critics for their “angle,” which produces stories of blighted urban inner city Negroes or Southern blacks besieged by racism (Hurston, “Pet” 914). She does not deny the reality of these experiences. However, she is critical of their ideological and affective function once these experiences become commodities, which she sees as reinforcing the complacency and self-congratulatory tendencies of Northern liberalism.

“Is it a good thing or a bad thing? Who am I to pass judgment? I am not defending the system, beloved, but trying to explain it,” states the narrator in “The ‘Pet’ Negro System” (Hurston, “Pet” 919). This rhetorical question goes along with the overall sarcastic tone of the piece; specifically here, the sarcasm arises in referring to fellow artists as the “belov-ed” (Hurston, “Pet” 914). Hurston is the master of the trickster role. She stages a critique and then denies that it is a critique. This is perhaps at least in part because the “petting system” is one that she cannot totally opt out of, even while signaling to her peers that she is critical of this “indefensible” system (Hurston, “Pet” 919). The “lowdown fact” is that the petting system does in many respects afford Hurston the possibility of writing this essay (“Pet” 919). She negotiates the “petting system” but cannot afford to reject it all together. In this context, to use Jayna Brown’s term, her “multisignifying practice” is to critique while appearing compliant, to engage multiple forms of address while avoiding becoming a target of white power (J. Brown 6). Hers is a veiled form of incendiary speech:

The lowdown fact is that it weaves a kind of basic fabric that tends to stabilize relations and give something to work from in adjustments. It works to prevent hasty explosions.... the appointer has his reasons, personal or political. He can always point to the beneficiary and say, "Look, Negroes, you have been taken care of. Didn't I give a member of your group a big job?" White officials assume that the Negro element is satisfied and they do not know what to make of it when later they find that so large a body of Negroes charge indifference and double-dealing. The white friend of the Negroes mumbles about ingratitude and decides that you simply can't understand Negroes . . . just like children. (Hurston, “Pet” 920)

Hurston is well-aware that the petting system is a form of containment. It is a strategy designed to thwart collective organizing and protest. However, the narrator goes on to state, “There are some people in every community who can always talk things over. It may be the proof that this race situation in America is not entirely hopeless and may even be worked out eventually” (Hurston, “Pet” 919). While it appears that Hurston holds out the possibility that the petting system is a stage in the upward movement of progress, ultimately she has a more damning take on the petting system:

But when everything is discounted, it still remains true that white people North and South have promoted Negroes—usually in the capacity of “representing the Negro”—with little thought of the ability of the person promoted but in line with the “pet system.” In the South it can be pointed to scornfully as a residue of feudalism; in the North no one says *what* it is.

And that, too, is part of the illogical, indefensible but somehow useful "pet system." ("Pet" 919)

The petting system maintains the racial order by extending slavery's systems of hierarchy, providing an alibi for "special" black people to exploit their access to privileged society, by privatizing wealth, and by choosing personal gain over collective accountability. According to Hurston, "The most powerful reason why Negroes do not do more about false 'representation' by pets is that they know from experience that the thing is too deep-rooted to be budged" ("Pet" 919).

In "The 'Pet' Negro System," the narrator seeks to provide "the inside picture of things, as I see it. Whether you like it or not, is no concern of mine" (Hurston, "Pet" 916). But, of course, Hurston does care how people see it, which is why she is writing the essay. Hurston shuttles back and forth between discussing affectionate ties across the color-line and the necessity and even imposition of white friendship for economic and artistic possibility:

But it is an important thing to know if you have any plans for racial manipulations in Dixie. You cannot batter in doors down there, and you can save time and trouble, and I do mean trouble, by hunting up the community keys. (Hurston, "Pet" 921)

But her ambivalence is precisely the messiness of the "petting system": mutual affection often accompanies inequities of power; conviviality and brutality are only antithetical in the rhetorical postures of white supremacy and black indignation; and the "actual conditions" of black life often make such puritanical posturing impossible, especially for a black artist who must negotiate white institutionality and wealth in order to acquire the material conditions necessary to accomplish their work. Sentience and property, affection and domination, are not oppositional but mutually produced by the entanglements of filial domination.

That Mason used familial metaphors to describe her relationship to Hurston, insisting that her beneficiaries refer to her as "Godmother," both relies upon and extends the property relation (Hurston, *Dust* 145). The petrification of blackness by the logic of "familial" racial pethood is not a break from a history wherein pet animals were often fed better than the enslaved in the same household, or wherein pet animals were commemorated through epitaph, elegy, and portraiture; but rather, it is a reorganization of black animality, this time for the purpose of avoiding an accountability informed by precisely these historical antecedents. As Margaret Burnham notes in her article "An Impossible Marriage: Slave Law and Family Law," the extension of familial metaphors served to protect masters' claims to enslaved persons as property rather than to extend the protective bonds of kinship to the enslaved. Familial metaphors entrenched the logics of slavery rather than refuted them, as they were formed through the entitlements of property while simultaneously undermining or even negating the recognition of black people's emotional and legal ties to each other. During the nineteenth-century, the courts sought to formally establish family law, including the parameters of gender roles, the rights of marriage and divorce, and the governance of sexual taboos and procreation, all of which was predicated on the adjudication and protection of slaveholder's claims to property, which included the personhood of the enslaved. The legal standing of the private sphere had no meaning for the slave family, as the enslaved were socially dead in the eyes of the law (Burnham 189). The law did not sanction black-authored bonds, and

marriage, procreation, and childrearing of the enslaved were molded to meet the commercial needs of slaveholders. Burnham argues that blacks were excluded from the protections and entitlements of family for two reasons: the enslaved were seen as a different kind of human—innately and immutably immoral and thus unmarriageable and too dumb and childish to themselves parent; and the black family ties that black people attempted to create for themselves could be disrupted, manipulated, held-hostage, or revoked at the whim of the slaveholder's family (Burnham 189).

In the mid-nineteenth-century, slaveholders began to circulate the term “domestic slavery” as a shield to protect themselves from the accusations of abolitionists (Burnham 192). The term “domestic slavery” combined with references to the enslaved as “children” and “family” implied that their slavery had been “domesticated” and was thus somehow milder. “Domestic slavery,” they argued, placed master and slave in the same domestic sphere wherein masters would treat their slaves as they would a member of their own family (Burnham 192). Thus, the image cultivated was one where social and economic relations were organically interconnected between master and slave. The image claimed that the slaveholding family was a refuge and safe-haven where selflessness flourished, especially because the Southern plantation environment represented the idealized natural setting for family life. Pastoral simplicity and rural wholesomeness shielded the enslaved from harm or human malice. The family as moral defense and civilizing institution was thought to best temper the purported immoral proclivities of the enslaved (Burnham 193). The family was the supreme metaphor for this tempering to be imagined with, as it contained a moral superiority as an institution sanctioned by God and nature (as was the slave's subjugation) (Burnham 194). Within this schema, white women were seen as white men's moral superiors, and white men reigned over intelligence and physicality (Burnham 195).

The notion of “domestic slavery” was very much connected to the idea of stewardship. In *Pets in America*, Katherine C. Grier provides a history of petting animals in America. While the practice of pet keeping has earlier antecedents, she locates emotional attachments, pet industries, and wide use of the term as beginning in nineteenth-century America. She argues that in the half-century before the Civil War, many Americans began to rethink their relationships with the animals living in and around their households. As Grier states, “the timing of these two phenomena is no coincidence” (13). This non-coincidence is perhaps best emblemized by the marketing of Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* as “The Uncle Tom's Cabin of the horse” in 1890 by George Angell, lawyer and founder of the United States' second animal protection organization (Grier 175).⁵⁹ Drawing on many of the devices of Stowe's novel, Sewell firmly established the potency of slavery as the baseline of abjection and slave abolitionism as an analogue for animal advocates.

The reexamination of human relationships with animals arose in a context where slavery was hotly debated and proslavery advocates were attempting to undermine antislavery struggles through the reformation of slavery's image. The “new domestic ethic of kindness” was part of a larger constellation of ideas and ideals, which included gentility, liberal evangelical Protestant religion, and domesticity (Grier 131). The concept of “kindness” was particularly tied to notions of care for dependent persons: children, elderly, the chronically ill, and the enslaved—all of whom were thought to be incapable of properly governing themselves (Grier 13). The new ethic of kindness to animals

conceptualized animals, particularly pets, as servants and children in both popular literature (Grier 14).

Such views laid the groundwork for animal welfare groups following the Civil War and provided a new avenue for white women's public leadership in the form of mass print media: magazines, newspapers, and books. Sunday school lessons, poetry, songs, stories, inexpensive prints, juvenile books, toys, and children's dishes depicted a new standard for human-animal relationships (Grier 132-133). Champions of active stewardship and the domestic ethic of kindness included such well-known abolitionists as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Lydia Maria Child (Grier 142). The domestic ethic, while it provided new avenues for white women in public life, also placed a heavy emphasis on restraint, echoing religious arguments that deeply distrusted the body due to a reliance on hierarchies of rationality and morality. Placing emphasis on degrees of self-discipline in both religious and secular terms, the ethic encouraged white Christians to think of themselves as infinitely perfectible, and to pursue perfection through the relentless exertion of power over the self and others.

Stewardship built on the popularity enjoyed by "gentility" on both sides of the Atlantic since the eighteenth-century (Grier 133). Gentility was accomplished through a strict adherence to "cultivation" and "benevolence." The idea of cultivation originated in agriculture, as Grier notes, and was coupled with the desire to promote happiness amongst all beings capable of feeling (133). Stowe would even make the case for domesticating the entire world, thus the application of domestic values could provide an avenue for new forms of public life for white women who enlarged the "household circle" beyond its traditional reach. Inclusive but non-egalitarian, the imperialist politic both prized patriarchal hierarchy and social order (Grier 137). While it was generally agreed that white humans were the most appropriate stewards, for the service to one's dependents was a duty, divinely ordained, this was not seen as at odds with stewardship, but rather complimented it. As Grier notes:

This Christianization of power over animals was strikingly like earlier attempts to Christianize slavery through an argument for stewardship and restraint on the part of masters to the benefit of their less civilized human chattel. It also suffered from similar limitations as an argument, since both enslaved people and animals were defined fundamentally by their legal status as property rather than by their place in the human heart. In general, pet animals did not even qualify as property. Gradually, in legal precedent and the law that is still evolving today, more kinds of animals became legal property. (138)⁶⁰

When the relationship between mothers and children became a proper paradigm of the best of human relationships, it also became a paradigm for sensitive people and animals, which aided the infantilization of cherished pet animals (Grier 166). The conflation of pets and children was popularized by print culture and the writings of sentimental fiction writers, like Harriet Beecher Stowe. The "lack" of speech, crawling on all fours, and small statures, suggested for some, that children and pets were even siblings with the shared need of moral guidance from adults (Grier 166). The term pet itself implied both trusting and pliable dispositions and dependence on the indulgence and care of adults (Grier 170). The infantilization of blackness of any age and the seamless incorporation of black people and animals into the sphere of stewardship is

consistent with the logic of the times. In law and custom, black people, white children, and animals were unequal siblings in the hierarchal patriarchal white family.

According to Grier, by the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, the domestic ethic had changed the baseline of acceptable behavior toward animals and imposed a new hierarchy amongst people based on those who were self-consciously kind to animals and those who were not; kindness became a measure of class standing and civility (Grier 14). Kindness became a measure of one's achievement of humanity in markedly raced, ethnocentric, and classed terms. Whiteness was increasingly consolidated by notions of the humane treatment of dependents, including women, children, slaves, and animals; whereas the savage was believed to delight in cruelty.

As Michael Lundblad argues, once evolutionary theory challenged the distinction between humans and animals, humane treatment towards animals became a new way to distinguish what it meant to be human (81). To restrain one's animal instincts was a marker of the achievement of humanity. The idea that white people were only infinitesimally different than black people, descending from a common ancestor, or that when "civilized man" gazed upon Africans, he was looking at earlier, more primitive version of himself, was troubling. The relationship between evolution and cruelty led to a new hierarchy among humanity: white people and animals shared animal instincts; the achievement of humanity rested on the curtailment of one's animal instincts; the savage stood in contrast (Lundblad 81). The savage was defined as having a slavish relationship to their passions, and unlike animals, delighting in cruelty (Lundblad 76). Violence plus pleasure equaled cruelty, and a civilized society would neither delight in the inhumane treatment of either human or animal (Lundblad 81). In this framework, animals as "helpless creatures" are elevated above savages ruled by passions. Thus, in this formulation, blackness is neither liminal—transitioning from one ontological position to another—nor interstice—betwixt and between—but sub-Other, as blackness is neither the self or "the human," nor the Other or non-human animality.

Therefore, the philosophy of stewardship is an index of a particular ontological relationship to the law, kinship, and representation; the metonymic chain between black women and animals foreclosed the possibility for black women to be stewards.⁶¹ In the ideology of stewardship, black women are limited to dependency and tutelage and excluded from moral leadership. Black women as "de mule uh de world," as hyperembodiment, is the semio-material condition of possibility for stewards' presumed moral superiority (Hurstons 17). Furthermore, stewardship's emphasis on protection and paternalism was virtually foreclosed to slave women by virtue of their vulnerability both to sexual and reproductive violence. Violence that is dissimulated by panicked cultural representations suggesting the dangers of black woman's "passions." The animalization of black women left them unprotected and thus unable to shelter others. Stewardship would attempt to universalize its particular expression of morality, specifically through Anglo-Saxon Christian normativity and imperialist conceit. Stewardship over animals, in the form of animal protections and welfare, would make gains in the law, by reasserting the enslaved female's metonymic tie to animals.

The enslaved female, as animate property, was the proxy through which the state would establish and regulate subsequent forms of what I call "vital property." For nineteenth-century animal advocates, the slave's social death was a ready paradigm, a heuristic emblem, of what it meant to be vital property. The African's enslavement

became a metaphor for animal exploitation, as slave welfare law was a model for the establishment of animal welfare law. The metaphors between animals and enslavement are multidirectional; one term gave substance to the other, reinforcing the bio-political logic of the state. Early cruelty cases at the time explicitly named slavery as an analogue. Note the language in *State of Missouri v. A.H. Bogardus* (1877):

In all the “manhood” that may be devoted to bloody conquests over defenceless creatures, already captive, we cannot feel sure of finding the material that would best serve to defend the State. When no higher motive is apparent in the conqueror than that of “displaying his skill as a marksman,” it may be doubted that his example is of a largely more elevating tendency than was that of the ancient tyrant who plucked out the eyes of a slave in order to show the deftness of his fingers.⁶²

Similarly, *Dolittle et al. v Shaw* (1894), a case concerning the recovery of the value of a horse resulting from death alleged as a result of cruelty, uses slavery as an analogue:

In the case last cited the action was for the value of a horse which had died, and which it was alleged defendant had ridden beyond the place he had hired him to go, and that by negligence or cruelty the horse had been so injured as to cause his death. . . . In *Harvey v. Epes*, 12 Grat. 153, the contract was one for the hire of slaves for a year, to work in a certain county. They were taken by the hirer, without the owner's consent, to another county, and employed in the same kind of work, and while there died. The court, after elaborately discussing the question and fully considering the authorities, held that the removal of the slaves to a county other than that to which they were hired to work in was not of itself a conversion, regardless of whether their death was caused by such wrongful act or not. It said: “Upon the whole, I am of the opinion that, in the case of a bailment for hire for a certain term, * * * the use of the property by the hirer, during the term, for a different purpose, or in a different manner, from that which was intended by the parties, will not amount to a conversion for which trover will lie, unless the destruction of the property be thereby occasioned, or at least unless the act be done with intent to convert the property, and thus to destroy or defeat the interest of the bailor therein.

The enslaved were the metaphor upon which law could expand its regulatory purview into the realm of animal life. The matrilineal nature of slavery, where slave status is passed along the female line, is ironized by the law’s insistence upon the natal alienation of black motherhood; even while the state simultaneously simulated the function of black motherhood by giving birth to nascent forms of property and establishing codes of protection based on the negation and plasticity of the female slave’s body. The law would effectively pronounce enslaved women’s children still-born prior to their birth, due to the state’s mandate that blackness be delimited by the terms of social death. Nevertheless, the law would turn the captive body into a proxy for the establishment of emergent forms of vital property. Thus, the state symbolically gave birth to new forms of life as it multiplied vital objects of property.

We typically gender the law masculine because of the legislative and disciplinary capabilities of the law, but what about the law’s creative capability? Law both regulates

and gives life. And when the law gives birth to new forms of legal life, it often substitutes one form of life for another. Animal welfare law would make protected animals the law's blackened progeny. When animal advocates claimed that animals were "like slaves," and the law subsequently modeled animal welfare on slave welfare law, they effectively racialized animals. Best, Francione, and Grier provide useful accounts of how the slave's personhood was an influential model during the establishment of intellectual property law, humane reform, and animal welfare law, but they miss that sexual and gendered violence is central to the very metaphoric links they illuminate. I argue that slave law's avowal of black maternity and disavowal of black motherhood is foundational to the expansion of property law. Intellectual property and humane legal reform developed in a legal context that made the negation of black women's maternity a precursor to legal personhood and central to the transmission of property that all property law attempted to regulate.

Animal welfare not only made animals' animalization redundant by stating that animals were "like slaves," but further objectified blackness by relying on the state and the public's all too present association of blackness with "animal man"—not in the interest of bringing an end to racial subjugation but as a convenient metaphor and trope. Animal welfare law and its proponents instrumentalized the slave's abject status in order to leverage its injustice in arguments about animal suffering. This strategy served to reinforce rather than ameliorate the animalization of blackness. From this vantage point, the strategy seems ill-conceived as it relied on slave welfare law's ability to disentangle black abjection from animality, "animal man" from her abjection.

Furthermore, in attempting to borrow the humanity of the enslaved, the use of slavery metaphors prematurely assumes that the recognition of slave humanity in slave welfare law is a remedy for the slave's abjection, as opposed to a tentative and ambivalent attempt to extend the life of racial subordination. As I have shown here and throughout the pages of this dissertation, human recognition in the law in the form of "personhood" and "citizenship" is the vehicle upon which law is able to disguise animalization and to expand animalization's borders into the "human" aspects of black personhood. As argued thus far, black "personhood" and "citizenship" have not led to liberty, freedom, rights and entitlements as much as it has been a route to criminalization and coerced consent. Thus, the expansion of the disciplinary dimension of the state, in terms of criminal prosecution of those who break animal welfare laws, placed those criminalized by race in an expanded field of vulnerability to state violence. If one were truly interested in challenging the law's violence, one would not just have to reconsider the abject status of "the animal"—human or otherwise—but one would also have to reimagine humanity without abjecting "the animal" and displace liberal humanism, which needs "the animal"—human or otherwise—to define protections, rights, and entitlements.

63

It is Hurston's formal artistry that I argue will open up a different set of possibilities for imagining the relationships between humans, animals, and the environment than those that are foundational to the law. The enslaved were perhaps the most visible and contested symbol of the stakes of property law. It is thus no surprise that legal representations of the enslaved were used to provide metaphor and substance to emerging forms of property law in the American Republic.

But if slave status would be dissimulated, rather than annulled by contract law, would not unequal contractual relations effectively facilitate, even encourage, Hurston's dissimulative acts? Is not the negative evaluation of Hurston's persona a "scapegoat" for a critique of social relations that refigured subjection under the terms of will, volition, responsibility, and contract? Barbara Johnson suggests that *Mules and Men* itself is a kind of folk performance, acted out for an audience solely comprised of Mason (286).

As Hurston states:

The white man is always trying to know into somebody else's business.
All right, I'll set something outside the door of my mind for him to play
with and handle. He can read my writing but he sho' can't read my mind.
I'll put this play toy in his hand, and he will seize it and go away. Then I'll
say my say and sing my song. (*Mules* 2)

In Hurston's analysis, might the "white man" be a function—a "Great Soul"—rather than a sociological identity? (*Mules* 6) Hurston certainly felt constrained by Mason's tight control over the meaning and significance of a folk culture that Hurston was a part of from the time of her birth. Notably, Hurston did not publish the work until after their relationship was no longer financial. Mason did play a central role in the creation of *Mules and Men* as its introduction suggests, but the exact extent of that influence is masked by Hurston's dissimulating performance.

The following text from Hurston's autobiography *Dust Tracks on the Road* has been interpreted by some as a dissimulated critique of Mason:

Once Sis Cat got hongry and caught herself a rat and set herself down
to eat 'im. Rat tried and tried to git loose but Sis Cat was too fast and
strong. So jus' as de cat started to eat 'im he says, "Hol' on dere, Sis Cat!
Ain't you got no manners atall? You going set up to de table and eat 'thout
washing yo' face and hands?"

Sis Cat was mighty hongry but she hate for de rat to think she ain't got no
manners, so she went to de water and washed her face and hands and
when she got back de rat was gone.

So de cat caught herself a rat again and set down to cat. So de Rat said,
"Where's yo' manners at, Sis Cat? You going to eat 'thout washing yo' face
and hands?"

"Oh, Ah got plenty manners," de cat told 'im. "But Ah cats mah dinner
and washes mah face and uses mah manners afterwards." So she et right
on 'im and washed her face and hands. And cat's been washin' after eatin'
ever since.

I'm sitting here like Sis Cat, washing my face and usin' my manners.
(Hurston, *Dust* 245-246)

In her essay "Thresholds of Difference: Structures of Address in Zora Neale Hurston," Barbara Johnson analyzes the ambiguity of the last lines of the text: "So ends the book. But what manners is she using? Upon reading this strange, unglossed final story, one cannot help wondering who, in the final analysis, has swallowed what. The reader? Mrs. Mason? Franz Boas? Hurston herself?" (288). As Nathan Huggins writes after an attempt to determine the sincerity of Hurston's poses and self-representations, "It is impossible to tellwho was being fooled" (133). We may never be able to answer with any certainty any of Johnson's questions. However, I argue it is not because the present conceals the

intent of past actors, or the archive does not speak, but rather because the conditions of racial animalization and commodified relations make it impossible to separate survival from “tomming,” resistance from accommodation. Deception, deference, and dissemblance are the inevitable outcome of the petting relation. But, we can certainly be sure that the strictures of genre, history, and law conspire to produce Hurston’s veiled form of address.

Thus far, I have established that Hurston’s “The ‘Pet’ Negro System” allows us to identify how the historical move from status to contract law expands and dissimulates black female abjection in property law rather than simply ameliorates or counters status law’s historical violence. I have argued that the animalization of black female reproduction is essential to the category of property in the law. In the final section, I want to highlight alternate models of relating between the humanistic and the animalistic as well as the human and the animal found in Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

TRANS-SPECIES VULNERABILITY AND INTERDEPENDENCE IN ZORA NEALE HURSTON’S *THEIR EYES*

They passed a dead man in a sitting position on a hummock entirely surrounded by wild animals and snakes. Common danger made common friends. Nothing sought conquest over the other. (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 164)

In the following section, I argue that Hurston intervenes in anti-black uses of animalized metaphors found in the law, humane advocacy, and racial petting systems. Breaking with the logic of stewardship and humane advocacy, Hurston disrupts narratives that demean the body and its pleasures. *Bodily experiences of pain, pleasure, and insight* are occasions of identification with our shared vulnerability with a world populated by flora and fauna. The human body and nature are not something to control but are characterized by affinity and entangled destiny. Humane activism relied on the fantasy of blackness as the hyperembodied limit of human species membership, and objectified animals by imagining them as the abjected parts of the achievement of humanity. For Hurston, the animalistic, including the body and its pleasures, is neither the phantasmatic passions projected in racial phantasy nor a vehicle for sin. Rather, the embodied mind is a part of nature and the Divine. Passion is the opening of the self to the “Other” and the interpenetration of self and “Other” in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In the previous sections, I discussed how Hurston’s most famous metaphor, “de nigger woman is the mule of the world,” was exegesis of the existential condition of black women’s animalization, giving the recursive legal dispossession of black women’s humanity its most prominent literary presence (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 14). In this final section, I reveal how Hurston’s text links the semio-material production of black women as “mule” to the exploitation of the narrative’s actual mule by the gendered politics of patriarchy. Hurston underscores how animalization across lines of species is endemic to the desire for heteropatriarchy in the narrative. More generally, I hope to identify how Hurston embeds a critique of gender, sexuality, and species’ practices into the experience of Janie’s embodied mind. What Hurston accomplishes in *Their Eyes* is a reconceptualization of humanity that does not abject nature or animality—human or otherwise; thus, it provides us with a model for how we can make trans-species linkages in ways that are less exploitative than the metaphors that appear within the law and even in African American

folk culture. Hurston reimagines humanity not as oppositional to the animal, but as sharing the condition of bodily vulnerability and interdependence.

Many have misread Hurston as offering a single-minded celebration of African American folk-culture; but in addition to a gendered critique of folk culture, she was troubled that black folk culture could become a vehicle to further animalize blackness. In her political essay “What White Publisher’s Won’t Print,” Hurston criticizes the dominant culture’s “folk belief” that black people are two-dimensional stereotypes, easily consumable “figures,” legible in a glance, and made out of “bent wires” without insides at all (951). She asks, “How could anyone write a book about the non-existent?” (“What White Publishers” 952) Anti-blackness’s attempts to hollow out black ontology potentially suggest that black subjectivity is a form of non-existence. The negation of black ontology, black existence as non-existent, is even found in Negro folk culture: the Negro ‘genius’ of metaphor can be used against the self in a matter that extends the reach of racial law. Hurston offers the example of the folk saying, “Nigger from nigger leave nigger—(Nothing from nothing leave nothing)” (“My People” 723). Furthermore, the conflation of blackness with the ape is a touchstone of Negro folk tales, much to the lament of Hurston, particularly in expressions such as “Monkey see, monkey do. Nigger see de white man do something, he jump in and try to do like de white man, and make a great big old mess” (Hurston, “My People” 723). Apeing takes on both the literal denotation of mimicry and the connotation of fraudulence. It also revives the long-held association of blackness with the ape. In one tale, black people are even represented as sub-Other with respect to the ape. Hurston states, “I found the Negro, and always the blackest Negro, being made the butt of all jokes, particularly black women” (“My People” 725). It is necessary to underscore that Hurston was aware of the dangerous uses of metaphor and folk culture for the meaning of blackness and the material practices of racial (re)production in (black) American culture. This point must be emphasized because Hurston’s critics have been successful at convincing many that Hurston uncritically celebrated black folk culture. It is in this context that we can more fully appreciate Hurston’s intervention into animal metaphor.

In *Their Eyes*, Hurston links the identification of the existential conditions of black women with the mocking of Bonner’s yellow mule. Both are conditioned by a heteropatriarchal politic, where men seek to define themselves through the process of demeaning the Other. Crucially, Hurston’s novel locates Janie’s vulnerability to sexism in white racism and violence in patriarchy itself (Wall, *Women* 180). As Cheryl Wall notes:

In *Mules and Men*, the same tale, “Why the Sister in Black Works Hardest,” is told by a male informant as part of a discussion on the regulation of blacks to work. Race, not gender, is the topic. Similarly, “mules” in the book’s title refers to the exploitation of black people’s labor, not to the condition of black women. Only by reading backward from the novel to the earlier narrative does one perceive how the title *Mules and Men* situates black men in relation to work, and therefore implicitly to white men, and in relation to black women. Black men though oppressed and treated as mules by whites, create alternative spaces where they succeed more often than not in asserting their selfhood. In *Their Eyes*, the focus shifts to the ways in which black men suppress black

women, treating them as mules, while women respond by constantly negotiating spaces in which to assert their selfhood. (*Women* 180)

The movement from *Mules and Men* to *Their Eyes*, sheds the story's sexist connotations. In *Mules*' "Why the Sister in Black Works Hardest," it is told that God originally put work in a box and handed it to Ole Master, who, unaware of its contents, orders the black man to carry it, who then orders his wife to carry it. Upon carrying it, the black woman dares to look inside. In *Mules*, black women's drudgery is a result of the inappropriateness of her curiosity, paralleling Pandora's Box, whereas in *Their Eyes*, the story reveals the manner with which black men oppress black women as being based on male insecurity and identification with patriarchy (Meisenhelder, "Conflict" 278). While Hurston is known to champion Negro folklore, she also redirects the gender politics of its dissemination. Folktales have often been used by black men as a philosophical justification and method for sidestepping black women's critiques of sexism and assertions of equality, as seen in the male chauvinism and patrilineal spatial politics of the porch in *Their Eyes*. Hurston's "mule of de world" bends this tradition in the direction of egalitarianism between men and women (Wall, *Women* 180).⁶⁴

The brutalization and taunting of Matt Bonner's mule is performed by men that also behave in the same way towards women. Hurston critiques the oppression engendered by Western modernity's commodification and denigration of women, animals, and blackness—a humanism that defines civilization's progress as being based on the dictates of heteropatriarchy's abjection and domestication of nature. While I have established that the figurative mule is paramount in the novel's existential treatment of black womanhood, so is a particular, living, and breathing mule central to the text's ethical intervention—a yellow mule bought and sold by Matt Bonner. The mule is not simply a signifier that props up Janie's self-projections and moral aspirations. Beyond metaphor, the mule is a subject of identification in the novel, an actor in its own right that resists the signifying schemes of the men. Thus, Hurston breaks from the metaphoric tradition that characterizes "Livy to Dante, Moliere to Kafka," and the mule moves beyond "the empire of sign and towards a neoliteral relation to animals" (Braidotti 528). In this case, Hurston establishes a structural connection between the zoo-exploitation of mules and black women.⁶⁵

The mule is a resistive agent despite having a spirit broken after years of starvation and brutalization. Several of the townsmen who frequently gather outside of the town's store—the community's epicenter and the site of Janie's confinement—decide to escalate their ritualistic teasing. This time, instead of making Matt the foil of their jokes, they decide to tease and bait the mule itself. The mule resists the men's baiting and attempts to hold his ground in the face of the men's menacing physical presence. The men find the mule's resistance entertaining, including Jody, who laughs heartily, but Janie does not. Jody's laughter is stopped in its tracks when he overhears Janie from inside the store, muttering to herself, "They oughts be shamed uh theyselves! Teasing dat poor brute lak they is! Done been worked tuh death; doe had his disposition ruint wid mistreatment, and now they got to finish devilin' im tuh death. Wisht Ah had mah way wide 'em all..." (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 67). Upon overhearing Janie, Jody, using the voice of patriarchal authority, requests that the men stop, "Lum, I god, dat's enough! Ya'll done had yo' fun now. Stop yo' foolishness and go tell Matt Bonner Ah wants tuh have uh talk wid him right away" (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 67). Janie comes out front and sits next to Jody

in silence. Neither speaks before Jody changes the form but not the texture of his authoritative tone, “Janie, Ah reckon you better go fetch me dem old gaiters. Dese tan shoes sets mah feet on fire. Plenty room in ‘em, but they hurts regardless” (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 67). Jody, instead of asking Janie about the source of her feelings, deepens her identification with the mule by rebuffing her articulations of resistance. Like the men taunting the mule, Jody does not listen. Janie instead speaks with silence. She goes to find the shoes, but “a war of defense for helpless things was going on inside her.” She thinks, “People ought to have some regard for helpless things” (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 67). She desires a fight about it, but Janie is not yet ready to fight according to the passion she feels, for she “hates disagreement and confusion, so Ah better not talk. It makes it hard tuh get along” (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 67). Instead, she buries her feelings. Once she feels that she has sufficiently overpowered both her anger and its correlating countenance, she returns with the shoes (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 67). Janie is not prepared to fight that day, but she will become an increasingly defiant figure in the latter part of the novel.

Janie’s “war of defense for helpless things” issues both from her indignation over the treatment of the mule as well as resentment based on her own stunted life rooted in the norms of an anxious patriarchy (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 57). However, upon overhearing Janie’s indignation and therefore fearing that Janie is slipping away, Jody substitutes Janie’s freedom for that of the mule’s. He buys the mule from Matt Bonner to “let ‘im rest” (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 68). Janie then likens Jody to Lincoln: the freeing of the mule to the freeing of the enslaved. Janie is proud of Jody for the good deed and chooses to reinforce his exercise of compassionate masculinity and ethical leadership. She appeals to his quest for power by likening him to a king. However, the purchase of the mule’s freedom is not the actualization of freedom, as the mule remains bound by Jody’s authority. The purchase of the mule is an instantiation of Jody’s authority, for he purchases the mule and establishes Janie as property based on the same commodifying patriarchal entitlement. As Janie will learn, Jody is no great emancipator but a fierce protector of the performance of patriarchal authority in the context of a world hostile to black male inclusion into the annals of “great men.” Jody’s patriarchal authority is an anxious overcompensation for authority that he can ultimately only borrow but never represent (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 57-68).

Janie rejects both Nanny’s romance with “the cult of true womanhood” and Jody’s idealization of patriarchy as part and parcel of a gender oppression at odds with her queer vision of the pear tree, which is biologically reproductive but not heteropatriarchal, despite being a “marriage” (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 13).⁶⁶ Janie questions the exploitation of black women in her community, including her own exploitation, and that of the mule with which she shares a metaphoric bond. After all, Jody’s kindness to both is self-serving; it is an instantiation of his dominion over both. Janie disrupts the exploitation of female sexuality and the hollowness of serving as a man’s “trophy,” which provides an opening to the question of exploitation generally. The hyper-exploitation of the body of the mule comes to light, for the character of Janie allows Hurston to present animality as a construction rather than an intrinsic value. The pained animality of the mule is something that unites Janie and the non-human animals forced to labor in the production of difference. Janie’s identification with the mule does not re-articulate the hyper-exploitation of black women as the “mule uh de world,” but instead poses the important question of why we need to produce mules at all. With the metaphor

of the pear tree and especially its visual rhetoric, Hurston opens up the entire paradigm of the animalization of black womanhood to further critique by questioning the presumed terms of humanity's relation to nature.

Through her literature, Hurston's visual rhetoric achieves "mind-pictures" (Hurston, *Their Eyes* 16).⁶⁷ Like a film editor, metonym becomes form editing and metaphor cross-cutting in Hurston's "cinematic" style. As Deborah Clarke notes, Hurston's "rhetoric of sight" is a paradigm whereby "vision must be embodied, one must see outwardly as well as inwardly," so that we can "employ vision in ways that are self-affirming rather than self-sacrificing" (203). That such a vision of humanity as both interdependent and distinct, though within a shared ecological milieu, is rendered beautifully and forcefully in images of human interdependency with nature must not be overshadowed by our own failures of insight. In Hurston's cinematic literature, she redeploys the language of the visual to transform the objectification of women, blackness, and nature; and by doing so, she redeems the potential of the visual itself, by wrestling it from the histories of empiricism that she instructs us to see beyond, by placing them in our field of vision but through her transformative lens. She reconfigures humanity's relation to the world and challenges its power dynamics by demonstrating how we can look without objectifying.

While sitting under a pear tree, Janie has a transformative visual experience, where the eyes are the fleshy contact zone, rather than barrier, between her body and the surrounding environment that impresses upon her to look. The reciprocal and mutual relationship between calyx and bee glimpsed from beneath the tree models for Janie what a romantic partnership could be. This metaphor is multiplied, altered, and given increased nuisance throughout the novel, as Janie experiences the promise and disappointment of mutuality in love. Janie's epiphany under a blossoming pear tree stands in contrast to the exploitation of those *produced as* mules, human and non-human alike. She describes this interdependence in the following extended metaphor:

It had called her to come and gaze on its mystery. From barren brown stems to glistening leaf-buds; from the leaf-buds to snowy virginity of bloom. It stirred her tremendously. How? Why? It was like a flute song forgotten in another existence and remembered again. What? How? Why? This singing she heard that had nothing to do with her ears. The rose of the world was breathing out smell. It followed her through all her waking moments and caressed her in her sleep. It connected itself with other vaguely felt matters that had struck her outside observation and buried themselves in her flesh. Now they emerged and quested about her consciousness.

She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze when the inaudible voice of it all came to her. She saw dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. Then Janie felt a pain remorseless sweet that left her limp and languid...

Oh to be a pear tree—*any* tree in bloom! With kissing bees singing of the beginning of the world! She was sixteen. She had glossy leaves and bursting buds and she wanted to struggle with life but it seemed to elude her. Where were the signing bees for her? Nothing on the place nor in her grandma's house answered her. (Hurstun, *Their Eyes* 10-11)

The metaphor strips away the “imperial gaze” and “empirical gaze” of authority, while revealing what they share, as the eyes no longer provide an occasion for purported hierarchical but somehow disinterested gazing. Janie's vision is situated by nature itself; nature does not take the form of a racial, gendered, or national “other,” or even of a “body” at all, but rather as a phenomenal experience of one's own body. The penetration of Janie's eyes reverse the masculinism that characterizes Kantian aesthetic tradition, whereby “the human” subjects the other to his gaze; here nature pursues her, transforms her, and engages her body in its totality—casting doubt over an entire philosophical tradition based on objective, self-directed, and unidirectional forms of looking.

This dream-like scene of eroticism and spirituality is the most egalitarian of the novel. What is revealed to Janie is the deeply intersubjective nature of being; it is fitting that what she hears has “nothing to do with her ears” because the solicitation includes and exceeds conscious and, thus, any socially-constructed sense of self (Hurstun, *Their Eyes* 13). While this scene is an anthropomorphic romanticization of nature, it nevertheless extols the beauty and pleasure of interdependence.⁶⁸ Notably, this field does not exclude the non-mammalian; the bees and calyx are in a field of analogous becoming as is the tortured and exploited mule. Stealing the other's joy, their pleasure, has been seen frequently in Hurstun's narrative, as evoked in both the protracted history of rape in Janie's family to the burden of patriarchal marriage in Janie's life. Even if this description fails as a phenomenology of nature, it is a model of identification and reciprocity that carries over to forms of gendered and sexual exploitation writ large in the novel. The scene of interspecies lovemaking between bees and calyces, which are described as arching to meet the “love embrace,” is fascinating in that it implies fecundity and creativity between active equals—there is no room for hierarchy and domination (Hurstun, *Their Eyes* 13).

This epic scene of rapture and the sacralization of nature and black female sexuality is a “revelation,” as Rachel Stein notes, which disrupts fixed social and zoological rankings rooted in Scripture: “The sacred tree, then as an image of spiritual and sexual ecstasy, contradicts the Judeo-Christian images of the tree of knowledge and the crucifix-tree, which represent the dangers of bodily knowledge and painful renunciation of physical existence” (65). Colonial and enslaving humanisms would dehumanize black women as repositories of sexuality, bodies without souls, emblematic of “lower nature.” The pear tree locates the divine in femaleness, blackness, nature, sex, and even insects, which are commonly represented as subanimal.⁶⁹ In Gurleen Grewal's excellent interpretation of Hurstun's metaphysical aesthetics, she states, “expressing the ineffable, can only be represented in the poetic medium of metaphor, so that the numinous is translated back into the concrete language of the sensuous, where it can be shared” (106). Hurstun uses narrative and metaphor to contrast the uniting and reciprocal image of the pear tree with hierarchic masculinities that exploit and denigrate nature and Eros. Hurstun braids these critiques into her analysis of black women's exploitation in the novel.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the experience of ecstasy, pain, and insight produces a feeling of connection between the living creatures of the world; the bodily experience of joy and suffering unites human and non-human into a shared field of relationality. For example, Janie:

...knew things that nobody had ever told her, for instance, the words of the trees and the wind. She often spoke to falling seeds and said, "I hope you fall on soft ground because she had heard seeds saying that to each other as they passed. She knew the world was a stallion rolling in the blue pasture of ether. She knew that God tore down the old world every evening and built a new one by sun up. (Hurstun, *Their Eyes* 29-30)

Janie is someone who listens to and learns from all around her: the living and the dead, flora and fauna. This suggests interdependence relation between knower, words, and worlds. We can see in Hurston an articulation of a philosophy of life that provides an alternative to the bio-political and necro-political with which Janie must contend. Janie models how we might see, hear, and feel knowledge rooted in our shared destiny with non-human forms of life without conflating differential forms of being. Hurston uses narrative and metaphor to contrast the reciprocal image of the pear tree with hierarchic masculinities that exploit and denigrate nature and Eros. Hurston braids these critiques into her analysis of black women's exploitation in the novel. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the experience of ecstasy, pain, and insight produces a feeling of connection between the living creatures of the world; the bodily experience of joy and suffering unites human and non-human into a shared field of relationality. Notably, what Hurston has to offer is not simply a unification with nature or an undifferentiated "wholeness" or "return" to nature, but an appreciation of our affinity and interdependence with nature; from this she proposes reciprocity and intersubjectivity.

Chapter Three

A Question Mark Followed by an Exclamation Point: Grace Jones, Cannibal Consumption, and the Limits of Purrformance

In “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow),” Jacques Derrida meditates on the aporia and instability subtending the human/animal boundary, an aporia that he considers foundational to modernity’s epistemological grounding and production of the self. According to Derrida, Europeans’ quest for Man’s uniqueness has led them in a fictional direction. In this essay, he reveals a highly intimate yet illustrative anecdote drawn from his own life. Derrida once found himself “caught naked, in silence, by the gaze of an animal” (“The Animal” 3). However, it was not just any animal; it was a female cat. “The cat’s eyes looking at me from head to toe, as it were just to see, not hesitating to concentrate its vision—in order to see, with a vision to seeing—in the direction of my sex. Something happens there that shouldn’t take place...a fall...a symptom (and “symptom,” as you know, also means “fall.”)”(Derrida, “The Animal” 4). He finds himself flushed with an embarrassment he cannot easily “overcome” (Derrida, “The Animal” 4) A “reflex” of doubly inflected shame sets in; he was ashamed of being nude in front of another as well as ashamed for being ashamed. Derrida’s shame tugs at him, inviting him to question the dominant episteme of Man, which would seem to anticipate and foreclose his experience of shame.

After combing through a dizzying array of exponents from Europe’s religio-philosophical tradition from Aristotle to Lacan, Derrida locates an incalculable amount of traits that seek to determine once and for all “what is proper to Man” and, by correlation, what “the animal” lacks: consciousness, morality, a self, technics, a sense of the world as such, speech, mourning rituals, autobiography, shame, history, reason, rationality, gender, etc (“The Animal” 5).

Derrida’s reading of the Western philosophical tradition is useful for the theorization of race. According to Derrida, philosophical discourse on the animal is evidence of an anxious projection. Yet, what he does not analyze is the link between discourses of race and species. In European continental philosophy, every admonishment of the animal that he identifies mirrors touchstones of anti-black philosophical discourse. Derrida does not go on to make the relationship between the trope of “the animal” and the trope of “the black” explicit; yet, in European Man’s quest to define himself as humanity’s highest achievement, the discourses of “nature” and “natural peoples” have been conjoined to the point of being nearly indistinguishable in the history of philosophy (Zimmerman 62-85). Derrida is useful for theorizing race, in the sense that his project is to reveal what is in plain sight. Man’s exceptionalism and epistemological grounding, his own claim to dominance and legitimation, are symptomatic of a philosophical failure. Derrida undresses the humanist project by showing what it is that humanism projects onto non-human animals, especially with regard to their sexuality. Derrida testifies, she is a “real cat;” she isn’t the *figure* of a cat (“The Animal” 6). This distinction is crucial because he wants to arouse a sense of ethical responsibility to where the metaphorical and the real touch.

So what of the gender of the cat, the peculiar agent that inspired this anecdote? Derrida describes the patriarchal moorings of Dominion in biblical narratives of “The Fall,” which inaugurate a patrilineal law: an anthropocentric power that ranks Adam over Eve, philosophical men over women and beasts. This law obscures from view the

perspective of women and animals, leaving women and animals vulnerable to the erasure, exploitation, and ethical disregard perpetuated by a patriarchal system.

Following Derrida, this chapter will place emphasis on the intersection of cats and women, race and sexuality, being and non-being, in the context of the life of the commodity in cultural representation. I suggest that in *Grace in a Cage*, multi-media artist Grace Jones attempts to appropriate and redirect cultural representations that have traditionally served to objectify both non-human animals and (black) women. Jones's ironic appropriation of degrading images of cats and black women has unexpected and contradictory spectatorial consequences. Ultimately, I argue that anti-black representation is a process of ontologizing, which acts as a limit to black performance by structuring both the performativity of black performance and the spectatorial encounter with black female embodiment.⁷⁰ Performances of blackness by virtue of being enactments of black subjectivities reference the history of racialization. They recall the very difference they often seek to interrogate or displace. Without evoking this history, they cannot be called a "black performance." For Jones, this is not a question of to perform "black" or not because her body is legible under the exclusive racial terms of blackness. The spectator will view her body under the terms of its legibility. Spectators can then take up a position with respect to the performance's meaning. Regardless of whatever significance it holds for spectators, it will make reference to the history of the black female body in representation.

Because we live in a society, indeed a world, that objectifies and reproduces animalizing images of black women for purposes of pleasure and profit, it may be difficult to notice or even identify when stereotypical representation is being ironized. Conversely, Jones's performances have been automatically interpreted as oppositional or counterhegemonic simply because they were authored by a black woman. The performances I discuss here highlight the limitations of binaristic interpretive frameworks for analyzing afro(post)modern cultural production. It is these binaristic frameworks – "male" versus "oppositional" gaze, active versus passive spectatorship – that are theorized differently in the following pages (Mulvey 833-44, hooks 115-32). I identify the contradictory nature of Jones's performances, their limitations, and aporias. By doing so, I hope to suggest a way to read afro(post)modern cultural production as an uneven and often contradictory negotiation of modernity. Instead of viewing Jones's performance of feline femininity, what I refer to as purrformance, as an antidote or straightforward rebuttal to the history of racist and sexist images of black femininity on stage and screen, I read it as a complex negotiation of historical representation; ultimately, one that serves contradictory ends.

In a 1985 interview with Johnny Carson to promote her film, *A View to a Kill*, Jones responds to Carson's query about how she began working with animals, particularly leopards:

JONES. I think Jamaica had a lot to do with that, growing up in Jamaica, I mean there are parts of it that, that, they don't actually have wild tigers and animals and things like that. But, I always thought they were going to jump out at me as I was running to the grocery store around the corner. I always felt lions, tigers, and bears were going to come leaping out at me. And I always felt maybe I was a cat, you know?

CARSON. In a former life or something like?

JONES. Yeah, yeah, or something like that. And, I sort of have cat eyes, sort of slanted. CARSON. Yeah, you do.

JONES. They don't really go with my face.

CARSON. Yeah?

JONES. Well, that's what they used to tell me when I started modeling, that's why I didn't get many jobs. That your nose doesn't match your eyes, and your eyes don't match your lips. Where the hell do you come from? What are you? So, I figured I must have been some kind of cat. I put whiskers on, and all of sudden—cat tail, and a cat outfit, and suddenly everything falls into place.... (Jones, "Interview")

In this chapter, I am interested in Jones's use of the trope of the cat to refashion a self. The field of animal studies characteristically aims to question and interrogate animals' symbolic and material roles in the production of the human self. This scholarship has presumed human "dominance" over animal Others, what is referred to as human exceptionalism or anthropocentrism. However, what is striking about Jones's feline feminine is that her feline persona reverses the presumed norms of valuation; Jones must become an animal in order to have aesthetic value, to be desirable. The possibilities and limitations of her trickster strategy will be examined for questions of sexuality, performativity, and consumption. I argue that the discursive and material effects of Jones's purrformance of feline femininity reveal the limitations of our theoretical frameworks, rather than merely reflect the success or failure of Jones as an artist. Reading Jones's performance in the context of the history of representation and consumption highlights both the stakes and challenges of black female embodiment's performativity.

Grace Jones is of Ibo descent and was born in Jamaica, but has lived the life of a cosmopolitan artist; she currently calls Italy, France, and the United States home. She works across various forms of media: photography, video, film, and music. She was a model in the U.S. and Europe before starting a career as a disco singer in the late seventies. Before her modeling and singing career, she studied acting in college. Jones maintains both recording and acting careers. She was eventually known as an actor in the U.S. and a singer in Europe. In her concert performances, she adopts various personas and wears eccentric costumes (Salewicz 129).

In 1978, Grace Jones made one of her earliest appearances on television on an Italian show called *Stryx*. The show thematically referred to devils, hell, witchcraft, and the underworld. It was staged in the backdrop of castles and caves reminiscent of the Middle Ages. Its format was a combination of staged performances and musical segments that featured a single artist. Produced during the disco era, the show provided a vehicle for the genre. A vocal section of viewers found the combination of underworld images and sex objectionable. The show was quickly cancelled, but not before Grace Jones was able to deliver one of her earliest, if not the earliest, recorded feline performances.⁷¹

Before Jones begins her purrformance, a blonde Italian witch introduces her. A dissolve cut follows. Jones appears encased within a glass vase bubbling with witch's brew. Against a two-dimensional backdrop of a hellish medieval forest, the title card "Rumstryx" blazes across her frame before she dramatically throws off the leopard fur wrapped around her shoulders. The leopard skin is not tailored for a human body; the skin is thrown over her body. Her leopard gloves remain. Now, scantily clad in a gold

metallic, asymmetric mini dress and stilettos, she makes her way to a golden throne dressed with leopard skin. Her eyes are painted with a dramatic cat-eye design.

Throughout the performance, she picks up various cat skins, strokes them, straddles them sensuously, and then releases them, all while singing about a missing lover. “Fame” is the name of the song. And lamentably, according to the song, it is her fame that has kept the lovers apart. The cat skins bear little resemblance to the actual animals they purport to index. Cheap and gaudy objects of consumption, they are revealed as counterfeit when the sequence offers a single shot of a lounging tiger. Gliding across a stage of billowing smoke, she purrs, growls, and scratches for the camera’s close-ups, all the while posing and giving her best vamp femininity. The cheap cross-section of cat skins, the prancing and posing on a floor of fog, and the two-dimensional backdrop of what appears to be a hell, make this performance all the more campy.

This performance signals artistic sensibilities of the artist to this day: parody, pastiche, and ironic appropriation. The very outrageousness and flamboyance of her earliest camp performances are retooled as a form of critique in *Grace in a Cage*. So, it is not just what she performs—feline black femininity—but crucially *how* she performs that draws attention to the artifice of her animalized, gendered, and racialized performance.

(CAT) WOMAN

In European folklore, cats have long been conflated with women. Cats are linked with the supernatural, mystery, and the devil, or conversely, with domesticity. The earliest record of cats as supernatural creatures goes back three thousand years to ancient Egypt (McNeill 6). Cat’s eyes have traditionally been connected with mystery, mythology, and abstraction. Whereas black cats are historically associated with bad luck and nefarious acts of the devil, in recent history, white cats have become a symbol of good luck (McNeill 7). The connotation of black cats with evil and bad luck has been entrenched and long lasting (McNeill 8). It has even been reported that it more difficult to find homes that will adopt black cats in comparison to white cats due to these associations.⁷²

In “Waving Ones: Cats, Folklore, and Experiential Source Hypothesis,” Lynne S. McNeill outlines the historical role played by cats and women in European folklore as figures of liminality (13).⁷³ Cats are believed to be in a permanent state of liminality in many of medieval Europe’s belief traditions; in this sense, they appear to be supra-nature, within yet hovering above nature (McNeill 10). To be supernatural is by definition to be interstitial: to straddle conceptual categories, to confound taxonomy and haunt teleology. Historically, humans or non-humans who cross moral boundaries or any boundary between two categories are considered within arm’s length of the supernatural. European folklore would suggest that supernatural creatures are attracted to interaction with liminal humans (McNeill 9).

In Europe’s medieval societies, women were also often seen as liminal creatures, at least partially explaining their perpetual connection with cats. The liminality of woman is arguably rooted in medieval cultural explanations concerning the particularities of female embodiment and menstruation (McNeill 13). Cats have long been perceived as symbolizing characteristics antithetical to Christian values: treachery, paganism, the moon, darkness, cruelty, and demons—in a word, witchcraft.

The behavior of women and cats has been conflated as well. Both have been perceived as masqueraders; cats are thought to manipulate in a devious feminine manner,

and, similarly, woman are believed to artfully manipulate a more powerful (male) authority (Rogers 165).⁷⁴ Cats are seen as furtive and opportunistic. Their domesticity is considered suspect due to a belief that they feign devotion and civility for the comfort these might bring, but in their essence, they are devious, self-centered, lascivious, and immoral. According to Katherine Rogers, before the nineteenth-century, cats often served to indicate what was wrong with undomesticated female wives (Rogers 185).

The association between cats and women even found its way into painting and literature. In painting, cats were often juxtaposed to the notorious Eve, who ruined mankind by acting in defiance of her husband's authority. Durer placed Eve and a cat together on one side of his *Fall of Man* in order to suggest an analogy between Eve's transgressions and a cat about to seize a mouse (Rogers 169). Sex workers have been described as *cats* since 1400. Manet's *Olympia* features a female sex worker accompanied by a black female servant as well as a black cat; both the black cat and the black female servant symbolize the sex worker's gendered and sexual transgressions. They are a kind of redundant symbol, as they reflect and refract each other's connotations: animality, sexuality, transgression, and desire. Dickens castigates cats in The "Uncommercial Traveller" by comparing them to poor and working class women; "like the women among whom they live," the cats "seem to turn out of their unwholesome beds into the street, without any preparation." (qtd. in Rogers 171) According to Dickens:

They leave their young families to stagger about the gutters, unassisted, while they frouzily quarrel and swear and scratch and spit, at street corners. In particular...when they are about to increase their families (an event of frequent recurrence) the resemblance is strongly expressed in a certain dusty dowdiness, down-at-heel self-neglect, and general giving up of things. I cannot honestly report that I have ever seen a feline matron of this class washing her face when in an interesting condition. (qtd. in Rogers 171)

Kathleen Kete, in *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, describes the eighteenth-century's most influential naturalist Georges Louis Leclerc, le comte de Buffon, who believed it was the female that was more sexually ardent than males of her species. Buffon also described the intensity with which the cat seemed to aggressively pursue and leap upon a reluctant male (Kete 118-119). He was hostile to what he saw as woman's offensive characteristics: "sexuality, sensuality, mystery, darkness, evil, and danger" (Kete 119). Cats' immodest arousal was noted by Buffon and others as offensive and as evidence of undomesticability in the feline species. In the eighteenth-century, dogs, unlike cats, were generally seen as magnanimous and heroic (Rogers 173). For Buffon, dogs were frank and trusting, and so it is no surprise that men are commonly associated with dogs (Kete 118).

As Katherine Rogers's notes, cats provided a convenient metaphor for the limitations of female love and devotion and human duplicity and cruelty. Much of this is an allegory for the uncontrollable nature of women, their rebelliousness, potential independence, and their unfitness for modernity; all of these metaphors express anxieties about the instability of men's power over women and nature (Rogers 178). Cats live in human homes without conforming to human standards. They are self-assuredly independent. They cannot be relied upon to share human affections, and seem immune to

human or canine guilt (Rogers 3). Their aloofness comes off as mysterious, and by classifying cats and women together as objects for evaluation and examination, the second sex becomes analogous to the second companion animal (Rogers 168).

Discourse regarding the cat takes a turn, for by the nineteenth-century, cats are praised for their natural reticence, unobtrusiveness, gracefulness, disinterest in human goals, and small size; in all of these qualities, cats symbolized the feminine attributes of modesty, compliance, lack of ambition, and timidity—exerting “no more force than is necessary to achieve her purpose” (Rogers 172). In the nineteenth-century, the cat’s image was recast, and cats became a welcomed member of the Western household. In her book *The Cat in the Human Imagination: Feline Images From Bast to Garfield*, Katherine Rogers explains that witches were commonly believed to turn themselves into cats, but by the nineteenth-century, with cats more highly valued and witchcraft discredited by a secular Christianity, their connection was seen as titillating and exotic rather than ugly and frightening (54).

Yet the medieval and early modern views of cats do not disappear entirely; rather, they are reorganized in light of the emergent evolutionary discourses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Desmond Morris, a British zoologist, suggests in his book *Catwatching* that cats have a “double life,” and the concept of a “domestic cat is a contradiction.” He believes that domestication has changed the cat very little, stating, “both in anatomy and behavior it is still remarkably like the African wild cat from which it was gradually developed” (Morris, *Watching* 10, *Catlore* 107). Biologist John Bradshaw makes a similar point. The cat “is neither a man-made species like the dog, nor simply an animal made captive for utilitarian purposes, like the elephant.” He adds “in behavioral terms, domestication has probably had less effect on the cat than on any other domestic mammal” (Bradshaw 6). The concern that a primordial wildness lurks within women, like cats, indicates the suspicion that a (white) woman could revert back to her wild state at any moment (Rogers 170). It is the resistance on the part of cats to the humanist project of domesticity that has made them a target and a convenient metaphor for the “problem” of women generally; yet it is the “African wildcat” as evolutionary origin myth that is decidedly racialized when metaphorically applied to women.

Starting in the nineteenth-century, white women have come to be associated with the “house cat” in that both white women and cats were symbolic of the virtues of domesticity. Yet, once the less strident view of cats as undomesticatable fades, another image of gendered feline femininity emerges: the black woman as leopard, sphinx, or tigress.⁷⁵ In the twentieth-century, advertising would cement an image of black women as wildcats. As in the case of Jones, black models and actresses would disproportionately be styled in scantily clad leopard, zebra, and tiger skins. The advertising industry incorporated black women into femininity but as being representative of the primordial cat. Human evolution and cat evolution become entangled, as black women in cat skin attire symbolized primitivism within humanity *and* the cat’s primitivism, and white bourgeois femininity symbolized humanity’s evolutionary achievement as well as the threat to Man’s ability to domesticate nature. Thus, it remains that surveillance and discipline must be deployed in order to guard against the threat of white female recapitulation.

The conflation of cats and women either served to censure women for insubordination in the face of their husband’s authority or to reduce women to

unobtrusive domestic homebodies. In either case, it was used to justify hostility to women who did not conform to the dictates of a patriarchal society. Abject qualities considered essential to the cat's nature were believed to be mirrored in women; and women's purported immorality rebounded on the cat. The constructs have continually reinforced each other. Cats and women are doubles in the desire to control "wildness," a "wildness" that is "out there" and "within" the human. It is the image of the black woman as simultaneously wild, evil, lascivious, exotic and alluring that Jones tries to appropriate and subvert.

GRACE JONES'S PURRFORMATIVITY

In *Grace in a Cage*, Jones and her romantic partner and artistic director Jean-Paul Goude construct an image of a nude Jones on all fours in a cage that bears the sign, "Do Not Feed The Animal."⁷⁶ The cage is placed on a stage behind a gold, crinkled, drawn curtain. Raw meat is scattered on the ground inside and outside the cage, as if thrown by Jones. Some of the bones are bloody but meatless. Her red lipstick echoes the bloody remains. Jones, growling ferociously, has been given a long black tail. A white masculine forearm emerges from the left frame, positioning a microphone close to her face in order to capture her growl. His trimmed red sleeve evokes the image of a circus ringmaster or fairground barker. If the viewer looks carefully, the viewer will be able to see a small, white, presumably male hand holding on to her tail, perhaps to maintain the illusion that the tail belongs to Jones's body, as opposed to being a manipulation of it. Her gaze meets that of the theatergoers, uniformly white and male, seated at the end of the stage. The audience is foregrounded and has illuminated silhouettes. The viewer's gaze is in alignment with the audience's field of vision. The viewer's spectatorship echoes theirs. At the same time, Jones's gaze pierces all spectators, including ours, as she growls at the viewer.

Jones is framed by white masculinity from the front, side, and rear, mimicking the logic of the daguerreotype and then subverting it. The daguerreotype, an early form of photography created by Louis Daguerre in the mid-twentieth-century, was an incredibly lucrative technology because it captured the public's growing fascination with exotic places and people, and it could be mass-produced. It was, however, more than an innovative technology—it was an idea, a pedagogy even, that was both informed by and reproductive of race. The daguerreotype's front, side, and back views were thought to offer visual evidence of essential difference because difference was thought to be both in and inscribed on the body. This was so much the case that it was widely held that difference had an objective, indeed scientifically locatable, correlation to a catalogue of physical signposts. These signposts were thought to be legible indicators of one's social position in a hierarchy of difference: exterior appearance was believed to reflect interior essence (Smith 5). In both science and anthropology, the ideal of nakedness was reserved for representations of primitive people. Nakedness was equated with a lack or diminished sense of shame. Shamelessness, rather than simple nudity, marked their animality. That said, it was a "shamelessness" that science was willing to exploit. Their nudity exposed more of the body to the probing eye of empiricist measurement and comparison. The camera both imprisoned and dissected black bodies in service to the era's "visual empiricism" (Collins 81).

Grace in a Cage, I argue, is a parody of photography itself. It is also an ironic appropriation of parodic black-face, sideshow, and circus performances. Colonialism

educated the public to identify, desire, consume, and spectacularize difference as entitlement and entertainment. The image evokes and interrogates the fantasy of animalistic black female sexuality simultaneously. It calls into question the fantasy of nature itself by pulling back the curtain and revealing the construction of the sideshow. Even her tail, the synecdoche of animality, is a prop. Animals, gender non-conforming people, the differently abled, and people of color were constructed as extreme others for entertainment and profit. The symbolic and material labor of the sideshow is revealed as a mediated event. It was not a reproduction of nature in the form of wild animals and wild people as it purported to be, but a formulaic reproduction of colonial fantasy, designed to console anxieties about the uncertainty of Man's superiority over nature and its human representatives.

Jones's nudity has been a source of controversy, as some fear that her nudity will be perceived as providing evidence that the black woman is without shame and thus in a state of naked animality. This is a fear that is not without historical precedent as daguerreotypes, scientific journals, exhibitions, sideshows, and German showman Carl Hagenbeck's exotic people exhibitions all provided an opportunity for—not just scientific—forms of looking (Rothfels 133-134). However, I will also suggest in my conclusion that her defiant acts of body politics are a refutation of the heteronormative and religio-patriarchal assimilationist politics that predominated both the Jamaican and Caribbean American immigrant community from which she emerged; thus, her performances cannot be reduced to a simple rebuttal to white colonial fantasy even if they target white spectatorship directly, as is true in this case.

Her nudity is not lamentable in *Grace in a Cage*, but instead, it engages in a critical practice of the body in a context of a culture that so comprehensively demeans black female embodiment. As Daphne Brooks describes, "Systematically overdetermined and mythically configured, the iconography of the black female body remains the ventral ur-text of alienation in transatlantic culture" (7). To propose that the body and the gaze are privileged sites of intervention is crucial precisely because it is sexualized and sexualized embodiment that sexism and anti-black racism privilege in their ideologies of domination. It has often been remarked that black women are only allowed to be a naked animal but cannot be elevated to the status of the nude in the history of Western art. Be that as it may, it is important to underscore that the very sexualization of blackness renders the black male and female body as naked whether clothed or not. The sexually exploitative gaze that attempts to locate blackness under the sign of the excessive and lewd itself situates the black body as a perpetual state of exposure. For Jones, to offer her body as counterpoint is a strategy that should not be rejected out of hand. In *Grace in a Cage*, Jones proposes her body as counter-critique by situating the body as an effect of practices, ideologies, and discourses, crucially questioning the origins of animalizing discourses leveled against black women and (wild) cats. Jones contests a culture that would reduce her body to "an object of spectatorial ravishment and domination" by instilling her nudity with an alternate textual meaning. Jones's "ferocious growl" is a protest to her imprisonment in representation (Brooks 137).

While it is problematic to reinforce racial stereotypes, it is also problematic to reinforce a triumphalist narrative of civilization, one where humans rightly tame and triumph over nature, in this case wildcats. Overcoming Jones, overcoming the tigress, would represent a triumph over nature, as subduing nature by subjecting it to an

objectifying spectatorship has been the benchmark for achieving humanity. Unfortunately, this has placed humans and animals, civilization and nature, in a war without end. The control of “nature” in the form of discipline and surveillance of women, people of color, and cats have been intersecting and mutually re-enforcing projects in modernity.

Colonialism’s exploitation of “nature” and enslavement of “natural” people for the stages of zoos and expositions were interdependent and mutually reinforcing; the enslavement and display of “natural people” on metropolitan stages and the trade in wild animals, skins, and goods employed the relationships and networks established by each other. This is well demonstrated if we examine the history of the modern zoo, where the trade in exotic animals followed along the same trade routes and worked with the same African middlemen in order to acquire and export Africans for display in European expositions and zoos.

In *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo*, Nigel Rothfels discusses the interrelation of zoos and exotic people shows in concrete terms by providing a history of the zoo itself and the zoo’s original architect, Germany’s Carl Hagenbeck. The trade in furs, such as the tiger and leopard furs donned by Jones, relied on a desire to consume both “wild animals” and “wild peoples.” The economic arrangements, transnational state trade relationships, and colonial administration policies made it possible for the fur trade and the trade in people to provide the labor for Hagenbeck’s shows. Not only did the trade in animals and the trade in people share a metaphoric even metonymic link in popular consumer capital culture, but they also shared a material relationship. Fifty years before World War I, the trade in animals had begun with almost complete dependence on both indigenous animal catchers and indigenous middlemen, with European traders purchasing only those animals that reached the coastal and later inland trading station. By the end of the nineteenth-century, Europeans had taken over the management of each link in the chain, including the catching itself. Thus, the animal-catching business was taken over by colonists and institutionalized in much the same way that other previous colonial industries had been (Rothfels 52-53).

The display of non-Western people in European cities goes back centuries, as the Moor and the American Indians were displayed and their physical characteristics and builds were openly analogized to animals in the royal courts of Europe (Rothfels 87). However, it was Carl Hagenbeck who innovated the practice by creating enclosures and installations of animals and people in the interests of realism. By doing so, he set himself apart from the rest, including sideshows. His efforts culminated in the display of humans and animals in the zoological gardens of Europe (Rothfels 88, 90). Hagenbeck migrated from the exotic display of animals to the exotic display of animals and people. However, the representational strategies that Hagenbeck developed for the purposes of exhibiting people would later be used to repackage his displays of animals, establishing realist representational norms that are present even today.

The contemporary zoological enclosure was initiated by *both* Hagenbeck’s animalization of natural people and the racialization of animals. Hagenbeck wondered, “where are you all, you Africans, Indians, you red sons of the wilderness, you Eskimos and Laplanders who trusted yourselves to my leadership in the land of those remarkable Whites, who gazed at you in crowds as if you were fabulous animals” (qtd. in Rothfels 141). Hagenbeck not only believed that “natural people” were like the presumably known

and stable referent of the nonhuman animal, he also took the enclosure and installation model and used it to revise how he displayed animals. As much as the people in the shows were exhibited as animals, he also learned how to produce a reality effect from the “natural people” shows and used that experience to effect the idea of nature up close, this time to animals (Rothfels 141).

His shows were taken up by scientific societies of the day and studied as authentic points of entry into the lives of natural peoples. For scientists of all kinds—not simply anthropologists and physicians but ethnologists, linguists, and musicologists—the shows provided an opportunity to study the “other” without the expense and danger of travel (Rothfels 93). Empirical methods of measurement and observations were facilitated by the shows. However, audiences had little patience for watching the enactment of rituals that they did not understand (Rothfels 128). Ever the showman, Hagenbeck’s shows produced the reality effect precisely because he understood and delivered a performance that met audience’s desire for legible primitivity. Photography supplanted the exotic people shows, because with photography one could study the other relentlessly without ever having to confront their gaze. Additionally, constructed scenes and villages in metropolitan centers competed with photography’s promise of *real* nature captured in geographically and supposedly temporally remote environs. Thus, photography and especially cinema would provide an ever more reassuring promise of authenticity because these technologies were thought to capture nature in its “true” environment (Rothfels 144). As *Grace in a Cage* is a photograph of a live performance, Jones’s gaze then questions the ontological asymmetries of both photography and the live performance stage.

Theorists such as Paul Gilroy, bell hooks, and Peggy Phelan have argued that live performance art as such resists commodification by avoiding mass reproduction: the non-reproducibility is thought to offer an intervention into the logics of capital. Phelan argues that performance cannot be saved, recorded, or documented without betraying “the promise of its own ontology;” its ephemeral nature certifies its resistance to the economies of reproduction (Phelan 146). Phelan states:

Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance’s being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance. (146)

In a similar vein, Paul Gilroy states:

Where the commitment to performance values, techniques and aesthetics are strongest, the assertion of real time resists the processes of reduction and commodification on which the globalised meta-market relies. Even when it shelters in the cobwebbed corners of the avant garde, performance culture struggles against the omnipotence of cultural industries. It asserts the inviolable integrity of face-to-face interaction and challenges the hyper-reality of pseudo-performance, which is the dominant genre through which seductive power of these valuable commodities unfolds. Immediacy

and proximity re-emerge as ethically charged features of social interaction.
(24)

The insistence on the inherent ethical superiority of performance art seems odd considering that the sideshow and the circus marketed themselves by suggesting that it was the “liveness” of the shows that authenticated what were indeed transnational capitalistic cultural fantasies of exotic, primitive, sub-Otherness. Liveness can then extend or authenticate what are mass-reproduced cultural fantasies. The sideshow stage does in fact live on after the barker has retired from show business and the show no longer tours. These images live on in the recess of our (trans)national unconscious, only to be reanimated and mediatized ritualistically by culture industries or quotidian discourse.

Furthermore, what if the body itself is the commodity that spectators pay to see and inspect, and what if an audience only exists for your art, in as much as you (re)produce your own ontological dislocation? Hovering somewhere between commodified object and resistant ob(sub)jecthood is arguably the most recited experience of “the Negro artist,” from Langston Hughes’s “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” to Kara Walker’s “My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love.” Reproducibility itself may not necessarily be a bad thing if the art is resistive and transformative, and by that I mean, if the dialectic of artistic process and spectatorship can forge some distance between blackness and inverted subjecthood. Performance art need not be defined in a puritanical manner and neither should reproducibility, despite the often-questionable opportunism and brazen commercialism rewarded by the anti-social tendencies of capitalist markets, which no doubt, Jones was complicit in.

SUBVERSIVE ACTS?: GENDER SUBVERSION AS RACIALIZATION, ANDROGYNY AS ANIMALITY

Jones’s androgyny is often stated as if axiomatic, but androgyny *itself* is important to interrogate for its race and species implications. In this section, I argue that the debate and stakes of Jones’s androgyny—much celebrated and defamed—is inextricable from an evolutionary and medical discourse that defines black women as modernity’s preeminent emblem of a crisis for categorization, as a problem for the delineation of what is proper to Man and what characteristics possess abject beasts. Gender has been privileged in this regard, as beasts may be either male or female but not masculine or feminine. Gender—masculine or else feminine—remains the unique possession of Man because it is an index of culture and civilization, and these attributes are thought to elevate Man above the exclusive dictates of animal embodiment.

In Miriam Kershaw’s essay “Postcolonialism and Androgyny: The Performance Art of Grace Jones,” Jones is interpreted as de-essentializing the black female subject because “her performances oscillated between exploiting the “feminine” myth of “primitive” sensuality and the “masculine” construction of threatening savagery” (21). For Kershaw, the instability of gender suggests ironic commentary on the iconography of power and subordination, which subtended colonization. But, the particular mythology surrounding black womanhood potentially disappears if we interpret Jones only in relationship to the “dark continent of (white) female sexuality” and the myth of black male “savagery” (Doane 244-248). The (de)essentializing power of Jones’s performance cannot be properly assessed if the historical particularities of the African female body are ignored. Subversion and gender instability have historically been represented as endemic

to the black female subject, as normative femininity is not something that black women are thought to embody or represent.⁷⁷ It is precisely the myth of the African female *as* gender and sexual subversion, which animalizes Jones and bodies like hers. It is the interstitiality that accompanies a woman thought to have a “masculine” drive and androgynous embodiment that makes this performance so fraught and potentially powerful. I argue that Jones’s body is rendered androgynous and thus pre-Oedipal in a state of nature rather than culture *prior to* her appropriation of androgyny and animality. It is the fact of her embodiment and its overdetermination in the history of representation that makes her appropriations so complex.

In Goude’s *Blue-Black in Black on Brown*, Jones wears her signature crew haircut and a square-shouldered Armani men’s suit jacket that approaches her waist at a dramatic point. The photograph is cropped right above her navel. We know it is menswear because of the buttonhole on the lapel and its width. She is shirtless. Her skin appears blue and luminescent, revealing the contours of Jones’s muscular body. Her breasts are hidden behind the lapels of her jacket, which frame her breasts in a manner that reminds us that a small-breasted female chest is not very dissimilar to a muscular male chest; detection of sexual difference might be only a lapel away, or conversely, easily masked by a lapel. The whites of her eyes are a shade darker than the cigarette hovering over her stark red mouth. The cigarette is vertically aligned with her body and unlit. Jones’s image is silhouetted against a muted brown ochre background, and behind her head and right shoulder is a nebulous darker mass that amounts to a shadow.

Blue-Black in Black on Brown is a highly stylized illusion. Goude cut up pictures of Jones’s limbs and re-arranged them in order to both elongate them and place them in impossible poses. In the hands of Goude, her body becomes an abstraction. Her image is flat and the edges sharp, similar to a cardboard cut-out. She is geometric, composed of all straight lines, and polished (Pacteau 6).

Much has been made of Jones’s “androgynous,” “masculine,” or “ambiguous” features; mostly, it has been suggested that her “angular” features lend themselves to cross-dressing, “transvestism,” or they are offered as evidence that she is “really” a man. Such associations obscure the racialization of femininity. When coupled with a dark complexion, “angular” features could be seen to obscure femininity and the female sex all together. According to Goude, “Let’s face it, looking at her, I could see how the average guy who was used to traditionally pretty girls could get a little scared by her physical appearance. It was so powerful. I thought she was great looking, but then, as you know, I’m a special kind of person—a heterosexual sissy” (102).

In Siobhan Somerville’s “Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Homosexual Body,” Somerville queries, “Is it merely a historical coincidence that the classification of bodies as either ‘homosexual’ or ‘heterosexual’ emerged at the same time that the United States was aggressively policing the imaginary boundary between “black” and “white” bodies?” (245).⁷⁸ Somerville goes on to suggest that the bifurcated categories of race and sexuality are structurally interdependent and perhaps mutually productive (246). Methodologies and iconography that drove dominant scientific ideologies of race were subsequently taken up in the scientific pursuit of an emerging discourse of sexuality (Somerville 247). Difference was thought to be a visualizable fact inscribed on the body; according to this logic, interiority could be read on the body’s anatomical markers. Racial difference seemed to hinge on and be most represented by the supposed differences of

sexual appetites and anatomies, particularly that of the African female. It is the black female who has been most consistently accused of being the root of “black sexual pathology,” a pathology that was extended to the men of her race (Gilman 88-91, 112).

Scientists drew upon fantasies of black female embodiment as their model of sexual deviancy and gender non-conformity (Gilman 89). Racial comparative anatomy methods were used to determine sexual definition, with a presumed similitude between “deviant” white bodies and black bodies. Black ones (especially females) were deemed by definition the template of pathology (Gilman 79-83, 89, 91). The word homosexual itself seemed to conjure for some anxieties about miscegenation, as the “barbarously hybrid word” was a mix of Latin and Greek, even referring to “shades of gender” and “sexual half-breeds” (Somerville 258-259).

For a twenty-first-century example of how this history lives on, we need not look any further than Jones’s performance as the intersex circus performer Christophe/Christine in Thom Fitzgerald’s *Blood Moon (Wolf Girl)*. Christophe/Christine appears to be the typical sideshow construction, wearing an outfit that captures the purported extremes of masculinity and femininity. Her male masculine persona is in a tuxedo. He has a mustache, side burns, goatee, and a short, square, naturally tightly-curved haircut. A devil’s horn is placed on his forehead. He cracks a whip. The Christophe/Christine female figure has long, wavy hair embellished by what appears to be a diamond necklace re-imagined as a hair accessory. Her 1940s “femme fatale” styled eyebrows mark femininity: thin and long. The feminine female persona, Christine, is several shades lighter in complexion than the masculine male, Christophe, with red uniting them. Christophe has red on his eyelids in a style similar to eye shadow, red stitching along his lapels, and a red bowtie. Christine wears a long-red and gold dress, red lace gloves. The red implies both exoticism and sensuality. While the color red seems to unite the two personas, their divergent skin color and hair texture suggest that they could even be members of two different races. Christine’s cigarette and Christophe’s whip connote deviant sexuality and phallic femininity. The dual and opposing nature of binary gender is contrasted sharply by Jones’s performance, offering us only side-glances of Christophe/Christine while singing “Believe your eyes.”

While the film is generally sympathetic to those deemed as “freaks,” it still reinforces stereotypes about the deviant sexuality of intersex and black people through the character of Christophe/Christine. Intersex people’s “genital variability”⁷⁹ and non-conforming bodies have often been interpreted as deviant, evil, and excessive. That the masculine persona more closely approximates Jones’s actual complexion, hair texture, and hairstyle seems to suggest that feminine embodiment is estranged from Jones’s body prior to its resignification. Her arm residing on the feminine side of her torso did not receive the same heavy make-up treatment as the femininized side of her face, and it reveals Jones’s actual complexion under the mask. In other words, what this performance uncovers is that Jones’s actual body has been signified as masculine rather than feminine; it implies that for women who are dark, femininity requires a racial transformation. Feminists have argued that what is at stake in the difference between the androgyne and the intersexed is “the visibility, the material fact of the body.” “What sets the androgyne apart,” says Francette Pacteau, “dwells in one gesture: the uncovering of the body” (qtd. in Hargreaves 6, 20). From this perspective, the intersex person is revealed by the disrobing of the body; androgyny disrobed is revealed as a phantasm, an impossible

referent. But what makes this formulation so problematic is that intersexuality is not always written on the body; it is not always legible to the eye. Furthermore, gender is not synonymous with the contours of the body, so the body itself cannot have the final word on the meaning of one's gender. Furthermore, black women have been cast as androgynous while simultaneously being pathologized for supposed "nakedness." Thus this disrobed black female body does not settle the question of gender but compounds it.

Jones asserts that she is of Ibo descent. It is not hard to imagine that the Ibo, without the imposition of colonizing aesthetics, would not construct an image of female beauty that would be antithetical to the normative features of Ibo female embodiment. It is imaginable that in the context of relative aesthetic autonomy, Jones's femaleness would be in plain view, even if defined differently. Thus, androgyny is racialized and involves such "secondary characteristics" as skin color, hair texture, muscular build, and facial features. It is not that androgyny is how her body offers itself to be seen, but rather, our situated presumptions about femininity stand in between our vision and Jones's body.

In *Bodies in Doubt*, Elizabeth Reis argues that the double-sexed figure has been seen as emblematic of an atavistic and primitive civilization. The fantasy of "monstrous" hybridity was tied to the regulation of white women's sexuality as human-animal sex, interracial sex, and intersexuality were tethered together in the construction of hybrid "monstrous births" in the sixteenth-century (Reis 7). "Monstrous births" were thought to result from an offending woman's fantasy life (Reis 7). In the colonial period, intersex births signaled divine punishment for a parent's depravity, Satan's intrusion, or unruly maternal imagination. Once the religious explanations began to wane in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the symbolic status of intersexuality shifted. The specter of racial instability and white women's changing status became major preoccupations that informed anxiety about intersexuality in this period. There was a fear that categories of gender and sex were becoming destabilized and that society was heading in a direction where some might be able to change their sex or change their race socially and biologically. It was even suspected that African Americans were disproportionately affected by "genital anomalies," especially elongated penises and enlarged clitorises and labia (Reis 139). It is this historical context that must be considered when in celebration or critique we position Jones as an animate gender border or hybrid, as such claims confuse racialized evolutionary precepts with Jones's material body. As we shall see, this epistemic slippage even colors Jones's reception in the black press.

CONCLUSION: A TRICKSTER'S GRAMMAR

In a July 1979 *Ebony* article on Jones, interviewer Lynn Norment asks a rhetorical question:

Just who is this Grace Jones—this "disco goddess" as she is often billed; this "sex freak" who bares her breasts and most other parts of her body to screaming crowds, that sculptured Black face and skinny legs who wears strikingly beautiful clothes; that bald head with an off-center part painted gold? She speaks with an accent, so is she European? African? South American? Isn't she really a man? Did she have a sex change? Grace Jones is a question mark followed by an exclamation point. She is in more than a few ways a woman of mystery. (90)

It is particularly striking that Jones would be described as a question mark followed by an exclamation point. If we emphasize the artistic or expressive use of punctuation, then we

are able to read these remarks as a statement about the performative aspects of Jones's persona. As Jennifer DeVere Brody explains in *Punctuation: Art, Politics, and Play*, the exclamation point, known in British English as a "screamer," would seem to be a performative act with illocutionary force (150). When encountered, audiences almost invariably react—widening their eyes, raising an eyebrow, skipping a heartbeat. It can be an element of surprise, pain, fear, or anger. It is, however, resolutely emotional (Brody 150). Like the exclamation point, Jones is showy; some would say "too showy." In either case, this description seems to capture the ambivalence black people have sometimes felt when it comes to her (in)famous persona. For many, her performance seems to cut too close to stereotype, reinforcing rather than questioning blackness's indefinite and paradoxical relation to the normative category of personhood.⁸⁰

Jones is trying to do perhaps the (im)possible: she is trying to take control of and direct her image and desirability from within a "self-alienating economy of pleasure" (Rogin 44). Unfortunately, her desirability is tethered to her abjection, fetishization, and objectification in consumer culture. It is a tightrope walk, where her embodiment could easily be(come) unassimilable, phobic, and objectified. Jones appropriates the image of a feline double not as the devious, nefarious, black cat, but as the trickster of Caribbean folklore. She appropriated her image and tried to gain power from it by inhabiting and then subverting the phantasy of others. She adopted race as masquerade, as a tropological performance. Importantly, she did so in music videos, commercials, "high" art circles, and movies as, historically, artistic sites are where the black body is figured as an index for absolute otherness while excluding black artists from their ranks. And, in the case of music videos, she was one of the first to integrate what is now a very influential site of image production.

Jones's innovative manipulation of technology complicated and deterred primitivist fantasy. World exhibitionisms and sideshows borrowed from each others' staging of primitivism: "natural" set-designs for "natural" peoples. However, exhibitions were also spectacles designed to exhibit technological achievement in an international competition for advancement. One's social position in Western modernity was suggested by whether one's body or one's technologies were exhibited. In this context, Jones's command of technology suggested her fitness for modernity. Her mechanical performances of embodiment resisted the logic of the primitivist exhibition stage. Jones broke new ground for black recording artists by resisting rhythmic animation—she poses rather than dances. She avoids all gestural vocabularies associated with black musical performance. This seems especially true of her collaborations with Goude. Her robotic or calculated futurist bodily movements, space-age set designs, and foregrounding of technological advancement thwart attempts to designate her performance as the "risqué natural" propensity for physical ability, expressivity, or bodily excess.⁸¹ Rather than make a space for herself as an artist or as a subject by opposing "nature," Jones problematizes modernists' competition with nature, which they frequently symbolize as a war between technology and nature.

For those who have been racialized, disparaged, queered, and made invisible, the circulation of Jones's iconic image holds out the promise of recognition and historical progress. For some, the mass reproduction of Jones's persona in commercial advertising reinforced or affirmed their sense of their own beauty. The popular embrace of Jones's image as commodity inspired them to break from normative expressions of black

femininity. Her commodified image excited the imagination; a certain strata of women could see themselves (at least partially) reflected in her image. This may have felt like the end of invisibility. Some experienced the arrival of Jones as a subversion of both dominant and popular black notions of beauty (found in *Ebony* Magazine, for instance), where difference is only conceivable as similarity to a white ideal. Women of all colors began to don more “androgynous” styles, and black women in particular began to wear their hair “natural” in short styles. Jones’s haircut caused a national style craze among black women. Many found in her image a brazen femininity that embraced queerness and masculinity. She was a compliment to eighties’ feminist sensibilities, which saw women defiantly trespassing into masculine territory in unprecedented ways. Yet, the resistant commodity of corporate self-reflexivity is unreliable, as what looks like subversion and self-reflection is often a strategy for greater market shares. As Jones puts it in her 2008 single, “Corporate Cannibal,” “I deal in the market, every man, woman and child is a target...a closet full of faceless nameless pay more for less emptiness... my rules, you fools... I’ll consume my consumers, with no sense of humour.”

Corporations are not unaware that multi-cultural marketing expands their revenues. Profit is the primary motive behind merchandising difference, but they are able to mask this by pronouncements of their promotion of multicultural inclusion in society through access to goods. These multicultural wares contribute commodity culture rather than redistribute value and wealth in society, and they do not challenge the fundamental precepts and paradigms of Western culture. As Ann DuCille notes in the production of “ethnic” Barbie dolls, Mattel Corporation did not change the mold (270). Black Barbie was marketed as “difference incarnate,” a novelty. A new enterprise or, perhaps as the black female Other so often is, an “exotic” (DuCille 271). “Black is beautiful” became ironized in the marketplace of difference. As hooks states in “Eating the Other,” “difference is thus used productively; indeed, in a social order which seems to know no outside (and which must contrive its own transgressions to define its limits), difference is often fabricated in the interests of social control as well as commodity innovation” (25). Jones’s image could both be a sign of impending progress and the staleness of modernists’ turbulent romance with their own projection of nature because her image is structured by, and to some extent beholden to, the limited roles allotted to black women. Jones’s image became a household commodity, in a marketplace that thrives on the reproduction of difference in order to drive the desire for consumption.

Indeed, as Louis Chude-Sokei notes in the *Last Darcy: Bert Williams, Black-on-Black Minstrelsy, and the African Diaspora*, whether Bre’r Rabbit, Anansi the Spider, or the Signifying Monkey, the trickster is not always on “our” side, and she is often figured as menace or fragmentation as well as a figure of subversion and resistance (95). During a historical moment defined by “positive,” “affirming,” and tightly self-controlled images and expectations of blacks, one can imagine the threatening and liberating appeal of an eccentric black femininity to a black audience, who themselves feel rejected, queered even, by intra-black notions of normativity (Chude-Sokei 99).

Because our cultural industries have been built on a legacy that bestializes and (dis)figures black womanhood as animal, it may be difficult to notice when such themes are being taken up for contrary purposes. Even feminist theorists could discredit Jones’s authorship even when critically interrogating the “gaze” of the white male photographer. This can be seen in the case of Francette Pacteau, who suspects a certain “ambivalence”

in Jones's performance of sadomasochism in a photo for Helmut Newton: "Her look toward the camera is irresolvably ambivalent; it leaves me with the impression of a performer who has not yet quite entered her role, who is perhaps unconvinced by the act she is required to play out for the camera: 'You mean like this...?'" (140). But Jones had been playing with bondage, domination, and sadomasochistic imagery at least since her days on *Stryx*. On the show, she performs "Am I Ever Going to Find Love in New York City?" and whips bound men and women while dressed in a skintight, leopard bodysuit. Part of what makes images of Jones so unsettling is because when spectators read them and see racial sexual stereotypes screaming back at them, they often do not know how to interpret Jones's participation in these images. Furthermore, spectators may even have anxiety about the fact that some of the images they believe are denigrating black female sexuality are (co)authored by Jones or her white romantic partners. It brings into crisis our binaristic interpretative frameworks for questions of gender, race, and sexuality as they are articulated through representation's unequal symbolic and material relations of power. It is our binaristic frameworks of the "male" versus "oppositional" gaze, active versus passive, which I theorize differently by identifying the contradictory nature of her performances, their limitations, and aporias; there are some things we cannot know. Pacteau's interpretation also risks reinforcing the Kantian binary between art object and artist, which relied upon a conflation of women and people of color with nature and made the creative agency the exclusive property of white male masculinity. Too often, Jones has been positioned as a passive piece of art. Frequently, she is referred to as Goude's construction, or Sly and Robbie's, or Trevor Horn's. I think we need to complicate this colonizing and sexist construction of her as merely an art object and not an active agent in the production of her image. And Jones agrees:

My career was designed way before I met Jean-Paul. When I met him I'd already made three records and the direction was already set. The androgynous look was already established. He was inspired by me and used me as a vehicle to make his career grow. No one has ever told me, wear this, do that, and I've always maintained complete control of my career. I'm not saying I've done it all myself, because I've always collaborated with other artists.... (qtd. in McKenna 28-29, 38)

She represents the fractures and contradictions of modern Black identificatory practices, precisely because her artistic efforts were "multi-signifying practices" (J. Brown, 6). There is never a clear-cut teleological relationship between the composition of an audience and the meaning of a particular performance, because the same performance can be read differently depending on the time and place (J. Brown 15). The set of expectations, desires, and interpretative frameworks of audience members also guarantee that any performance's significance will be multivalent. Her artistic practice exploited dominant discourses about black female sexuality and enabled a space for satirical comment on the cultural fantasies undergirding such depictions. It would be too simple to reduce the complexity of her masquerade to a mere performance of self-hate or the internalization of stereotypes. It would also be patronizing to dismiss her as desperate or self-denigrating. Rejecting or dismissing her performance could easily serve to police the boundaries of communal membership, particularly along the lines of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. It could be a way to promote conformity and undermine dissent by policing it within its ranks: dissent over appropriate modes of representation, appropriate forms of

sexuality, and appropriate manifestations of pleasure and politics of expressive play (Chude-Sokei 99). So, it is not only that Jones is appropriating stereotypes; she is also critiquing bourgeois assimilation, morality, and “respectable representation” generated by black elites, particularly Caribbean ones. She is rejecting the assimilationist expectations placed on a middle-class, Caribbean, immigrant girl.

However, Jones’s story is not a triumphalist one. The affects of her masquerade are complicated and conflicting, partially because power maintains itself through subversion and through the confusion of its own codes. Michael Rogin argues that this may be the great contribution made by American hegemony, the ability to maintain power through the championing and commodification of potentially subversive doctrines such as “freedom,” “democracy,” “independence,” “multiculturalism,” and even “identity” and “resistance” (qtd. in Chude-Sokei 102). Masquerading occupies a critical place in maintaining power and ensuring consent. Resistance is most often coupled with the less glamorous but historically more common twin of accommodation, which is as Louis Chude-Sokei notes, “often is only accepted under the guise of ironic subversion, just as acquiescence is possibly a mask for a ruthless destabilizing of the status quo” (111). Jones’s persona is a heteroglossia that risks being appropriated again and again by racist and assimilationist discourses. Because the trickster is a liminal figure, the trickster is also easily an accommodationist figure, or even counterrevolutionary. Chude-Sokei states that if accommodation can be a mask for resistance, resistance can also be a mask for accommodation or even self-destruction (113). In *The Narrative of Liberation*, Patrick Taylor writes:

It is this very ambiguity, at once destructive and creative, that is both the power of the trickster tale and its ultimate, tragic limit. The tales articulate a mythical conception of the world as a place of endless and ongoing struggle, of progress and regress, friendship and enmity. This mythical conception has implications for the meaning of the tales in relation to the colonial social and political totality. If there is nothing permanent about the position of the master, there is also no necessary permanence in the community. One perverse implication (from the point of the community) is that the trickster-slave may indeed turn his skills against his own people in order to benefit himself and become like the master. (qtd. in Chude-Sokei 113)

In short, subversive masking can be a double-edged sword because it creates a world where potentially all categories are in crisis, including subversion itself. Thus, there is a limit to subversive performativity. Jones’s staged imitation of stereotype is unsettling because it reveals the potential for black people to imitate stereotype in life. The ubiquity and persistence of mass culture makes the circulation of Jones’s image dangerous because of the very threat that black people could identify with bestial blackness, however partially or contradictorily, in a matter that would be antithetical to black subjecthood. After all, camp and parody presume their audience will be able to maintain distance from the stereotype as presumably the performer does. If either side does not maintain this distance, then the performance fails as parody and becomes reinscription of difference. While *Grace in a Cage* may evoke and critique simultaneously, in our phenomenological experience the critique is recognizable only once we have recognized the evocation of stereotype. Unconsciously, we may hold on to

the stereotype. The ontologizing effects of performativity are thought to result from the accumulation of iterations. However, racial ontology can silence iterations that undermine the logic of race, while also amplifying those that can be appropriated as a legitimization of dominant forms of racialization. This process itself may involve the temporary subversion of the racially exclusive politics of authority and voice in order to re-establish the purported truth of race.

Furthermore, pointing to the performativity and contingency of difference is not the same as undoing difference. Parody potentially reveals the performative status of difference, but it does not dismantle difference. Jones's performance may destabilize gender while potentially reinforcing racialized abjection: black women *as* the destabilization of gender and "the human" more generally. Her androgyny may be the "third sex" that destabilizes the other two gendered categories or even category itself, as Marjorie Garber would have it (16). However, it is just as likely, or more likely, that she will be seen as the exception upon which the rule was established. Jones's performance of her stereotypical twin loses its potential for subversion if it is not read as a parody, if it is simply read as Grace being Grace. Potentially subversive performances, which arguably unmask stereotype as fantasy and projection, could be read as evidence of her true animality or as a synecdoche for black women, especially those similarly embodied. This is the danger of refashioning the self from the remains of one's ghostly life in public culture. The audience has to take a leap of faith and believe that the black body could be something other than a base stereotype. Indeed, the assumption of racial modernity has been that blacks are simple, unitary, and transparent by nature, lacking of the interiority that would support complex self-reflexive performance. That Jones's character courts stereotype makes this leap of faith even more difficult. Thus, her masquerade even risks erasing herself as subject since the black body itself is thought to testify for the authenticity of her performance, especially when its artifice is disavowed. Jones could play with categories, but the phantasy of her embodiment would not let her shed them, which marks the tragic limit of *purrformance*. In "Performance Practice as a Site of Opposition," bell hooks states:

Thinking about the history of African-American engagement with performance-as-art, it is useful to distinguish between performance that is used to manipulate in the interests of survival (the notion of wearing a mask), and performance as ritual play (as art). Collapsing the two categories tends to imply that the performative arts in black expressive culture emerge as a response to circumstances of oppression and exploitation. It is useful to consider these two modes of performance as both similar and different. One may engage in strategic performances in the interests of survival employing the same skills one uses to perform in the interests of ritual play, yet the performative standpoint alters both the nature and impact of performance. In one context performance can easily become an act of complicity, in the other, it can serve as critical intervention, as a rite of intervention, as a rite of resistance. (220)

Unfortunately, in the art of someone like Jones, it is nearly impossible to separate mask-wearing in the interest of survival from performance as ritual art. Jones's intervention is seamlessly entangled with the danger, lure, and contradiction of masquerade. The production and reception of Grace Jones's art is both symptomatic and constitutive of

social relations. If “body art,” to use Amelia Jones’s term, involves to some extent offering oneself as a vehicle for projection and desire, it seems that this puts Jones at risk to the demands of the spectator’s gaze and the Eurocentric and racially commodifying art establishment that commonly casts black women artists in the role of “exotic” object of desire or native informant.

For Amelia Jones, body art has the *potential* to enact modes of intersubjectivity that renegotiate subject/object relations whereby spectators and performers dialectically articulate the significance of a work of art, continually negotiating an exchange of desires and identifications. In short, “[b]ody art proposes the art ‘object’ as a site where reception and production come together: a site of intersubjectivity” (A. Jones 14). Amelia Jones’s theory of body art reminds us that social relations are both enacted and produced through the intersubjective body and not merely pre-written by the body. But, what if animalization and/or racial difference does not facilitate intersubjectivity but forecloses it as a result of a historical process that produces blackness not as Other but as other, beyond the horizon of recognition, dispossessed of the “I” in the “I/you” exchange that defines intersubjectivity? Amelia Jones moves rather quickly from gender to religio-ethnic to racial difference without articulating their differences and mutual implications for the (im)possibility of intersubjectivity, politics, and ethics. In short, she presumes a basic subjecthood that cuts across all forms of othering in order to articulate a theory of body art. It is true that black subjecthood has not been historically guaranteed and has too often been vulnerable to racialized erasure, and this is certainly not due to a lack of protest on the part of black artists.

Cultural performance and spectatorial identification and interpretive frameworks are more often than not complicated and contradictory, which would not have either texts or spectators fitting neatly into dominant or resistive categories. It is the very nature of hegemony, particularly its embrace of subversion that marks the limit of dominant versus resistant identities for performance. When Jones’s forms travel to another community/social context a change occurs in its signification. It is in this context that we can come to understand why Jones could represent agency, resistance, and capitulation simultaneously. Jones’s artwork presses upon both the spectator and theorist to be more attentive to the contradictory material and semiotic labor of black female performance.

Chapter Four
Sacrificing Sacrifice: Racial Patriarchy and Animal Slaughter in Charles Burnett's
The Horse and Killer of Sheep

...killing a native belongs to the same register as killing an animal or expunging something no longer of any use. But why, how, and in what circumstances does one kill an animal? (Mbembe 193)

The moral question is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the nonliving, man or animal, but since *one must* eat in any case and since it is and tastes good to eat, and since there's no other definition of the good (*du bien*), *how* for goodness sake should one *eat well* (*bien manger*)? And what does this imply? What is eating? How is this metonymy of introjection to be regulated? And in what respect does the formulation of these questions in language give us more food for thought? In what respect is the question, if you will, carnivorous. (Derrida, "Eating Well" 115)

The *New York Times* herald Charles Burnett as the nation's least known great filmmaker and most gifted black director (Weinraub C13).⁸² Charles Burnett is a MacArthur "genius" award-winning American filmmaker. He has also been awarded an Independent Spirit Award and a Guggenheim Award. He is widely known for his highly acclaimed 1977 film *Killer of Sheep*, which he made for his Master's thesis at the University of California, Los Angeles. The Library of Congress, who declared *Killer of Sheep* a national treasure, has selected it for preservation in the National Film Registry.

Charles Burnett was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi in 1944. Like many southern black Americans, his parents decided to leave Mississippi for California during the Great Migration, motivated by the prospect of gainful employment in urban industry and an escape from the harsh realities of Southern racism. The Burnett family ended up in the Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles. These locations would inspire his works; the films in this chapter retrace this migration, as *The Horse* takes place in the rural South, and *Killer of Sheep* in Watts, California in the years following the 1965 Watts Riots. Burnett, a child of the Civil Rights Movement and a student of Third Cinema, Italian Neo-Realism, and Cinema Verite, uses his films to address African diasporic existential dilemmas in the context of everyday life. In this chapter, I argue that Burnett's meditative filmmaking, resisting the lure of didacticism, critically reflects on what Derrida refers to as modernity's sacrificial logic ("Eating Well" 115).

In "Eating Well," Jacques Derrida suggests that hetero-patriarchal humanism is predicated on the sacrifice of animals and women. According to Derrida, the full transcendence of Man relies on the sacrifice of "the animal" and the "animalistic" within humanity, paradigmatically represented by "woman," which in turn makes possible a symbolic economy in which we can engage in what Derrida calls a "noncriminal putting to death" of those who have been animalized, human and non-human alike (*Points* 278). He views "sacrifice as fundamental" and within a human space "foundational" to the exercise of power, whereby "the human" exercises power over "the animal" to the point that putting animals to death is not forbidden ("The Animal" 91). In short, sacrifice "structures intersubjectivity," in as much as Sacrifice is foundational for social and cultural self-definition (Wolfe, *Animal* 100).

While I welcome Derrida's intervention, a remainder haunts his analysis of Oedipal violence: the ontological uncertainty of black women, men, and children. He contends:

Authority and autonomy (for even if autonomy is subject to the law, this subjugation is freedom) are, through this schema, attributed to the man (*homo* and *vir*) rather than to the woman, and to the woman rather than to the animal. And, the father, husband, or brother (the canon of friendship, I will show elsewhere, privileges the fraternal schema) belongs to the schema that dominates the concept of subject. ("Eating Well" 114)

As I will establish in this chapter, the controversy that attends black claims to humanity substantially complicates the Oedipal presumptions underlying Derrida's theory of Sacrifice. Black people's indefinite ontological status and the gendered nature of this dislocation, unsettles the symbolic relationship between the terms father and son, man and woman, human and animal that are presumed in Derrida's analysis of Oedipal violence. I demonstrate that *humanization* and *animalization* are mutually constitutive projects of antiblack violence, working in conjunction rather than in opposition, as is often presumed. (Neo)liberal humanism attempts to *humanize* black people by turning "the slave" into the proletariat, but the gendered forms of labor made available to the former slave are deemed "animal." To further the aim of demonstrating the Janus-faced nature of (neo)liberal humanism—humanization coupled with animalization—I investigate the existential conditions of black gender under the conditions of capitalism, rather than presume that black gender relations are predicated on the Oedipal model described by Derrida.

This chapter focuses on two films by Burnett that articulate the entanglement of human and animal sacrifice in modernity: 1973's *The Horse* and 1977's *Killer of Sheep*. In this chapter, I demonstrate that Burnett's editorial strategy, shot compositions, and ironic use of music in these two films bring attention to the manner with which the operative vocabulary of the oedipal relation—girl, boy, father, son, wife, daughter, brother, sister, woman, man—is inextricable from the racial stratification of gender and sexuality. This chapter builds on Derrida's critique of heteropatriarchal violence by investigating how the American racial scene complicates his guiding assumptions and operative terms. The heteropatriarchal manhood that Derrida questions *arises out of and is consolidated under the conditions of antiblack slavery* and its afterlife, such that blackness itself qualifies one for Sacrifice. Thus, the black men in Burnett's films find themselves in the position reserved for "woman" in Derrida's analysis, as they are locked out of masculine "authority" and "autonomy" in the Symbolic. In particular, I argue that Burnett's use of "the cut" and sound function as a critique of heteropatriarchal modernity's sacrificial logic and culture.

However, Sacrifice for Derrida and this chapter is not limited to the ritual sacrifice of the animal, which does not take place in either film, at least not to the extent of featuring scenes of religious ceremonial sacrifice. Nevertheless, said practices haunt the films' expressions of sacrifice. For Derrida, the "I" of "the human" marks his authority over living creatures, which can only be effected through the infinitely elevated power of presenting himself as an "I" based on the biblical injunction from Genesis on. But as Derrida argues across his oeuvre, "We know less than ever where to cut.... And this also means that we never know, and never have known, how to *cut up* a subject" ("

The Animal” 117). According to Derrida, we have never known once and for all where to cut the border dividing the human and the Other, but our attempts to do so have been governed by a sacrificial logic. A logic that I have been arguing throughout this dissertation would call into question what we mean by “animals,” precisely because *antiblackness has sought to produce the category “animal” not in opposition to blackness but through blackness*. So we must ask: how have black people been sacrificed according to the sacrificial logic described by Derrida? We should not assume too readily that we know the subject of which we speak, or else we risk closing down entry points to the ethical reflexivity that Derrida calls for, a call that presses urgently on our sense of responsibility to the Other.

Derrida has attempted to distinguish his critique of Sacrifice from a set of ahistorical or non-contextually specific rules, which he argues, would only instantiate the culture of Sacrifice: “I am not recalling this in order to start a support group of vegetarianism, ecologism, or for the societies for the protection of animals,” operations that he believes would, however ironically, be marked by a return to humanism’s sacrificial economy for two reasons: First, they, too, participate in the fundamental introjection of the Other in order to define the self; Second, to the extent that they rely on symbolic or juridical law, “thou shall not,” so to speak, they commit the humanist fallacy of equating law with justice (Derrida, *Points* 278). Thus, according to Derrida, they avoid the moment of decision, which is what makes justice possible. Derrida’s aim is disruption accomplished through the deconstruction of the sacrificial structure at the heart of the European continental tradition and, in particular, its “cultures,” as he puts it.

While Derrida and Burnett’s articulations of the logic and culture of Sacrifice have contrasting guiding terms and operative assumptions, together, their contributions point to the need to question ceaselessly one’s relation to the Other without relying on the didacticism of juridical authority or a set of universal principles—given that Sacrifice is foundational to these modes of authority. The critical juxtaposition of human and animal suffering in Burnett’s films uncovers the sacrificial logic of modernity and underscores the mutual production of animal slaughter and racial oppression. But more than that, Burnett’s films engage in the kind of self-reflexivity that resists the “thou shall not” and the erection of didactic edicts that so often lead to more killing in the name of killing, killing. Burnett’s films do so by replacing these forms of authority and commandment with a thorough-going interrogation of relations of killing and an articulation of a *desire* for modes of relationality that in Derrida’s words, “sacrifice sacrifice” (*Points* 279).

THE HORSE

In film historiography, the figure of the horse is draped in scholarly lore as the horse is the star of what is arguably the first moving pictures. Eadweard J. Muybridge was an English photographer known for his pioneering work on animal locomotion, in which he used multiple cameras to capture the nuances of animal motion (Solnit 175; Clegg 53).⁸³ In 1872, former Governor of California, railroad magnate, and racehorse owner Leland Stanford commissioned Muybridge to settle a popularly debated question, one in which he had commercial investment: do all four of a trotting or galloping horse’s hooves ever leave the ground simultaneously? Equine locomotion was a popular question of the day amongst scientists, artists, and “turfmen,” sparking both convivial and heated debate. Stanford sought out Muybridge to settle the question scientifically, as photography had become a vehicle of scientific proof (Solnit 3, 78; Clegg 50-56).

In 1877, Muybridge presented Stanford with a single photographic negative showing Stanford's racehorse Occident completely aloft in the midst of a gallop (Solnit 83; Clegg 55). By 1878, encouraged by Stanford to expand the experiment, Muybridge had successfully photographed a horse in fast motion. Muybridge's work culminated in a series of photos taken in Palo Alto, California called *Sallie Gardner at a Gallop* or *The Horse in Motion* (Clegg 132; Solnit 192). It shows that all four hooves do in fact leave the ground. However, this occurs not when the legs are fully extended forward and back as commonly believed, but rather at the moment when all the hooves are tucked under the horse as it switches from "pulling" with the front legs to "pushing" with the back legs (Mitchell). The racehorse experiment also hastened the adoption of photos as a form of scientific evidence, and launched the study of animal locomotion. The images shook the art world by exposing postural errors in classic equine sculptures and paintings (Fairly 60). Unbeknownst to Muybridge, he had unwittingly set the stage for a spectacular invention a decade later—the motion picture.

Within a year of the racetrack experiments, Muybridge had produced not only the first sequential photos of rapid motion but also the prototype for the motion picture projector (Clegg 142-152). Muybridge coined his invention the "zoopraxiscope" based on a popular children's toy called the zoetrope. Projected images from disks moving in rapid succession gave the impression of motion (Mitchell). Initially, the stop motion images were painted on glass, while the later version used photographic prints, which outlined drawings on glass discs that were subsequently painted by hand. Although Muybridge's photos were not technically projected onto the screen, film historians consider the zoopraxiscope a forerunner to the movie projector because it showed the first images based on live-action photos and, unlike the zoetrope, projected those images for an audience and not just a single viewer (Mitchell; Clegg 215, 150, 246).

Legend has it that Stanford had a \$25,000 wager riding on the outcome of the bet concerning equine locomotion (Solnit 78). The horse that is a pawn in a bet is one of film history's most cited anecdotes. This legendary bet has mostly been discounted, but it prefigures a film industry that will rely on the labor of animals for profit in a capitalist age (Clegg 52, 119). That the horse would be at the center of the origins of cinema—the meeting point of capital, technological innovation, and male ego—is fitting given the predicament of the mare in Burnett's film.

Charles Burnett's *The Horse* begins with an excerpt from Samuel Osborne Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* as interpreted by trailblazing, African American, operatic soprano Leontyne Price; yet, we never hear her voice, only the music, which is layered and emotive. Barber was an American composer of orchestral, opera, and choral music.⁸⁴ His acclaimed *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, a work for soprano and orchestra, was set to the prose of James Rufus Agee (Heyman 4).

James Rufus Agee was an American novelist, journalist, poet, screenwriter, and film critic.⁸⁵ His autobiographical novel, *A Death in the Family* (1957), won Agee a posthumous Pulitzer Prize. The novel recalls the author's relationship with his father and melancholically laments the latter's passing (H. Davis 236). Part of this novel is set to Barber's composition *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*. James Agee's words accompany Barber's music, creating a romantic and nostalgic Tennessee of Agee's youth. The short prose piece is a quaint, ethereal depiction of an evening in the American South, narrated by a child. Barber's *Knoxville*, in many ways, parallels Agee's text. While Agee was

touched by the death of his father in his childhood, Barber was, during the time of composition, enduring his father's deteriorating health (Heyman 278 -279). The effect of his father's illness and death on the composition can be seen through the dedication: "In memory of my Father."

In Burnett's film, Barber's song covers the *mis-en-scene* in a fashion similar to a grand, historical romance, recalling a pastoral scene; however, the film gradually builds a critique of features of American pastoralism, in particular, innocence, nostalgia, and tranquility. These features are thought to characterize American rural settings, where it is presumed a harmonious balance of power occurs. Although Barber's music evokes the pleasure of the pastoral romance, Burnett's directorial/editorial decisions simultaneously disrupt generic depictions of the pastoral by visually and sonically signaling that the film critically interrogates the idealization of American pastoralism.

The soaring sound of *Knoxville* contrasts with the film's non-conventional shot structure and editing. Narrative film customarily, but not exclusively, begins with either a wide shot of a landscape/cityscape or an establishing shot, often a two-shot, which then quickly conforms to the "shot reverse shot"⁸⁶ structure. Typically in the establishing shot, the characters are revealed in medium shots and their voices are synched with their image; there is usually no delay between the character's voice and their image. Thus, in these early shots we are typically alerted to the film's hierarchy of characters, whereby our central characters and their motivations are hinted at in the first scenes based on established filmic codes. In contrast, the beginning shots of the *The Horse* break with these conventions in three important ways: The shot structure visually decenters human characters: animals and environment are central to the action rather than function as passive components of *mis-en-scene*, and the suturing of face and voice is deferred. Taking in the breadth of the landscape, the camera gives focuses equally on human and non-human, animate and inanimate, even *after* the dialogue begins. Burnett's film opens with a hand-held camera shot that lingers on the expanse of the Southern landscape. A car tracing the horizon slowly approaches; before it arrives, viewers are offered a high angle shot of the setting from a nearby mountain. In Burnett's long take, humans, landscape, architecture, and a solitary horse share equal status in the film's establishing shot as the car makes its way to the rural home; the humans seem miniscule in comparison to the vastness of the countryside. The fact that the film refuses the customary mid or long establishing shot for an expansive wide shot, even as the dialogue unfolds, keys viewers in to the fact that land, architecture, and animals are important to this story. Arguably, this wide shot undermines conceptions of humanity predicated on a disavowal of the human body's interdependence with the surrounding natural environment by reframing humanity in an intersectional relation with natural environment; the shot breaks from the studio system logic, where interiors symbolize a retreat from nature.

In Burnett's film, the nostalgic portrait of Southern familial life between a father and son is evoked and subverted by the film's focus on Southern racism's fragmentation of a black father-son dyad; slavery and its afterlife are revealed as the conditions of possibility for idyllic pastoral portraits of white fathers and sons. Noticeably, the white men present never address the black adolescent boy attending to the horse, despite the fact that the young man is equidistant to the white man they address with a "Howdy, Will." The "howdy" requires additional vocal labor in order to achieve the customary lilt due to the distance between the men. The additional labor triumphs over the spatial

obstacle, but it highlights the equal effort required to ignore the young man among them. Already the film prepares us for a failure of recognition along masculine, racial lines.

The first close-ups are of the men's shoes and backs. The camera rhythmically focuses on the men's shoes and backs. The men represent structural positions within patriarchal, racial capital rather than individual personalities. Their clothes—wingtips, summer wool blazers, lacquered hair—suggest that they are petty hustlers. We learn from the dialogue that these are poor, working class men desperate for work. Walter, one of the white men, walks directly into the farm home on the property and returns with a drawer shelf that he transforms into a chair. Now, the house belongs to the yet-to-be-acknowledged, although present, young man stationed beyond the camera's frame. The entitlement to enter a black home uninvited and remove furniture ignores customary respect for another's property. Emptying a drawer of its contents and turning it into patio furniture is an instantiation of white heteropatriarchy. This performance of white entitlement is also a performance of gender because it suggests that black people cannot retreat to the protection and privacy of a domestic sphere. While black people may own a house, they cannot have a home that is their own. The space of the domestic is constantly at threat of being raided by white masculinity, even working-class white masculinity. This seemingly small act precludes normative gender and sexuality within black domesticity because the private sphere is where one theoretically establishes the symbolic norms and practices of patriarchal society. Thus, it is fitting that the house itself is dilapidated and in a state of disrepair. The camera offers a close-up of crumbling stairs.

From a close-up of one of the men reinforcing the crease in his pants and dusting off his shoes, a jump cut finds the adolescent gently swatting flies from the back of the mare. Her rib-caged is exposed; she is emaciated. The young man, known as "Ray's boy," gathers dirt and meticulously places it on the back of the horse in order to deter flies. He is engaged in care labor and makes no attempt to engage the men seated on his porch. The avoidance of mutual acknowledgement reflects habituated acts of racial hierarchy customary in the South during the Jim Crow era. While it is easy to imagine that the young man would not preemptively address adults in another's home, it is difficult to imagine that an adolescent would be silent when men arrive at and enter his own home, unless there are racial customs of interaction that bar the young black man from addressing the white men directly. Instead, he focuses his attention on the horse. However, the meditative care labor he performs is disrupted. Walter asks who the young man is but instead of asking him directly, he points at him and directs his question to the other men: "Where that boy come from?" "That's Ray's boy" is the response (*The Horse*). The adolescent's youth does not quite explain the affect that animates the reference to him as a "boy." This patronizing form of address has become one of the era's most recognizable motifs. Patronizing forms of address, exclusionary patterns of white male socializing, and systemic modes of social segregation have all conspired to unman and thus discredit black masculinity. The pointer, offended, asks why do they have to wait for "some damn nigger...any one of us could do it" (*The Horse*). The spectator will soon learn that the "it" is killing the horse.

A jump cut to a medium close-up, the epithet empties the space between Ray's son and the men. The adolescent is hailed by the epithet, conscripted, and forced to witness his father's humiliation, for it is his father that is the "nigger" to whom they refer. While the men speak amongst themselves, the young man and the horse mutually

produce a kind of dissociative space, one that anticipates and guards against racial violence from the world of the porch. Seconds before the epithet punctures the wall separating the porch from this dissociative space between Ray's son and a horse, the camera offers a close-up of the boy's face. His countenance is divided by his arm that strokes the horse's face, yet we are able to see his eyes avert in just enough time, as if to avoid visually what he cannot help but hear.

That the men speak about him but never to him suggests a suspension of intersubjectivity. In fact, the film never offers a shot reverse shot structure between the adolescent and the men. This structure implies a dialectics of recognition between characters in a narrative film.⁸⁷ It either establishes their relative equality in terms of social standing, or their relative inequality based on how it is shot. For instance, if a character is shot from below, as in a low angle shot, it may suggest that the speaker has power over the other character in the sequence. That we only see one shot where they are all in the same frame—an establishing shot from behind the field of action, authorized by no character's point of view—suggests that there is either no social relationship across the lines of race between the film's main characters, or that the social relationship is fragmented to the point of being ontological in its effects. This establishing shot occurs right before the racial epithet is voiced. But refraining from the shot reverse shot structure here is a critical commentary on the linear stratification of masculinity based on race, and the ontological divide posited by a racial order. Many films potentially risk anachronistic portrayals of social symmetry as a consequence of their fidelity to formal filmic practices, when they feature racially integrated spatial arrangements within shots and reproduce the shot reverse shot structure in interracial dialogue sequences.⁸⁸ That Burnett defers these filmic practices underlines the non-reciprocity of antiblack sociality.

One man tosses a switchblade until the knife becomes lodged in the roof of the porch. A fade transposes the knife ominously on the image of the mare, and then in between Ray's son and the mare. This foreshadows the breeching of the bond between Ray's son and the mare, as well as symbolizes their shared vulnerability to white phallogentric power.

The film never offers a clear explanation for why the men feel that the horse must die. At times, the horse looks unusually thin and possibly sick, and at other times healthy; there were actually two different horses, of different ages, cast for that the part. However, what is important here is the significance of "the kill" for formations of masculinity, humanity, and symbolic presence. The absence of a verbal explanation in the film's diegesis, especially in its dialogue, invite an interrogation of the men's motive, which directs our attention to the gendered implications that this particular killing has for the men's sense of identity. The lack of an official explanation only underlines the racial and gendered meaning it has for masculinity. However, as Walter states, it is true that anyone of them could do it, but they do not. Will, the leader of the pack, the character with the highest class standing, has the power to set the killing in motion, but he does not. Walter is resentful that he has not been given the job, for he views it as a trespass of his white masculinity, which has been made precarious due to class standing and unemployment. For him, killing the mare would provide substance and presence to an emaciated masculinity. Walter's elevation of himself over nature through killing the horse is one of the only forms of masculinity available to him. Killing the other, sacrificing the other so that one might avoid being sacrificed, is fundamental to

masculinity, according to Derrida (Derrida, *The Animal* 91). However, that form of masculinity is only normative when it is sublimated symbolically or indirectly. That Walter is eager to kill the mare himself plunges him deeper into the uncivil, the barbarous, and symbolic blackness. Walter's words are an attempt to triumph over a profound sense of castration and deep resentment regarding the men's reliance on Ray, a black man, to perform the phallic labor of killing the horse. Walter's melancholic masculinity is marked by a decidedly unmanly desperation and ambivalence; this resentment and ambivalence is emblematic of the contradictory and shifting nature of dominant discourses on racial masculinity and the prevalent disjuncture between masculine entitlement and masculine authority experienced by Southern white working class men. The film allegorically captures the violence generated by blind adherence to generic constructions of racial masculinity and humanity.

Despite the article in the film's title, *The Horse*, Burnett undermines the kind of abstraction we associate with generic animality as well, at least in part because of his use of close-ups. Derrida argues that the use of definite articles when describing animals is symptomatic of misrecognition of both the human self and animals:

the animal, what a word!...Confined within this catch-all concept, within this vast encampment of the animal, in this general singular, within the strict enclosure of this definite article ("the Animal" and not "animals") are all the living things that man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbors or his brothers. And that is so in spite of the infinite space that separates the lizard from the dog, the protozoon from the dolphin, the shark from the lamb, the parrot from the chimpanzee. ("The Animal" 32-34)

For Derrida, this "immense multiplicity of other living things... cannot in any way be homogenized, except by means of violence and willful ignorance ("The Animal" 48). Burnett's unconventional use of close-ups challenges the misrecognition Derrida argues is embedded within the concept of "the animal." As stated earlier, in *The Horse*, close-ups of male shoes and backs efface singularity in order to scrutinize racial, gendered, and classed structural position; conversely, the close-up becomes a vehicle to foreground the singularity of the film's horse.

Day turns to dusk in the scene prior to the mare's death. Burnett lingers on a solitary hoof, and for the first time, we can see her shoes. Shoes serve as a marker of status in the film. The mare's shoe establishes both difference and continuity between her and Walter. We then get a close-up of one of her eyes. This is the tightest close-up of a face offered in the entire film. These close-ups testify to her interiority and signal that her death is worth mourning. Thus, her alterity is a form of internal difference.⁸⁹

The subsequent shot is of the back of a barn. A cross has been planted in the ground, perhaps in an attempt to mark a final resting place for a member of Ray's family. Arguably, this shot foreshadows the impending death of the mare. Again, a car traces the contours of the road. When it arrives, we meet Ray for the first time as he steps out of the screeching, rusted truck. From the right of the frame, his son runs into his arms. Ray asks, "You miss me?" (*The Horse*). His son's enthusiastic embrace reveals the rhetorical nature of the question. Ray informs his son that his dinner is coming soon and then quickly removes his son from the spatial line uniting himself and Will. While pulling his son tightly to his side, Ray's countenance changes from affectionate to solemn. Will would

have walked through Ray and his son had Ray not moved them out of Will's path, allowing the man to enter his car. Again, Will does not ask to enter Ray's car; he just does and removes an object wrapped in newspaper—a gun. Will places a bullet into the gun and then hands it to Ray. We only see the exchange via close-ups between the men's hands. Will's hands open and then lower; Ray's are ready for duty but without eagerness. Their hands suggest resignation and burden, respectively. Will and Ray guide the horse out the frame. Led by Walter, the gang on the porch gathers kerosene and wood for what we can assume is for the cremation of the mare's remains.

Burnett edits the action that follows in a way that articulates the sacrifice of the animal as a trauma against human and non-human, a disruption of reigning hierarchies of value in modernity. There's another jump cut, sounds of the whimpering horse, and a medium shot frame Ray's son. He has closed his ears tightly with his hands, and his eyes are pressed closed as well. He begins to slowly remove his hands from his ears and lift his lids because he either suspects that the worst is over, or because he feels compelled to witness the mare's death. Just as he begins to peer over his shoulder, the gun explodes. A light flashes across the screen, and he jumps as if he were shot himself. Then, there is a freeze frame of the young man's traumatized image. There is no movement as the seconds pass, a filmic equivalent of hours in real time. Next, the film fades to black. It is a stillness that ensnares. The close-up resembles still photography—a traumatic episode captured like a snapshot, which is not dissimilar to the temporal arrest that ensnares the black masculine as type, as problem, and as myth. Burnett takes the filmic form of the shot, which non-coincidentally is a homonym for the gunshot, and subverts the logic that unites them. Burnett's reflexive "shot" questions the logic of "the hunt" implied by masculinist cinema.⁹⁰

The gender of the horse is important in Burnett's film. As a mare, she is both female and animal simultaneously. That horses are matriarchal adds another layer of signification to Burnett's film. In the wild, horses are herd animals. A herd is guarded by a stallion and led by a matriarchal mare (Walker 2). While our culture, particularly film, celebrates the image of the dominant stallion, in the wild, the role of the lead mare is central to the socialization of horses (Walker 15). The head mare keeps members of the herd safe until they can lead and guard their own young. Amongst peers, the mare does not lead based on fear of her dominance but through trust and familiarity (Walker 15). The head mare is a figure of female strength and leadership. Her status amongst the herd complicates patriarchal claims rooted in the presumption of an inherent androcentricism in nature.

In the twentieth-century, despite horses' central role in American colonial expansionism, growing industrialization deemed them redundant, and they were increasingly replaced by tractors, cars, and planes. Fordism sought to replace "inefficient and unsanitary" horses while retaining their presence through the metaphor of "horsepower" (Shukin 119). I will return to Fordism when I discuss *Killer of Sheep*. With the advent of the Western movie genre, the horse took on new cultural significance. As Elaine Walker has noted, the Western film, a genre that would eventually be known worldwide, often relied on color coding. Deeply invested in moral binarism, expansionism, and heteromascularity, the Western has a strong tradition of associating white with good and black with evil, assigning the hero a white horse to match his "purity of heart," and the villain a black one to reflect "the depths of his evil." The code

functioned as shorthand for the audience to identify characters against monochrome landscapes (Walker 173). Horses began as part of the supporting cast, contextualizing the story and its characters, but this changed as horses took on a following of their own and were developed to resemble the wise and reliable horses of mythology. In film and television shows predicated on the human-horse bond, the horse became equally or even more famous than their human companion. This historical shift in the prominence of the horse in cinema and television facilitated an audience that would be able to recognize the mare in Burnett's film as a character essential to the narrative. The killing of the mare, a lead character, is central to how the film articulates white masculine entitlement and the simultaneous sacrifice of animal, woman, and blackness.

Sacrifice is ritualized killing; however, it tends to be carried out with hesitation and unease. As Brian Luke states, "Sacrifice is not a morally neutral act" (111). Animals, like humans, struggle against death, so guilt and even shame often accompany the killing of animals. In capitalistic, racial modernity, killing is slotted for the hands of those already marked as animal, amoral, and uncivil: the poor, the immigrant, and those of color. As humanism has sought to distance itself from its violence, it has burdened marginalized men, black and poor, with the task of carrying out the shamed labor of killing with one's hands. This has forged a symbolic bond between those sentenced to death and those assigned the shamed labor. The move from savage life to civilization is predicated on the replacement of direct with indirect forms of killing, whereby civilized society kills via the "rational" institution of the state or in the interests of capital, whereas the savage kills directly. Burnett's films, especially *Killer of Sheep*, critique the placement of black men in forms of labor that are deemed animalistic and that arose in the context of neoliberal racial capitalism and state abandonment. Burnett's film not only critiques this animalization but, ironically, chooses human/animal metaphor as a vehicle for its critique. In the introduction, I note that Césaire sought a creative humanism with new metaphoricity. Burnett's films redefine and redirect human/animal metaphor rather than jettison it together, not in the interest of animalizing as a pretext for engaging in racialized "noncriminal forms of death," but rather in order to expose the sacrificial nature of the state and capitalism writ large (Derrida, *Points* 278).

KILLER OF SHEEP

In the movement from *The Horse* to *Killer of Sheep*, Burnett travels from the rural South to the urban West. His films disrupt a firm distinction between the city and the rural and the South and the West, by exposing the existential continuities that give shape to Black America. *Killer of Sheep* is set at the onset of neoliberalism. The early 1970s were a time when urban black centers were deindustrialized, jobs were scarce, and the state began to abandon American urban cities. Burnett's drama tells the story of one struggling black family's attempt to stay afloat in the sea of change between the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, Reaganomics, and the crack epidemic. In *Killer of Sheep*, the family's paternal figure, Stan, works at a slaughterhouse where he does the killing. The racial stratification of slaughterhouse labor is part and parcel of a larger societal dynamic that sacrifices men and women as well as nonhuman animals. That black men do the killing says less about their ascent into normative manhood and more about the disjunctive state of black humanity. The films' black male protagonists are simultaneously living and dead, human and animal, and Man and beast of burden.

When introduced to Stan, the film's disconsolate, insomniac protagonist, he states flatly, "I'm working myself into my own hell. I close my eyes and I can't get no sleep at night. No peace of mind" (*Killer of Sheep*). A high angle shot captures Stan in a literally depressed position, kneeling and slouched on the floor. Yet, the source of Stan's dejection extends far beyond dissatisfaction with his job. Stan is frustrated by his existential condition and inarticulable anxiety, where the job is both a symptom and cause of the dissatisfaction gripping him. This existential quality of Stan's malaise is acknowledged when his friend responds, "I don't have any trouble sleeping. I ain't ashamed of nothing I can't help" (*Killer of Sheep*). In the interim between these two statements, the men provide three options for black men similarly situated: suicide, murder, or religion. Suicide, it is proposed, would make Stan "a lot happier" (*Killer of Sheep*). Stan rejects suicide, an option we learn that has already been taken by one of the men's former acquaintances. Stan's daughter emerges from the edge of the right frame. He and his daughter exchange glances, and there is a glint of a smile; Stan is not yet ready to die.

The film poses the question of what ails this black father and husband while resisting the lure of a patriarchal solution. The film's title, *Killer of Sheep*, evokes scenes of mass carnage, but what we get is a subtle, nuanced, and non-didactic film about the demoralizing effects of structural violence and inequality. It is demoralizing in the sense of eroding or destroying confidence or hope in a group, fostering disorder and chaos, and corrupting the morality of those interpellated by a society's violence.

In Burnett's films, soundtrack and especially its music do not merely accompany image, they are equal participants in the story telling. The demoralization and injury of racial and animal capital is powerfully expressed in the soundtrack: music is used ironically in order to inspire the viewer to move from spectator to witness by raising the status of sacrifice as an ethical question.

Burnett ironically juxtaposes music and image in three sequential scenes that make symbolic use of Paul Robeson in order to articulate the interdependence of human and animal exploitation in capitalism. Paul Robeson is a multi-signifying figure in United States history and culture, and represents artistic excellence, the promise or problem of radical leftism, black internationalism, and dignity in the face of state repression. A singer and actor of stage and film, Robeson's growing political and racial consciousness found him at odds with the U.S. government in an era that sought to contain black protest and undermine communist influence.⁹¹

In "The House I Live In," Robeson's bass voice and commanding presence can be felt as the union of voice and music elevate child's play to world historical importance. The film intermittently intercuts vignettes of children at play in dilapidated surroundings. The *mis-en-scene* is littered with the discarded remains of capitalist consumption. We get the sense that the children are playing in capitalism's trash heap; their neighborhood is a graveyard for discarded and older models. Broken bikes and rocks from blown out and abandoned buildings are revived by the imagination and invention of the children from Watts. Not all of the song's lyrics appear in the film; of those that do, they are as follows: "What is America to me? / A name, a map, the flag I see, a certain word, 'Democracy'! / What is America to me?" (Robeson, "The House I Live In"). Robeson's voice soars, extending the words "democracy" and "me" over a close-up of collective invention: a wrench becomes a hammer, a spinning top re-imagined as a yoyo, and scraps of wood

become an edifice built by young architects and carpenters. If the economic situation of the film's black male adults are any indication, these young boys' capacities will likely languish due to narrow options, despite the fact that the material conditions of the ghetto, itself, encourages innovation. Robeson continues: "The house I live in, a plot of earth, a street./ The grocer and the butcher and the people that I meet./ The children in the playground, the faces that I see; All races, all religions, that's America to me" ("The House I Live In").

"The House I Live In" is a patriotic anthem that celebrates the pluralism and benefits of American democracy. Penned in 1943 by Abel Meeropol with music by Earl Robinson, this song is more of a celebration of what Meeropol would have liked America to be, rather than a celebration of what it was, as it is sometimes mistakenly interpreted (Margolick 19).⁹² This scene of child's play provides concrete, visual testimony to the song's ironic commentary on the vast expanse between American idealism and the lived experience of the racialized poor. Narratives of progress often fetishize childhood as an emblem of possibility. In Burnett's film, childhood is creative and innovative for sure but is also destructive and violent. *Killer of Sheep* includes several scenes of children's physical violence set in the context of domestic violence and a decayed urban environment; these scenes do not carry the narrative forward, but are poignant asides, which suggest that the film's children, like the adults, have imbibed the violence and disregard directed towards them by dominant and internecine socio-economic orders. What *Killer of Sheep* accomplishes is both a filmic articulation of the co-formation of dominant and intrablack practices of power and exploitation, and a desire for something beyond the necro-political.

With a cut to the slaughterhouse, Robeson is temporarily silenced and replaced with the hum of the machines. We see medium close-ups of the sharpening of knives and the arranging of assembly hooks. White male management exits, and we see a tightly-framed stationary shot of the chute where sheep and goat enter before systematically following each other to their deaths. Robeson voice returns: "Mother's there 'spectin' me, / Father's waitin' too, Lot's o' folk gathered there, / All the friends I knew" ("Goin' Home").

Antonin Dvorak wrote the music for "Goin' Home," and the lyrics were provided by his student William Arms Fisher. Dvorak, a classic Czech composer, wrote the melody while on a four-year residency at the New York Conservatory of Music (Horowitz 133).⁹³ While in New York, Dvorak became convinced that African American folk music, sometimes referred to as Negro spirituals, would revolutionize American music writ large. "Goin Home" advances Dvorak's interest in Negro spiritual's hybridization of European classical form and African American folk music (Beckerman 96; Horowitz 138). Initially, spirituals represented enslaved Africans' attempts to negotiate forced Christian conversation. The songs' lyrics detailed the struggle of a people commodified under slavery; at times, the songs were coded instructions on escape. Most often, though, they reflected African American musical ingenuity, as the songs frequently rearranged the music, melody, and content of Christian hymns. "Goin' Home" solemnly testifies to the transition from life to death by oscillating between faith and melancholy. In *Killer of Sheep*, the song provides the sheep and goats the dignity that they are denied by the mechanical, disassembly lines. The scene neither conflates human and animal oppression nor displaces one for the other. Rather, it functions as a form of

witnessing, a testimony to intertwined fates under capitalism. I argue that this is a new metaphoricity. Animal metaphor has so often been used either to animalize a marginalized population in the interests of necropolitics or as a proxy for human self-reflexivity. In neither instance are animals, as opposed to “the animal,” engaged on their own terms, for such metaphors instrumentalize rather than engage in intersubjectivity with actual animals. In Burnett’s films, sacrifice is an intertwined fate and shared destiny for black humans and animals in neoliberal capitalism.

However, this chapter began with Derrida’s call for an ethics that is post-innocence, or one where we confront that purity and innocence are impossible, whereby consumption of the Other is “fundamental” even in intersubjectivity (“The Animal” 91). For Derrida, the ethical is not innocence but rather a practice of ceaseless decision-making and reflexivity.⁹⁴ So, it is not surprising that we would find animal slaughter at the origin of film’s history, even though Burnett deploys film as a critique of sacrifice. Cinema would not only draw inspiration from the anima-tion of the horse, but would also consume the flesh of animals in order to animate its technologies.

Nicole Shukin, in *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*, details how film stock and cinematic spectatorship emerged in a context that presupposed and reinforced the symbolic and material exploitation of animal corporeality. Film stock production pivots on the procurement of gelatin—derived from the waste of industrial slaughter. The actual substance of gelatin consists of the leavings of tanneries and slaughterhouses, including the trimmings (so-called skips), ears, cheek-pieces, pates, and fleshings (Shukin 104). This provides the biochemical material needed for photographic and filmic images to cohere to celluloid by binding light-sensitive agents to a base so that images can materialize (Shukin 105). George Eastman and Thomas Edison adapted the technology for cinema, creating the Kinetoscope for celluloid film (Shukin 107).

Cinema culture also drew inspiration from animal disassembly and is thus implicated in the carnal business of the slaughterhouse. The disassembly lines were arguably America’s first “moving pictures.” The disassembly line as time-motion technology realized a cinematic disposition prior to cinema proper. Over one million people visited Chicago’s stockyards at the same time Muybridge’s zoopraxiscope was starting to garner attention (Shukin 93). Consumed as spectacle, the slaughterhouse excited new models of visual consumption, as tourists were invited into the abattoir to witness the spectacle of technological innovation predicated on animal disassembly. Continuous linear sequences of unfolding discrete moments, where the eyes of the spectator are analogous to the “frames” reeled at high speed, created the illusion of seamless motion (Shukin 100). The shock and horror, the affect of the spectacle—smells, visuals, sounds—drew crowds as much as the lure of technological progress did (Shukin 95). As an affective experience, cinema promised to provide a totalizing experience, a desire fed by the spectacle of the animal disassembly tour. Thus, film, itself, is indebted to the rise of the slaughterhouse.

However, as Paula Young Lee has noted in *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, over the course of twentieth-century, the slaughterhouse became a disreputable business, an industry that society would rather obscure from view. Lee argues that it represents both the burden of our corporeality and the dismemberment of living flesh into dead meat. It is where the life of an animal is extinguished in order to reanimate depleted human bodies (Lee 2). As sociologist Norbert Elias notes, over the

centuries, the state has been working to repress bodily sensations such as hunger, a task essential to the project of civilization (396). The slaughterhouse, like the sewer system and public restrooms, are marginalized in cityscapes as shameful reminders of our corporeality. Slaughterhouses are concessions to our “debased” urges, including greed and violence. As embarrassing necessities, they are stripped of their representational value despite being massive in scale and lucrative. The slaughterhouse is especially despised because its sole function is killing for the purposes of capital gain; its only ethos is efficiency and economic profit. Inside the modern industrial system, animals are first and foremost meat. Like a staple crop, they are born to die; they move in a virtual conveyor belt from pasture to slaughter. This approach contrasts dramatically from traditional agricultural human-animal relations, which viewed animals not exclusively as meat but also as a source of wool, milk, muscle power, fertilizer, and companionship. They were consumed in the interest of practicality, frugality, and sanitation. The contemporary slaughter system represents a radical shift in human-animal relations as it harvests animals exclusively in the mode of depersonalized, industrial slaughter (Lee 2).

I argue that Burnett’s graphic close-ups of human laborers dismembering living flesh function not as the shocking pleasure of abjection found in the nineteenth-century Chicago meat house described by Shukin, but rather as a confrontation. His camera does not placate a twentieth-century socius that would disavow and conceal the material labor of the animal’s body. As Burnett does with the scenes of black abandonment in urban ghettos, he brings into view the essential yet hidden violence of the slaughterhouse.

In 1977, Burnett’s *Killer of Sheep* not only represented a population ignored by mainstream media’s depictions of the American experience, but also offered a nuanced rendering of the problem of deferred freedom, rather than the problem of black people. Like the prisons that house ever increasing numbers of African diaspora (including African and Caribbean immigrants in the detention and deportation centers) since the onset of neoliberalism narrated in *Killer of Sheep*, slaughterhouses are often placed in economically depressed urban and rural communities, providing labor opportunities to populations that lack options found in more economically advantaged communities.

In *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenic and Psychogenic Investigations*, Norbert Elias argues that a society is deemed “civil” not to the extent that it has extinguished actual killing, but rather its perception and reminder of it (qtd. in Lee 90). Consider this in the context of the prevalent racial stratification in the slaughterhouse industry even today, whereas men and women of color were initially prevented from joining the ranks of slaughterhouse labor based on gendered racial exclusion, only to become overrepresented on the killing floor, precisely as this form of labor becomes dishonorable. Today, men of color, particularly black and Latino, are overwhelmingly represented on the killing floor; while white, economically privileged men abstain from the killing itself by serving as managers or captains of industry. The slaughter industry has had a long history of racial competition and exclusion.⁹⁵ Women, immigrants, and African Americans have historically been excluded from the industry’s unionizing efforts. In some cases, the union was a vehicle for attempts to drive out African American workers, by reinforcing the exclusionary divide between skilled and unskilled labor (Pacyga 159- 165). But as whiteness consolidated and expanded to include European immigrant laborers, they moved into different segments of the economy, and black and

brown workers took over those jobs as they were increasingly abjected by modern notions of cleanliness and civility.

In his article for the *New York Times*, “At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die,” Charlie LeDuff details the working conditions of a rural North Carolina pork-packing plant. It was the sixth installment in a series titled, “How Race is Lived in America.” In this article, LeDuff describes how relations of hierarchy, domination, and exploitation between humans and animals are mutually imbricated in the racial and gendered symbolics and practices of the slaughterhouse. The interracial and interspecies power dynamics uncannily resemble each other. In the Smithfield’s Foods plant, whites are at the top in managerial or mechanical positions, with American Indians under them, and with Black and Latinos in the dirty, bloody jobs of the disassembly line. Quoting LeDuff, “the first thing you learn in the hog plant is the value of a sharp knife. The second thing you learn is that you don’t want to work with a knife” (184). According to LeDuff, the closer one is to the killing and the blood of the animal, the more likely one is to shed blood and experience violence on the job. The automation and efficiency of slaughter ensnares the very bodies that perform the physical acts of slaughter as a systematic and racialized form of marginalization and disability.

Outside the plant, the workers inhabit and socialize in racially segregated quarters. Remarkably, although blacks, whites, Latinos, and American Indians work in the same plant, they all have separate stations; locker rooms and cafeteria tables are separate as well, mimicking the racial segregation common in prisons. The work is repetitive and brutish. It is grueling to the point that the factory has a 100 percent turnover rate: “5,000 are hired and 5,000 quit every year” (LeDuff 185). As LeDuff describes, “The work burns your muscles and dulls your mind. Staring down into the meat for hours strains your neck. After thousands of cuts a day your fingers no longer open freely. Standing in the damp forty-two-degree air causes your knees to lock, your nose to run, your teeth to throb” (187). According to LeDuff, the plant has enough methane, ammonia, and chlorine to kill every living being in the county, but the pork plant is one of the few places in a fifty-mile radius that one can make more than eight dollars an hour (184-5).

Management’s attempts to kill and pack animals with increasing efficiency has led to a decline in wages and an increase in the use of machinery and unskilled labor; all of which lead to declining wages, poorer living conditions for workers, racial tension, and competition. While workers have increased the rate of killing, they have not had increased wages. In fact, the opposite has occurred since the late nineteenth-century (Otter 157). At Smithfield’s, profit nearly doubled in the past year, but wages have remained the same (LeDuff 184).

The line between skilled and unskilled often ran parallel to immigration, racial, gendered, and class polarities, and therefore reflected and reproduced societal inequality inside the confines of the slaughterhouse. Women were often excluded from the killing, as it was seen as a compromise of heteronormative gender polarity. Women workers to this day must contend with presumptions about the nature of femininity and the exclusionary forms of masculinity that traffic amongst their male counterparts. However, it appears that women who are often marginalized as immigrants and/or racial minorities are the first admitted onto the killing floor (Pacyga 153). The black women at Smithfield’s are assigned the chitterlings room, where they scrape feces and worms from

intestines. The black men are sent to the butchering floor (LeDuff 185). Again, I argue that race stratifies gender such that the symbolics of black womanhood are the reverse of the normative ideal. And it is precisely the job's abjection that makes black women's admittance into a male-dominated occupation not a triumph over racial patriarchal capitalism but an instantiation. Antiblackness threatens legibility of black genders within a patriarchal order as blackness is in a perpetual state of indeterminate gender.

In the scene following Paul Robeson's dirge for the sheep of the Solano Meat Company, manhood—its definition and significance—is the scene's subject. The scene resolutely challenges predatory conceptions of manhood acquired through the sacrifice of Others. In the process, it exposes the pernicious effects that capitalism has had on black identity, even threatening black familial survival. However, it does not resolve in any absolute terms the animalizing nature of racial capitalism's interpellation of blackness; instead, it positions black people's identification with their animalized image as a problem yet to be resolved.

As in *The Horse*, Burnett shows a scene of hustlers negotiating the terms of a murder for hire. Two neighborhood associates, Scooter and Smoke, pull up to Stan's home and knock on the door. They are neighborhood acquaintances that approach him by name. The men's clothing and Cadillac identify them immediately as neighborhood hustlers. They jokingly ask Stan for a dollar before informing him of their true intentions, which is to invite Stan to participate in a murder for pay; as in *The Horse*, the film does not provide an explanation for the murder, but rather exposes the men's logic. We are never told the identity of whom they plan to kill, but in all likelihood, it is another black man as the relations between capital and black men in the ghetto is one of carnivorous competition; the joking request for a dollar is a dark comical expression of the ghetto's necro-political scarcity. In the scene, Stan resists associating with the men by first slamming the door in their faces, and then he balances a firm and resolute "no" with a vocal performance of familiarity. His gestural vocabulary maintains distance between the men. Stan never extends bodily gestures of familiarity or kindness to the men, even when Smoke wraps his arm around Stan's shoulders. Stan responds by pulling his arms to his sides and placing his hands in his pockets. He withholds direct eye contact and instead offers them a judgmental sideward glance. He never invites the men into his home, and he even directs them away from the door by sitting on the edge of the porch. Stan is in quite a predicament: he cannot protest too strongly or he might be suspected of going to the police, which would potentially be dangerous for himself and his family considering that Scooter and Smoke know where he lives and are probably men who grew up with him.

His wife, played by Kaycee Moore, appears at the door, and we watch her overhear the conversation in a tight close-up of her increasingly irritated countenance. The mesh screen is the transparent veneer separating the domestic from the public. Stepping onto the porch, she moves from interloper to usurper, protesting her role in the tacit debate over the nature of manhood. When she approaches, the men fall silent because their conversation is "between men." The men and Stan's wife are now in full view. Stan and his wife's home are in the background. The home is a representative of their family, and their family is what is at stake in this debate. Once Stan looks up and sees his wife behind him, he pulls a cigarette from his pocket and places it in his mouth.

Looking down, he plays with his bare feet. His wife is about to do the talking. Hovering above the men, hand on hips, she asks them:

STAN'S WIFE. Why you always want to hurt somebody?

SCOOTER. Who me?... That's the way nature is. I mean, an animal has his teeth and a man's has his fists. That's the way I was brought up, Goddamn me.

SMOKE. Right on.

SCOOTER. I mean when a man got scars on his mug from dealing with son of a bitches everyday for his natural born life. Ain't nobody gon' run over this nigga... Now, me and Smoke here, we are taking our initiative. You be a man if you can, Stan. (*Killer of Sheep*)

The direct address to Stan is an attempt to exclude his wife once again from those who are authorized to define manhood; it is designed to shame them both simultaneously. Her presence and vocal protest to the men's scheme force the issue of gender to be stated directly. The expression "son of a bitch" demeans Stan's wife and female animals, potentially even conflating the two by virtue of the expression's metonymy. Bitch is a sexist construction that black women are especially vulnerable to given the history of black women as forced breeders, and the view of them as "strong" to the degree that it compromises or negates femininity, and thus their relationship with the civilizing symbolics of heteropatriarchy.⁹⁶ The men start to turn and walk away, satisfied that they have said their piece. She marches down the stairs and turns them around. Every finger point is a gestural equivalent to an exclamation point:

STAN'S WIFE. Now, you just wait one minute. You talk about you be a man, just stand up. Don't you know it's more to it than just with your fists. The scars on your mug. You talk about an animal. What, you think you in some bush or some damn where? You here. You use your brain. That's what you use.

SMOKE. Look at Stan, what have you got? You worked your whole life, and what have you got? You don't even have a decent pair of pants... You can't live if friends dying, that right? Is that right? (*Killer of Sheep*)

The currency these men place on manhood is defined by the capitalist distortion of evolutionism epitomized by the phrase "survival of the fittest" and its most pernicious underside "kill or be killed." Herbert Spencer coined the term "survival of the fittest" after reading Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. In a misreading of Darwin's magnum opus, he saw a biological justification for predatory and unrestrained capitalism. Spencer is often credited with being the father of Social Darwinism, a doctrine that located social effects in biological constitutions such that social, political, and economic intervention would be tantamount to a misguided attempt to tamper with the natural order (Spencer, xxvi). Social Darwinist views are most often associated with free market capitalism and the struggle between racial and national groups. Social Darwinism relies on a discourse that fetishizes blackness as the so-called animal within the human. Blackness then becomes representative of a conception of nature that is unitary, timeless, and pre-reflexive. This perception justifies structural inequality as the unavoidable effect of natural laws.

Nicholas Abercrombie defines Social Darwinism as:

There are underlying, and largely irresistible, forces acting in societies, which are like the natural forces that operate in animal and plant communities. One can therefore formulate social laws similar to natural ones. These social forces are of such a kind as to produce evolutionary progress through the natural conflicts between social groups. The best-adapted and most successful social groups survive these conflicts, raising the evolutionary level of society generally (the “survival of the fittest”). (321-2)

Scooter and Smoke contend that they are just trying to help Stan be a man. His male deficiency, according to their view, is proved by his lackluster sartorial presentation. Stan’s wife challenges their understanding of manhood based on a predatory and sacrificial logic—a logic authorized by those who benefit directly from their poverty and premature death. Her mocking of “man” and “animal” rejects the tropological logic that the men wield in order to justify their actions.

Her pejorative tone when referring to “the bush or somewhere” and Stan’s subsequent admonishment of his son’s use of the Southern expression “my dear” to refer to his mother, signal black Americans’ attempts to distinguish themselves from the tropes of primitive Africinity, and the shame of enslavement represented by Southern American blackness (*Killer of Sheep*). Their ambivalence in relation to the anti-African dimensions of evolutionary discourse and gendered racial capitalism, is not so much a failure on their part but emblematic of the difficulty of defining the self when antiblack discourse is the dominant language made available to define the self. These scenes highlight the inherently divided nature of black articulations of their humanity in an antiblack cultural context—one that equates the achievement of “fitness” with the abjection of an already uncivil, unfit, and therefore Africanized human animality. It also performs Burnett’s commitment to non-didacticism. He presents issues in a manner that make the viewers want to come up with solutions rather than present the solutions himself, as he believes no particular solution or single perspective will offer the nuance needed to resolve the issues faced by the African Diaspora (Martin and Julien 146). While Stan and his wife’s statements risk reinforcing the antiblackness that ensnares them, Stan’s wife offers a powerful rejection of Social Darwinism’s masculinist sacrificial logic.

CONCLUSION

If the limit between living and nonliving, now seems to be as unsure, at least as an oppositional limit, as that between “man” and “animal,” and if, in the (symbolic or real) experience of the “eat-speak-interiorize,” the ethical frontier no longer rigorously passes between the “Thou shalt not kill” (man, thy neighbour) and the “Thou shalt not put to death the living in general,” but rather between several infinitely different modes of conception-appropriation-assimilation of the other, then as concerns the “Good” (*Bien*) of every morality, the question will come back to determining the best, most respectful, most grateful, and also most giving way of relating to the other and of relating the other to the self. (Derrida, “Eating Well” 114)

By way of conclusion, I will discuss the meaning and significance of black masculinity in light of both films as it pertains to the symbolic and biopolitical economies

governing “Eating Well.” I have argued that Burnett’s films do something that, according to Derrida, has eluded the European continental tradition: they propose the sacrifice of sacrifice. According to Derrida, buccal politics concern not only the mouth but also the ear, eye, and all the senses in general. For Derrida, “the question is no longer one of knowing if it is “good” to eat the other or if the other is “good” to eat, not of knowing the other. One eats him regardless, and one lets oneself be eaten by him” (“Eating Well” 114). In his view, this anthropophagy is essential to modern subjecthood: “their most elevated socius, indeed the sublimity of their morality, their politics, and their right, on this anthropophagy” (“Eating Well” 115). Thus, it is no surprise that he concludes: “Vegetarians, too, partake of animals, even of men” (“Eating Well” 115). Derrida argues that human identity and sociality are intrinsically carnivorous and even cannibalistic: a practice that cannot be resolved conclusively through a politics of abstinence in the form of dietary restriction, rights, advocacy, or protection (“Eating Well” 115). This raises serious ethical questions, for as Derrida asks, “what does it mean to eat well?” Derrida does not offer a prescription on the problem but instead questions the ontological boundaries typically observed when we question our responsibility to the Other. Thus, he reframes ethics as a question of the “most respectful, most grateful, and also most giving way of relating to the other and of relating the other to the self” (“Eating Well” 114). Burnett’s films give articulation to such questions, by highlighting how the language of film could elaborate an ontologically unbounded approach to ethics. Like Derrida, Burnett does so without didacticism, prescriptions, or ready solutions, but instead expands the boundaries of ethics and revisits the terms of the question of responsibility.

The Jim Crow era in *The Horse* and de facto segregation of urban Los Angeles in *Killer of Sheep* present an impossible paradox for black men who desire masculine recognition. On the one hand, patriarchy suggests that there is a formula for achieving manhood. If one attains economic solubility and acts within the dictates of heteronormative gender performance, then recognition of manhood will be extended. However, the normative definition of manhood takes blackness as its antipodal starting point. In such a context, it would appear that black masculinity is what is on the socius’ menu. Or as Derrida puts it:

“One must eat well” does not mean above all taking in and grasping in itself, but *learning* and *giving* to eat, learning-to-give-the-other-to-eat. One never eats entirely on one’s own: this constitutes the rule of underlying the statement, “One must eat well.” It is a rule offering infinite hospitality. And in all differences, ruptures, and wars (one might even say religion), eating well is at stake. (“Eating Well” 115)

The consumption of fungible black flesh was arguably the first commodity upon which global capitalism established itself, one that symbolically conflated black bodies with food such as honey, chocolate, coffee, and brown sugar. Black men entered into the global economy as objects of exchange and as an expendable resource, depersonalized, and fungible (Hartman 21, 26).⁹⁷ This founding condition of capitalism stratified manhood. From capitalism’s originating moment to 1970s Los Angeles to the contemporary slaughterhouse, we can detect a persistent structural pattern: race divides manhood into differential symbolics where the measure of one’s humanity is set against the animalistic.

Racism exploits the ideology of black male deficiency and animality to justify and administer an entrenched color barrier in hiring practices, courts, schools, public transport, and public life writ large. As Marlon Ross notes in *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era*, segregation attempts to bar not only encounters between black men and white women but also encounters between men of different color, except in those scenarios where white men's authority over black men is institutionally and structurally staged and reinforced. For instance, as seen with the Southern planter in charge of black sharecroppers, or the Western industrialist supervising laborers at the bottom of the factory system, men's racially integrated space was nevertheless racially stratified (Ross 20). Thus, racial integration and segregation where not opposing systems but complementary.

Because black men are neither normatively men (patriarchs) nor women, not by some failure on their part but rather due to the racially chauvinistic symbolic and material practices of capitalist patriarchy, it makes occupying a position as father, provider, and protector nearly impossible for the majority of black men. Under these conditions, black masculinity is best described as indeterminate. This indeterminacy is ontologized by our society as pathological, rather than as an existential condition rooted in structural violence, confinement, and patronizing state pedagogical efforts that purport to "humanize" and "civilize" black men.

Black men's indefinite role unsettles the dyadic terms of father and son, man and woman that underwrite Derrida's analysis. Black men, women, and animals are all sacrificed in the production of normative categories of manhood. All are offered as surrogates for the father's death. Race is a form of gender classification and a sexual system of oppression, which divides men into superior and inferior masculinities, manly versus unmanly races, heteronormative versus queer(ed) sexualities. Historically, normative manhood is defined by the ability to disrupt filial lines and disinherit black men from the realm of manhood. However, it would be problematic to argue that black men are not men as a result of being barred from normative patriarchy. If we were to do so, we would simply reassert white, economically privileged heteromascularity as the standard of what it means to be a man. Rather, what is crucial to note here is the stratification of manhood along the lines of race. So, it is not only that man is defined in opposition to women; white masculinity presents itself as the standard in a context that disrupts black men's potential to act as fathers to their sons.

David Marriott, in *On Black Men*, argues that in a racialized society age becomes nothing but a number, as all black males are "boys," and thus black fathers and sons are more like a race of brothers (114). While age may increase, manhood is kept at bay or is sent in the opposite direction towards a perpetual adolescence. This adolescence is one where one is culpable for one's actions but is not granted authority over oneself, home, or society. Black fathers have experience and knowledge to impart but do not have authority to protect. Patriarchy in this instance is less of an entitlement, but precarious, tentative, and limited to the boundaries of the black home and black institutions. But, as in the *The Horse*, homes and institutions can be raided by the dominant order at any time.

In *The Horse*, Ray's son has no name in either the film's dialogue or credits. This condition of being without a name marks a state of spectrality because a name is a benchmark of the most basic forms of recognition. Without a name, or worse, in the context of customary practices that defer an acknowledgement of a name, it is not

unsurprising that some men would respond to this by either giving up on manhood or fetishizing it to the point that it imperils those within the immediate community, as is the case of Scooter and Smoke in *Killer of Sheep*. Too often the strictures placed on black masculinity are perceived as resulting from black men's sexual deviance and consequent social irresponsibility—in short, their animality.

Typed in the wider culture as the cause and cure for black men's "failure," black fathers bear the burden of symbolizing what is wrong with black masculinity. As stated by E. Patrick Moynihan, "Negro children without fathers flounder—and fail...in a society which presumes male leadership in private and public affairs."⁹⁸ Moynihan makes clear that the children he is most concerned with are male sons. For him, adherence to patriarchy is essential to the restoration of black dignity; it would act as a testament to black fitness for citizenship. Moynihan's report implies that it is black people, men and women, who must prove their worth as citizens despite the historic and continuous destabilization of black families resulting from slavery, sexual violence, lynching, mass imprisonment, preventable disease, and economic exploitation, all of which created a race of orphans as their cumulative effect. It is ironic that Moynihan would call for black people to invest in categories of humanity that are literally and figuratively foreclosed by state exclusions and capitalist exploitation. The issue of absent or inadequate paternity is never far from cultural assessment—or narrative—on the criminalized deviancy of black men.

As discussed in the introduction, for humanist thinkers such as Hegel, deference to the state's paternal function is a benchmark of one's civility; it attests that one is in a state of culture rather than captivated by the anarchic, aggressive, and sexual drives that mark either a state of nature or bestial man, which he argues is most represented by "the African." (qtd. in Eze 110-149) It is held that aligning oneself with patriarchal codes of gender and sexual restraint are emblematic of man's movement from animal to Man. Moreover, for a patriarchal nation-state to function properly, it is incumbent on every father to reinforce the state's patriarchal law.⁹⁹ However, fathers disappoint because the father's performance is never synonymous with his symbolic function. The father is always failing, disappointing, and inadequate to his function. Yet, what antiblackness does is suggest that black men are most representative of this failure, and this failure is simply one of irresponsibility. The patriarchal state, in the form of state discourses and practices, is at once legislative and punitive in its assessment of its black sons. Through discrimination and chauvinism, black men are excluded from the institutional power that would provide credibility to black fatherhood. As a result, black fatherhood is dismissed as fraudulent. Race already implies a gender hierarchy as discourse of gender already implies a racial hierarchy: black men and women are both perceived as inferior as men and women along lines of idealized masculinity and femininity. This can help us to understand how black people's relationship to white civil societal institutions are not unilaterally a site of privilege for black men in what is overwhelmingly a patriarchal culture.¹⁰⁰

Burnett's films are an exploration of race in the context of carnophallogocentric power rather than an endorsement of patriarchy.¹⁰¹ The ontological negation and semio-material disjuncture of black manhood substantially complicates our theorization of "black patriarchy" and "black gender." In Hortense Spillers's groundbreaking "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," she offers a theory of black

gendering at the limit of the subject. As commodified persons, enslaved Africans were gendered by the dominant society through patriarchal categories of gendered difference, but in a manner that inverted their meaning. She describes a state of injury that makes gendered and sexual normativity impossible. While particular non-black sexual and gendered practices may be queered, blackness serves as an essential template of gendered and sexual “deviance” that is not limited to the negation of a particular practice but rather to a state of being. So, there are no practices that an individual black person can take up that will settle once and for all the doubt that accompanies the assertion of a black humanity. Spillers argues that this predicament presents an opportunity for an ethical disinvestment in heteropatriarchy. She suggests that black people subvert racist exclusion by establishing intentionally non-heteropatriarchal ways of relating to gender and sexuality. And, more specifically, she asserts the need for black men to embrace rather than abject femininity, such that one can be critical of gender violence directed at black men without distancing oneself from black men’s supposed “femininity” or “lack” under the normative codes of masculinity. Such a perspective would redirect the issue of gendered violence away from melancholic investments in heteropatriarchy (Spillers 203-229).

Burnett’s films encourage us to interrogate the subject of masculinity rather than presume that patriarchy is always and already there. Moreover, Burnett’s films invite us to reflect on aspects of gendered and sexualized racial experience that often go unaccounted for in scholarly work on race, despite the efforts of black feminism and its theories on intersectionality. Feminists of color have encouraged us to think about gender and sexuality as they intersect with the particularities of racial experience and embodiment. In the context of blackness, gender oppression not only circumscribes the lives of women but also stratifies or suspends the category of “manhood” (Ross 2). Black men are seen as “excessively male and insufficiently masculine” (Garber 271). The negation of blackness is foundational to ethics and politics, even modern sociality itself; this negation overdetermines black practices as criminal, queer, polluting, pathological, and animal.

Burnett’s films offer a complex meditation on blackness prior to and in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Era. In sum, these works suggest that the pursuit of patriarchy is not only a losing endeavor for black men because patriarchy establishes a norm that is impossible for black men to fulfill, if not in practice than in symbol; but more to the point, patriarchy is profoundly unethical due to its reliance on Sacrifice. Burnett’s editorial cut reverberates across the cut that divides black and white, man and woman, human and animal. The logic of sacrifice “structures intersubjectivity” in capitalist, carnophallogocentric America (Wolfe, *Animal* 100). Burnett offers us the cinematic expression of a desire to sacrifice sacrifice.

Afterward

Jean-Michel Basquiat took Expressionism, an artistic genre indebted to primitivism and colonial expansionism, and assigned it different referents and meanings. Basquiat's differentially produced Expressionism made him one of the twentieth-century's most well known artists. The Haitian-Puerto Rican artist also became the world's most famous black artist. Yet, he found himself maligned in the art press, who often referred to him by making use of animal metaphors and associations, which he confronts in the documentary *Young Expressionists* by ART/new york and the fiction film *Downtown 81* directed by Glen O'Brien. In *Wolf Sausage* and *Monkey*, Basquiat, drawing from the linguistic rebellion of graffiti art, turns the signifier into pure form. Basquiat worked with aleatoric composition, fragmented representations, and an almanac-like resonant phrasing, inventing a unique artistic vocabulary. I argue that his work not only deconstructs animalizing metaphor but also shows that language need not be a closed system and that representation remains open.

In the recent documentary *Jean-Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child*, documentarian Tamra Davis interweaves footage of arguably the most influential black artist of the twentieth-century being interviewed by ART/new york at his loft for a program called "Young Expressionists." The cinema verite style interview has long been thought to be the only videotaped interview with the artist in existence (*The Radiant Child*). Shot in 1982, Basquiat, in his early twenties at the time, wore a Wesleyan University football jersey and jeans splattered with paint (Chou). His slight frame is slouched in a "director's chair" against a white studio wall—adjacent to one of his mounted paintings, the canvas painted black. Basquiat sits across from a white male interviewer named Marc Miller.¹⁰² The wall behind the men is divided into black and white. The white of the wall frames Basquiat, and the black canvas frames Miller. Miller and Basquiat are tightly framed in two-shot, a microphone between them. Whereas Miller faces Basquiat directly, Basquiat offers only sideward glances. Basquiat's hands now tucked between his thighs; nevertheless, his movement reveals anxious agitation. Miller asks, "You are seen as some sort of...*primal* expressionism, is that...?" Chuckling cynically, Basquiat interrupts, now looking directly at Miller while still irreverently chuckling, "Like an ape? A primate?" The interviewer responds, clearly caught off guard, "Well, let's...well, I don't know." To which, Basquiat shrugs dismissively and insists, "you said it...you said it." Basquiat does not wait for a response; instead, he looks off to the side beyond the interviewer, not once, but twice. It is already too late. When Miller utters "primal," the cameraman, Paul Tschinkel, steps back abruptly, enlarging the view of the space shared by Basquiat and Miller. As Basquiat replies, "Like an ape? Like a primate?" the hand-held camera moves forward, further tightening the shot, eliminating all space beyond the bodies of the two men. The tightening frame produced by a step (perhaps even a partial step) must have resonated with how both men felt—claustrophobic ("Young Expressionists").

"Primal," a traumatizing slip, both effectively summarized the manner with which the press had distinguished Basquiat from both the artists that inspired him, like Picasso and Pollock, and his neo-expressionist contemporaries featured in the series: Julian Schnabel and Francesco Clemente. "Expressionism," "lyrical expressionism," "neo-expressionism," and "abstract expressionism" are all commonly used terms in art

historical circles to distinguish historical, national, and stylistic demarcations. *Primal?* “Primal Expressionism” is not a formally recognized genre. This slip implied the animalization of blackness, of himself, that Basquiat would underline and challenge throughout his career. Basquiat’s disruption, his insistence, “You said it... You said it,” deconstructs racial linguistic codes by foregrounding that “primal” and “primate” are paronyms and by challenging the racial connotations of these terms (“Young Expressionists”).

Miller, in fact, does not say “it” if “it” is limited to the signifier, but Basquiat’s insistence hinges on signification and connotation. From Basquiat’s view, on the register of signification, Miller has, in fact, said “it.” By the time of this interview, Basquiat was all too familiar with how the press used words that bestialized him. In an interview with Tamra Davis, Basquiat expresses frustration that most of the reviews of his art are not about his work at all but focus on his personality—his art being merely incidental to his myth (*The Radiant Child*). As he puts it, he is characterized as a “wild man running wild” or alternately as a “monkey man” (*The Radiant Child*). Yet, his purported animality serves as a key constituent of desire for the consumption of his work, for it was believed to make his work “edgy,” “primal,” and “sensual:” an antidote to the cerebral nature of the conceptual and minimalist art popular at the time. His purported animality was commonly expressed through infantilizing descriptors such as “wild child” or “feral child.” His technique was called “primitive,” “instinctive,” and “child-like.”¹⁰³ This infantilization managed the anxiety projected onto Basquiat by an art establishment that had yet to acknowledge black-authored artistic talent, let alone genius. This was so, despite celebrating the African-influenced works of Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso: artists who are thought to have ignited modernism. Infantilization is what permitted Basquiat to be seen as both “wild” but domesticatable, “willing to attack”¹⁰⁴ but ultimately powerless, hypersexual and boyish—a feral pet. This mythology was the steep price of fame, of breaking the color barrier, to become the art establishment’s first black star. By the time he died from an overdose at 27, he was more than a star; this neo-expressionist painter, musician, and graffiti tagger had become a legend (Emmerling 7).

While Basquiat is the most well known black artist of the twentieth-century, the “feral child” myth appears to be indispensable from his fame. Basquiat grew up in metropolitan New York and attended a predominately white private school until fourth grade. He was the son of Haitian and Puerto Rican middle-class parents (L. Bloom 36). His father was an accountant and former Haitian Minister of the Interior, and his mother was an artist. Jean was a precocious child: he could read and write at four, and by eleven, he was fluent in English, Spanish, and French (*The Radiant Child*). Despite his precociousness, his coming of age story shared many of the touchstones of a middle class upbringing. Yet, the media and the art establishment clung to a persistent myth about Basquiat, namely that he was a “wild child in an expensive suit.”¹⁰⁵

His work was both celebrated and dismissed as an instantiation of primitivity, sprung from a “bestial imagination.” For those who celebrated Basquiat, he represented “radical purity” and an outsider’s perspective: an artist relieved from the stultifying effects of (Western) tradition. Untouched by the strictures of capitalist modernity, Basquiat was “feral.” Once Basquiat’s middle-class upbringing became common knowledge, the price of his paintings dropped, yet the primitivist voyeurism simply shifted to the paintings themselves. The earlier paintings with graffiti tags, cartoon

crowns, and notary symbols, as well as those incorporating materials and methods of the streets, such as discarded doors and wood exposed canvases, remained highly valuable collector's items.¹⁰⁶ It was even believed that if he used techniques such as xerography, this would "ruin his intuitive primitivism"¹⁰⁷ (L. Bloom 36). As the interview footage I have just discussed makes clear, Basquiat was well aware of how the press constructed him.

Furthermore, the scene in Glen O'Brien's *Downtown 81* between Jean and Mrs. Calvalcanti, a wealthy Italian art collector, parodies both the desire for primitivity and the culture of wealthy art collection that fuels it. The film narrates a scene where being an artist, and in particular a black artist, looking to make a living off of one's artistic talent, carries with it the danger of hypersexualization, by which the artist becomes an eroticized collectible. The scene underscores the centrality of gender and sexuality for the reproduction of race, generally, as well as illuminates how these dimensions shaped Basquiat's fame in particular.

In the following scene, primitivism and consumption converge in the sexualized commodification of Basquiat's artistic persona. Basquiat plays the lead character, which is a fictionalized version of himself, alternately named "the artist" and "Jean." Evicted after not being able to pay the rent, Jean runs into a friend, Claudia, and she informs him that she knows someone who would want to buy one of his paintings and "take you with it" (*Downtown 81*).

Jean, sitting in the plush home of Mrs. Cavalcanti, grabs a coffee table book on the work of Man Ray, a progenitor of the primitivist strand of western modernism. Jean issues a critique of Western art's commercialization and idealization of mastery by tagging the canonized artist's photographs in Basquiat's signature style before tossing the book aside. By his actions, Jean rewrites and rejects the epistemological, affective, and epistemological order that it represents, even if he ultimately cannot escape its reach. Man Ray's most famous work, *Noire et Blanche*, which meditates on the mystery, primitivity, and exoticism of femininity by placing a white woman's face adjacent to an African mask. In this juxtaposition, the abundance of abject blackness projected onto the mask overwhelms and displaces gender differentiation, which serves to imply the mask's genderlessness, obscuring the female gender that the mask references. Black female gender is displaced by a notion of "the Negro," as the black female face/body is conflated with and displaced by the mask. The woman's makeup and hair has been styled to resemble the mask, yet the juxtaposition itself is premised on an implied threshold effect between "woman" and "Negro." It has often been suggested that *Noire et Blanche* premiered emergent forms of transgressive play across the colorline. However, modernist primitivism did not affect a shift in the meaning of blackness but, rather, put black racial abjection to new use. Namely, it eroticized what it abjected and fetishized what was historically a source of fear.

In *Downtown 81*, Mrs. Cavalcanti's primitivism simultaneously postulates and traverses the gulf between black and white, much like *Noire et Blanche*; however, unlike *Noire et Blanche*, the mystique of "woman" is a site of ambivalent racial and species affiliations. Mrs. Cavalcanti emerges and both infantilizes "poor Jean" and sexualizes him, rubbing his head and kissing him on the lips with a "darling." Her petting of Jean implies that she is a "cougar," reinforcing misogynist antipathy to older women's sexuality, especially when directed at younger men. Mrs. Cavalcanti wears stretch animal

print pants—an important marker of gendered, sexual, and racial difference. In my chapter on Grace Jones, I argued that according to the dominant episteme, when a black woman dons animal print, it is a redundant marker of the ontological fissure in the category of the human. Here, animal print is used to manifest what racial whiteness conceals: white women's liminality with respect to whiteness and blackness, which is mapped onto human and animal respectively.¹⁰⁸

This scene's misogyny is intertwined with the very racial sexual economy it seeks to unsettle. The characterization of Mrs. Cavalcanti's sexuality as animal-like, comparable to an African wildcat, is inextricable from a symbolic economy that would, based on myths about dark sexuality, cast Jean *as animal*, rather than *animal-like*. Mrs. Cavalcanti seeks to experience sexually and sartorially the animality she has created but nevertheless projects onto Jean. For Mrs. Cavalcanti, projecting and consuming primitivist cultural fantasy generated by non-reciprocity in the Symbolic provides her with pleasure. Jean informs her that he had recently been in the hospital where he felt like "the slide under a microscope;" ironically, Mrs. Cavalcanti's petting of Jean—his arms, thighs, hair, and shoulders—is not too unlike the dissection he describes (*Downtown 81*). Mrs. Cavalcanti "loves" his work, describing it as "so strong, so savage" before requesting a pink one to match her décor. Jean plays along with her enthusiastic consumption of him and his artwork. By conning her, he is able to acquire rent money. The wealthy woman's maid watches this con with amusement. Mrs. Cavalcanti "loves" his art, but her relation to art and artists is cannibalistic (*Downtown 81*). Art, for Mrs. Cavalcanti, is merely an emblem of wealth and cosmopolitanism. That woman is the site of frivolous consumption, a dupe for consumerist fetishism, and is undoubtedly part of the sexism of this scene as it rehearses the problematic conflation of femininity with consumption (of pink fetishes—no less).¹⁰⁹

However, through its instantiation, this scene reveals the sexualized nature of desire for the primitive; in the process, the racialized gendered presumptions of primitivism are laid bare. Pleasure is contingent on fixing the Other as fetish in a racialized sexual economy of exchange, even when artists are male.¹¹⁰ The reproduction of depictions of blackness *as animal*, not only attempt to justify the murderous racial violence that characterizes the history of lynching, but also vitalizes the eroticized specter of black animality. This eroticized specter, I argue, is central to the very autopoiesis of a race. The economies of destructive and erotic pleasure rely on the cultural fantasy of black humanity as animality. This scene uncovers the hypersexualization that was central to the myth of Basquiat, while also highlighting the artist's critique of that very myth.

The hypersexualization of Basquiat has sometimes been misrecognized as simply an index of his vocation as a "hustler," but a more nuanced reading of this scene facilitates an analysis of the sexualized dimensions of the rise of his celebrity.¹¹¹ Such a reading involves reading against the grain of O'Brien's misogyny and comedic parody—the ultimate success of Jean's con. Although I have argued that O'Brien's film reveals that the consumption of Jean's work is imbricated in a sexualized primitivism that destabilizes normative codes of gender, it also attempts to restore Jean's masculinity through scenes of the artist's smug success.

Beyond Man Ray, Basquiat was familiar with primitivists such as Picasso, and his practice even referenced the famed modernist. He was even dubbed "the black Picasso"—a label he found flattering and insulting (*The Radiant Child*). Picasso's *Les Demoiselles*

d'Avignon (1907) is often described as the progenitor of the modern aesthetic. Picasso was both inspired by and projected onto "the African" in order to create this masterpiece, which also exploited the eroticization of the African mask: the painting's depiction of white female sex workers conceals their faces behind Africanized/Oceanic masks.¹¹² That Basquiat would gravitate to Picasso seems ironically fitting in that Picasso's work would by in large introduce "the African" into European modernism, however fractured and distorted the introduction.¹¹³ Basquiat cited Picasso's *Guernica* as the first artwork that left a strong impression on him, having seen it early as a child.¹¹⁴ Basquiat's work would be in direct dialogue with Picasso until his untimely death. In addition to Picasso, abstract expressionists such as Jackson Pollock and William de Kooning also influenced Basquiat. (*The Radiant Child*)

How very dangerous and brave for a black Caribbean artist to choose neo-expressionism as his mode of critique. Expressionism itself had sought to fix "the African" as embalmed childhood. In an effort to become acquainted with primordial humanity's putative mysteries en route to unearthing an equally dubious "feral" self, Expressionism cast "the African" as primitive specimen.¹¹⁵ Expressionists privileged intuition, the unconscious, and the drives as these deep "primitive" psychic structures that were believed to provide authenticity and a "truer" form of expression. Expressionism elevated intense emotion above rationality and valued immediacy over contemplation. The artist's hand and wrist were historically believed to be an extension of the painter's rational mind. However, Jackson Pollock's expressionist paintings would not only bear the signature of his hand and wrist but also his entire body. Pollock's instrument was the body, viewed as a vast wilderness of drives, where reason finds itself in the dark. Pollock, now *in* the painting rather than objectively outside of it, removed the supposed safe distance, dividing subject from object. Pollock danced in a trance-like state with a painting that he believed had a "life of its own."¹¹⁶ This process of painting, Pollock argued, was a conversation between his body and the life emerging on the canvas. Defying the convention of painting on an upright surface, his canvas was laid on the floor; the artist, literally on all fours, was inches from the earth¹¹⁷ (Jones 53-102). Expressionism invested in primitivism on both sides of the Atlantic, which made its artistic grammar dangerous for an artist like Basquiat, especially because the United States often projects "wildness" onto a Caribbean imagined as the "jungle" just beyond its shores. Basquiat was believed to be the "wild child" of the New York metropolitan art scene, but his use of language and figuration spoke reflexively, testify that he understood the dangers of his field.

Basquiat was deeply interested in language systems, grammar, syntax, and, above all, signifiers and their significance. Basquiat's study of language systems can be seen even in his earliest graffiti tags. The tags were notable because they often took unusual forms: lyrical play on words, riddles, or multiple-choice questions. His graffiti tag "SAMO" brought him his first taste of notoriety in the underground art scene. Basquiat's "SAMO" tags took graffiti art's bravado and combined it with conceptual art's interrogation of semiotics. The fusion of conceptualism, expressionism, and graffiti art broke Basquiat into the mainstream gallery system at a time when graffiti artists were largely excluded. Fab Five Freddy, DJ and graffiti artist, befriended Basquiat during his years as a tagger.¹¹⁸ In Christina Clausen's *The Universe of Keith Haring*, Freddy discusses his own response to the art establishment's dismissal of graffiti art.¹¹⁹ Freddy

has a famous piece that involved him painting Campbell's soup cans on the side of a New York subway train—a direct reference to Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans*; one of his most famous works. Warhol was perhaps the pre-eminent artist-hero for artists on both sides of the gallery line during the 70's. He was a Pop-Art icon and the artist credited with rewriting the aesthetic standards that defined the previous generation. Warhol was celebrated for blurring the boundary dividing “high” and “low” culture; and he not only got away with it, but he became a star, by breaking through elitist standards for defining art. (*The Universe*)

Yet graffiti artists were largely excluded from showing their work in premiere galleries at the time. Freddy's cans are more than homage to an artist hero. In his words, he wanted the world to know that graffiti artists like he and Basquiat “weren't just animals, savages, and wild dogs, as we were depicted in the press at the time” (*The Universe*).¹²⁰ Freddy's “animals, savages, and wild dogs” points to a specific history of animalized racialization that is both reliant on animal metaphors—“wild dogs”—and independent of animal metaphors—“savages”—because blackness itself has its own history of animalization. The animalization inherent in the notion of “the savage” is reinforced by a discourse on non-human animals but is not reducible to it. Freddy and Basquiat were all too aware that visual representation would claim more than “presence, immediacy, and facticity;” as a “mode of describing, narrating, and representing reality, it was also a particular strategy of persuasion, even violence” (Mbembe 142).¹²¹ And as artists, they were determined to offer a different narrative of their own blackness.

As a corrective to animalizing discourses on graffiti, Bio, Pose Two, and Tracy 168 state the following in *Bomb It*, John Reiss' 2007 documentary on graffiti culture:

The very essence of the graffiti movement it is all about the signature, the tag. The whole art form (graffiti tagging) is based upon lettering. You know how jazz, broke from it's classical form and flipped it and started adding Bebop to it and different forms. We did the same thing with letters. We took the basic alphabet and stretched it. We took a “p” and elongated it, and added extensions. And just added funk to it, like we do to everything.... You don't want to loose the basis of the letter, but you want to loose the letter.... It is taking your name, your identity, and exaggerating it.¹²²

Stretching the letter to the point that it threatens legibility could be accomplished through elongations and extensions. Basquiat's art would not only challenge language's legibility but also deconstruct its grammar. Basquiat's work sought not only to provide a certificate of the artist's presence through the tag, but an assault on a system of language and its economies of value. By reducing the signifier to pure form, or by highlighting its lyrical quality, Basquiat wanted to reshape and redirect systems of language and the prevailing order of knowledge.

Basquiat's paintings *Wolf Sausage* (1983) and *Monkey* (1986) reveals that he was both a critic of animalized racialization and an innovator of knowledge systems. Basquiat's insight stemmed from his critical reflection on aesthetic inheritance in transatlantic cultures; far from a romantic depiction of hybridity, his work identified his aesthetics' condition of possibility in the transnational assault of conquest, slavery, capitalism, and colonialism. His paintings were the meeting point of European, African,

Caribbean, and U.S. histories and aesthetic influences. His oeuvre would not only critique European modernity but also present an alternative epistemology of “the human.”

In *Wolf Sausage* (1983), Basquiat demonstrates his signature “loose” style: the images do not attempt to offer the pretense of closure, precision, or a totalizing cohesiveness. This does not mean the images are composed without conscious intention, but rather that Basquiat does not purport to offer a seamless representation, as much of the painting’s detail has been painted over, obscuring representation. His use of aleatoric composition, fragmented representations, and almanac-like resonant fragments, invent a unique artistic vocabulary. His style would not only erase boundaries that purported to divide “high” modernism from “low” popular culture, but also those that demarcated drawing from painting and abstraction from representation.

In *Wolf Sausage*, the entire canvas is equally weighted, as it is painted on a grid that stretches the length of the canvas. Like a Pollock painting, in order to “take the painting in,” the viewer must give equal attention to every inch of it. In the center is a cartoon-style painting of a wolf’s head. Below the wolf head, Basquiat has painted “BAD WOLF.” The capital letters and period are unequivocal. The wolf is drawn in black lines, but is filled in with red, white, and blue. With sharp teeth exposed, red pouring from the mouth, an Uncle Sam hat balanced on the wolf’s head, Uncle Sam, the national personification of the United States government, has been transformed into a wolf. The U.S. currency surrounding the wolf is modified by the placement of a copyright symbol. The copyright emblem often accompanied Basquiat’s “SAMO” tags, establishing Basquiat as a critic of capitalist culture. This painting implies that the U.S. government and capital, once combined, transforms into the carnivorous wolf of nightmares, fantasies, and cautionary tales. Signifiers for “sausage” are written several times in the quadrant below the wolf’s head. The word “procciuutto” is a misspelling of the Italian “prosciutto,” meaning ham. It is also frequently the name for ham sold in expensive restaurants. The words for sausage are crossed out, underlined in red, or misspelled—all to draw the viewer’s attention.¹²³ Another copyright symbol appears suspended at the end of “SAUSAGE” painted in red. His use of the Spanish word “pecho” meaning chest in English, at the very least challenges the viewer’s uncritical relationship to language, as Basquiat would commonly create polylinguistic works. Additionally, Basquiat exploits the arbitrariness of the signifier. The wolf caricature’s resemblance to actual wolves is affected by habituated implication, and therefore does not hinge on empirical indexicality. In *Wolf Sausage*, this caricature is appropriated in order to critique a predatory euromodernity that has reduced the wolf to an abject emblem of threat.

Wolf Sausage is an allegorical painting referencing folkloric stories such as “Peter and the Wolf,” “The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids,” “The Three Little Pigs,” and “Little Red Riding Hood.” In Basquiat’s version, dominant U.S. culture is the “BAD WOLF;” and the interests of commerce have transmuted the red of the protagonist’s cloak into blood dripping from the mouth. The original tales are stories of subterfuge, cunning, and cannibalism. In some versions of “Little Red Riding Hood,” the wolf masks himself as the little girl in order to gain the trust of her grandmother before dining on her; in another version, Little Red Riding Hood, deceived by the wolf, mistakenly eats her grandmother (Tatar 149). It is arguable, however, that Basquiat’s painting resonates the most with the anthromorphic tale of the “Three Little Pigs,” where the mother of three

pigs sends them off to seek their fortune only to be eaten one by one by a wolf, that is, until the third pig outsmarts the wolf (Tatar 149).

Basquiat's wolf bears an uncanny resemblance to the 1933 Disney version of *The Three Little Pigs*, a narrative that in its telling praises hard work and industriousness in context of the Great Depression. The film has been interpreted as a response to the threat of the Great Depression, where the wolf symbolized the Great Depression and "Practical Pig" was the symbol of perseverance.¹²⁴ Unlike Basquiat's painting, the film is not so much a critique of the inherent predatory nature of capitalist culture but rather reinforces the ideology of the protestant work ethic.¹²⁵ Non-productivity and leisure are chided in the film, whereas "practical pig" is the narrative's hero. In the original version of the film, the wolf's voice and dress displays overt anti-Jewish stereotypes. His white gloves are inherited from the blackface minstrel stage. The question here is not whether the characterization of the wolf is animalizing black people and/or Jews, or conversely, if it is an instance of animals being racialized, whereby animals are held hostage by an intra-human affair. It is undoubtedly an instance where both moves are happening at once. Whenever representations conflate oppressed humans with animals, both humans and animals are burdened with the consequences of an endless war—the "human versus the animal." Basquiat redirects these caricatures by returning them to their source, rewriting them as the paranoid projections of a predatory, racialized, imperial, capitalist culture.

The painting also makes several references to Renaissance polymath Leonardo da Vinci. Basquiat was an admirer of his work but rejected da Vinci's interest in "authentic" representation and scientific accuracy (Emmerling 79). Basquiat's art made no claim to indexicality and was not driven by idealization of the human form, but rather was a critical study of the politics of representation. The painting's grid structure and depiction of a circle broken into quadrants is likely a reference to da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*, a painting depicting two superimposed drawings of a male figure with outstretched arms and legs, simultaneously inscribed in a circle and a square. da Vinci's drawing is based on Roman architect Vitruvius' geometric projections of the idealized male form. da Vinci learned that some of Vitruvius' calculations were questionable (even despite the architect's fidelity to precise measurements), which he discovered through lining up circles and squares as a means of determining proportion.¹²⁶ *The Vitruvian Man* represents da Vinci's interest in the question of how art relates to nature, and he sought to study the topic scientifically.¹²⁷ For da Vinci, *The Vitruvian Man* represented the manner with which the male human body, in perfect proportion, modeled nature and the universe writ large. Today, we not only know that the human body's proportions are highly variable, but artists like Basquiat also questioned da Vinci's method and epistemology, identifying the horrific consequences of idealizing the white male form as an exemplary model of "Nature."¹²⁸ The painting's citation of da Vinci's "Five Grotesque Heads" suggest the distorting effects that this very history can have on the politics of life.

Basquiat's paintings offer no pretense of "the real" or the empirical; they are a study of the machinations of language in the context of racial capital. Thus, his paintings not only call into question the authenticity of particular representations, say of race, but also interrogate the pretense of representation itself. Basquiat critiqued the problem of power and language through interventions into racial representation; stemming from this critique, he was able to speak to both the specificity of antiblack representation, while

also shedding light on the politics of representation itself, which affects the politics of life itself.

Basquiat's performance of the signifier—his reduction of the signifier to pure representation, his resignifications, and his interest in systems, grammar, and the mapping of language—present a crisis for a symbolic system that attempts to fix the meaning of his art. He showed that repetition was never simply a return to the same, or to a prior moment, but that every repetition was new signification even when it was signification's failure to take hold. His risk was entering into a mode of expression, "Neo-Expressionism" to be exact, where his blackness was rendered redundant and already known, already written by Jackson Pollock, Man Ray, and Picasso and especially their commentators. But his repetition of modernist terms potentially unmoors the bestializing semantics accompanying his predecessors' practices. Basquiat's persona and artwork was a disruption that could not be fully neutralized by the myth that attempted to circumscribe the artist. His insistent "you said it...you said it" and the work itself tears at the fabric of animalized racialization (*The Radiant Child*).

Following Basquiat, I am most interested in how black people can displace a conception of animality that has over-determined black people as animate objects, zoological spectacles, or living artifacts of primitivity in a manner that not only critiques euromodernity's foundationalist terms but also produces new orientations to both terms—human and animal. It should be clear by now that the fables that Basquiat references in *Wolf Sausage* are not stories about animals at all; as his work suggests, they are stories about humanity. Therefore, our task is not so much to rethink how we see animals; rather it is essential to interrogate the "I" that constructs Others. Interrogating our subjecthood and fantasies of self reveals the manner with which we project onto animals (human or otherwise) however positively or negatively. Thus, it stands to reason that if we do not make rethinking the category of "the human" central to our definitions of self, then we can potentially redefine animals, humanize them even, while not challenging the power dynamics and precepts of our epistemology. In other words, we can elevate non-human animals in the order of things, but fail to sufficiently challenge a system of self-recognition that needs equal parts misrecognition and abjection to define the self.

BASQUIAT AND EPISTEMIC POSSIBILITY

Given the prevalence of racially charged effigies depicting the artist, and black people generally, it is remarkable that Basquiat would dare to create a work like *Monkey*. *Monkey* was created for Barney's New York 1986 AIDS research and education benefit auction, *Decorated Denim*. The benefit brought celebrities from the arts, music, and fashion. *Decorated Denim* was New York's first major AIDS benefit at a time when the disease was steadily decimating the arts' established and rising stars. Visual artists (including Basquiat and Warhol) and fashion designers were asked to transform an American classic: the Levi's denim jacket. The benefit was a partnership between Levi's Strauss & Co and Barney's New York.¹²⁹

Basquiat's repurposed jacket is the ironic meeting place of animalized representation and canvas. The center panel of the jacket at the back is painted white, drawing attention to the (dis)similitude between the jacket and a painter's canvas. Basquiat has drawn our attention to the canvas itself, not as the absence of representation, but as historically contingent, a stereotype. Its stark whiteness is an uninterrogated starting place—something we unconsciously presume, unquestionably. That canvases are

increasingly made of cotton and have begun to resemble the American classic raises the troubling correlation between plantation slavery and artistic production. The denim jacket's classical nature rests on a desire to fix cotton's image as an emblem of American progress rather than an emblem of American slavery. With *Undiscovered Genius of the Mississippi Delta* (1983) and *Origin of Cotton* (1984), Basquiat makes the ignominious history of cotton production a touchstone of his critique of European modernity.¹³⁰

On the jacket's center panel, we find a cartoon-like monkey head that is sparse and seemingly incomplete. At closer inspection, the white of the canvas extends into the mouth, eyes, nose, and left ear of the monkey—even pouring out of these facial features, overwhelming the black outline. Representation of the canvas and the monkey are inseparable, much like the art press made Basquiat and his works indivisible. Despite their abstraction, his works were often denied the ability to have symbolic import because of critics' conception of blackness: black people were seen as ethnographic spectacles rather than abstract or symbolic thinkers (L. Bloom 34). This placed Basquiat in an inferior position in comparison to other abstract painters, but Basquiat's purported inferiority is predicated on interrelated false dichotomies—"particular versus universal" and "abstract versus literal." The purported universality imputed to the works of Basquiat's contemporaries and Modernism's progenitors was often a disavowed particularity, such that its universality was an ideological effect of Eurocentricism. *Monkey*, and Basquiat's oeuvre more generally, suggests that the "universality" and "abstraction" of Western art is inextricable from the subjective expression of a particular "genre of the human." As many would and did look at Basquiat and see the moniker etched on the jacket, *Monkey* situates such viewing practices in white normativity and its disfiguring species and racial representations. Basquiat took the challenge of repurposing a jacket and provide ironic commentary on the relationship between fashion and identity, surface and depth, protest and corporate sponsorship. Unlike a jacket, animalized racialization was not something that Basquiat could put on or take off. However, the fact that Basquiat chose oil paint as his medium is worthy of note. Oil paint does not stand a chance against regular washing. In the wash, the racially charged effigy would simply fade away.

REFERENCES

¹⁹ See Mark Reinhardt's text for information on the historical Garner. Reinhardt, Mark. *Who Speaks for Margaret Garner? The True Story That Inspired Toni Morrison's Beloved*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010. Print.

¹⁹ For more on the mother-daughter dyad, see Wyatt.

²⁰ For articles that underline the manner with which *Beloved* undermines or complicates empathy between reader and characters as the novel's approach to ethics, see Travis, Hale, Phelan, Wu.

²¹ For an article on *Beloved* that stress the narrative's contradictions and aphorisms as central to its ethics, see Harding.

²² For a great book that explores this topic historically, see Salisbury. She argues that during the Middle Ages a culture that once considered humans as absolutely distinct from animals began to adopt the view that the animal was within, and one's humanity was measured by behavior not species membership. This corresponded with the humanization of animals. Humans began to identify with animals, especially in literature, but the anxiety caused by shifting borders led to the animalization of Jews and other marginalized populations.

²³ Betty J. Ring provides an excellent exposition of how Douglass embraces "Christ-based values" while rejecting the hermeneutical warping of pro-slavery adherents. It also underlines the problems of elevating Douglass's narrative as authentic or origin.

²⁴ For texts that historicize and analyze the conditions of early African American autobiography, see Foster, Foreman, and Andrews.

²⁵ Cary Wolfe coined the phrase "discourse of species" in order to critically intervene in the semio-material twinned and oppositional constructions of "human" and "animal."

²⁶ Douglass is not proposing that all farming is brutalizing. Rather, he argues that slavery is brutalizing to both humans and animals, as it coarsens humans' treatment of life. However, Douglass's humanism does have him privileging particular aspects of humanity that are seen as uniquely human, such as reason and affection, even if he seeks to recognize these traits in animals. But his recognition of animal reason and affection still positions the animal as lacking "to a limited degree." Animal studies scholars such as Derrida question how securely "the human" possesses these very characteristics; and others, such as Vicki Hearne, argue that the comparisons do not take difference seriously, as a dog's nose is its strongest sense, and the average dog's nose is exponentially stronger than humans', so on what basis are we comparing? For thinkers like Hearne, the presumptive politics of comparison is the problem, as it tends to take presumed human attributes as the norm from which to compare animals. For more, see Brotz, Derrida, and Hearne.

²⁷ We need not dismiss Douglass's formulation on animal intelligence and emotion. For a sampling of recent scientific research in this area support Douglass's claims, see Dawkin, Griffin, Bekoff and Jamieson, Bekoff and Pierce, Bekoff and Goodall, and Peterson. In light of developments in ethology, cognitive science, and other fields, it is difficult to suggest that theoretical, ethical, and political questions should be

coterminous with a species distinction with the human on one side and everything else on the other. I am not so much interested in reinforcing scienticism as reopening the question of humanity. These texts help us recognize a world of multiple intelligences and communicative beings.

²⁸ Hartman also discusses how laws that would on face value appear to provide protection against “extreme” or “severe” form of “punishment,” were really there to protect the rights of ownership, and furthermore, they extended the suffering of the slave, as they provided slavery with a veneer of benevolence. That slavery as such should be ended was never on the table; these laws sought to regulate the practices in a manner that effectively extended its life in the face of abolitionist organizing. See Hartman, especially her chapter “Seduction and the Ruses of Power.” 79-114

²⁹ The term “civil death” was developed by Joan Dayan. The term recasts Orlando Patterson’s “social death” thesis in order to describe the prisoner’s nullified relation to citizenship.

³⁰ The novel does not conclusively state that Paul D himself was raped on the line. So following Morrison’s lead, I will not suggest conclusively that he was. However, the novel does imply that Paul D “was skipped for the time being,” but perhaps Paul D’s time did eventually come (Morrison, *Beloved* 127).

³¹ Dariack Scott does a great reading of this shaking as tied to the feminized conceptions of hysteria and female orgasm. Orgasm and the hysteric system are metonymically related in Freud’s early theory of hysteria. For Scott, this shaking is the bodily notation of the distance between Paul D’s actual male embodiment, his sense of failure, and a broken ideal (Scott, *Extravagant Abjection* 142).

³² Forms of indirection may reveal some degree of homophobia in black writers, who readers can assume are already painfully accustomed to embodying sexual guilt rather than symbolizing it—irrespective of their sexual practices. See O’Wallace and Spillers’ “Mama’s Baby” chapter in *Black, White, and in Color*.

³³ Carol E. Henderson makes a similar argument. But in her reading, Paul D is not avoiding the fragility of his masculine ego per se, but the presence of his desire for Beloved. His attraction to her “light,” if acknowledged, had embedded with in it the terrifying power of freedom as its effect. He would enter the terrifying freedom of having a desire that was not dictated by the conditions of enslavement. And retroactively, he would confront how much (post)slavery had controlled his sexuality. From there he could confront his fragmented identity.

³⁴ It was not clear whether they were sons or nephews.

³⁵ However, mother and child collaboratively generate breast milk after childbirth.

³⁶ Mae G. Henderson provides an excellent discussion of Schoolteacher’s empiricism with respect to the fields of history and ethnography as opposed to science and medicine.

³⁷ Here I disagree with critics such as A. Timothy Spaulding who have argued that Schoolteacher “restricts any acknowledgement of Sethe’s internal consciousness.” I argue that “internal consciousness” does not save the slave, but rather exposes the enslaved.

³⁸ For instance, in Morrison’s narrative Sethe’s breast milk attracts “gnats, grasshoppers, and everyother living thing,” so here is one instance where the flesh, the so-called animalized part of the human, set in opposition to “spirit,” shares an intimacy

with animality and nature, but is not reducible to an instantiation of an antiblack philosophy, or a reduction of a “human” to “an animal.” She is simply acknowledging that humans and nonhumans alike recognize breast milk as food; it simply sates. Contrarily, it would appear that even Paul D’s speech reflects animalized racialization as pertains to black women when he states, “Men don’t know nothing much,” said Paul D, tucking his pouch back into his vest pocket, “but they do know a *suckling* [emphasis added] can’t be away from *its* [emphasis added] mother for long” (Morrison, *Beloved* 19).

³⁹ While Paul D would remind Sethe, “A man ain’t a goddamn ax. Chopping, hacking, busting every-goddamn minute of the day. Things get to him. Things he can’t chop down because they’re inside;” he seemed to have difficulty extending such compassion for himself, or maybe if didn’t find some way to chop down what was growing inside, he would end up like Halle.

⁴⁰ But what, precisely, is the gestural and countenance vocabulary of a rooster or the phenomenal bodily language of a rooster? This question is important because the privileging of “the gaze” presumes a particular experience of the human body. The privileging of vision is often aided by Eurocentric epistemologies that centralize empirical observation. A rooster’s strongest senses are touch and hearing instead of vision. This would suggest that Morrison’s text is not grounded in empirical studies of actual roosters. I bring this up, not because it takes away the power of the text’s intervention, but rather because it clarifies that human perspective on animals is embodied and cultural rather than transcendental.

⁴¹ See *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* where Orlando Patterson argues that “laboring” for the master’s economic wealth is only one form that slavery takes. Not all slaves increased the master’s economic profits, but all slaves labored for the symbolic accrual of the master’s status.

⁴² See both Alain Locke’s and Richard Wright’s reviews of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in Gates, Henry Lewis and Kwame Anthony Appiah, eds. *Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*. New York: Amistad, 1993. Print.

⁴³ In the “Idea of Black Culture,” Hortense Spillers cautions against an idealization of the essential uniqueness of black culture. She argues that many have abstracted black expression from the histories that black culture references in order to produce a timeless positive quality to black expressive culture. For further information see Spillers, Harriet J. “The Idea of Black Culture.” *New Centennial Review* 6 (2007): 25. Print.; Wagner, Bryan. *Disturbing The Peace: Black Culture and the Police After Slavery*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009. Print. And, lastly, Hazel Carby has been critical of Hurston’s anthropological “spy-glass” as she believes that Hurston’s training is burdened with a set of assumptions that Hurston brings to the study of Eatonville and herself. Ultimately, Carby argues that her “spy-glass” is distorted by the disciplinary assumptions of her time. Carby also makes the argument that the Hurston “industry” is complicit in the contemporary desire to turn towards romanticized images of historical blacks and away from the realities of urban poverty and discontent within the prevailing social order. See Carby, Hazel V. “The Politics of Fiction, Anthropology, and the Folk: Zora Neale Hurston.” *New Essays on Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Ed. Michael Awkward. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. 71-94. Print.

⁴⁴ Animal law is any legal issue that involves animals in any setting. Animal law's purview would include both statutory and case law.

⁴⁵ Michael Awkward and Michelle Johnson, in "Zora Neale Hurston," suggest that scholars investigate rather than presume a unidirectional influence between teacher and student. They believe that people should compare the methodological and theoretical approaches of Hurston to her teachers and contemporaries, including Jane Bello, Ruth Benedict, Hortense Powdermaker, Katherine Dunham, and, of course, Franz Boas. They argue that a systematic close examination might actually suggest that Hurston influenced Boas and not the other way around. See Awkward, Michael and Michelle Johnson. "Zora Neale Hurston." *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Zora Neale Hurston—New Edition*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase, 2008.131-142. Print.

⁴⁶ Cheryl Harris has developed the idea of whiteness as property. Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness As Property" 106 Harv. L. Rev. 1707 (1992-1993)

⁴⁷ See Kipple, Kenneth and Virginia Himmelsteib King. *Another Dimension to the Black Diaspora: Diet, Disease, and Racism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Print. Richard Steckel claims that at least 54% of North American enslaved women's pregnancies can be classified as stillbirth, infant mortality, and early childhood mortality. See Steckel, Richard. "A Dreadful Childhood: The Excess Mortality of American Slaves." *The African Exchange*. Ed. Kiple. Durham: Duke University Press, 1987. 220. Print.

⁴⁸ The metaphor between humans and animals extended into naming itself, as cattle names and slave names were similar, and slaves were given either classic names such as Phoebe and Cyrus or as a form of mocking irony; "Beauty, Carefree, Monkey, Villain, and Strumpet." Names such as Zeno, Socrates, and Scipio were commonly imposed on slaves, but such names were also later adopted for dogs." The bodies of cattle and women were metaphorically linked, as evidenced by the fact that "Bessie" the female slave and "Bessy" the cow were listed in the inventory of William Browne (Francione 110).

⁴⁹ For instance, in debates on stem cell research, slavery is summoned as precursor and analogue of the dangers of what I am calling vital property: property claims on life.

⁵⁰ For an excellent article on the "foundation violence" of (intellectual) property from a Derridean Perspective see Guan, Wenwei. "The Poverty of Intellectual Property Philosophy" *Hong Kong Law Journal* 38. (2008): 1-160. Print. This quote builds on R. Pipes, *Property and Freedom* (Alfred A. Knopf. 1999), 36.

⁵¹ Famed Hurston biographer Robert Hemenway argues that the attention placed on Hurston's controversial relationship with patrons has led many to misinterpret her literary contributions, as it has rendered suspect the sincerity of her character and fiction. He argues that such a reading rests on a historical error, as most of Hurston's most celebrated works were not published during her tenure with infamous patrons such as Osgood Mason; furthermore, the amount of funding received is also inflated. In fact, Hurston supported herself through a multiplicity of strategies rather than simply "being taken care of" by wealthy whites. Moreover, Hurston was certainly not the only Renaissance writer with a benefactor; Hemenway is thus led to ask, why all the criticism of Hurston? See Hemenway, Robert. "The Personal Dimension in *Their Eyes Were*

Watching God. New Essays on Their Eyes Were Watching God. Ed. Michael Awkward. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990. 29-50. Print.

⁵² This chapter has benefited tremendously from K.J. Greene's "Copyright, Culture and Black Music: A Legacy of Unequal Protection." Greene, K.J. Copyright, Culture and Black Music: A Legacy of Unequal Protection. 21Hastings Communication and Entertainment Law.339. Winter, 1999 Print.

⁵³ Charlotte Mason, Encyclopedia Britannica article Retrieved April 25, 2012 <http://www.britannica.com/blackhistory/article-9218444>

⁵⁴ For a full-length book on the reception of Hurston's work, see West, M. Genevieve. *Zora Neale Hurston and American Literary Culture*. Gainesville: U of Florida Press, 2005. Print. Furthermore, recent work on Hurston such as Cheryl Wall's *Women of the Harlem Renaissance*, Ann Du Cille's *The Coupling Convention: Sex, Text, and Tradition in Black Women's Fiction*, John Lowe's *Jump at the Sun: Zora Neale Hurston's Cosmic Comedy*, and Susan Meisenholder's *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick: Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston*, all of which discuss the history of her work's reception. Carla Kaplan's *Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters* reveals Hurston's correspondence with some of her most staunch critics.

⁵⁵ The primacy given to the spoken word and Hurston's intimate knowledge of the form is most prominently displayed in *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, *Man of the Mountain*, "Book of Harm," "The Sanctified Church," and *Dust Tracks on a Road*.

⁵⁶ A number of scholars have written on the petting of Africans, including Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*; Folarin Shyllon, *Black People in Britain, 1555-1833*; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*; Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*; David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth-Century English Art*.

⁵⁷ Aravamudan states that the term *pet* initially referred to a pet lamb.

⁵⁸ While this chapter resolves to not generalize pet ownership or offer a singular position on its ethics, the type of pet ownership described in Hurston's writing reproduces black subordination and Jim Crow, so I am interested in her critique of a specific "petting relationship." There is a great deal of literature about petting and human/animal companionship that details competing ethical positions with respect to the many forms these relations can take, but ultimately this scholarship is beyond the scope of this chapter. For further reading, see Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet* and Alice A. Kuzniar's *Melancholia Dog* and Yi-Fu Tuan's *Dominance and Affection*.

⁵⁹ The marketing tagline was coined by George Angell, criminologist, lawyer, philanthropist, and founder of the second oldest humane society in the United States.

⁶⁰ Historically, pets such as dogs have been considered separate from the wildlife, as pets were thought to offer no economic value, but were rather kept for "pleasure, curiosity, and caprice," as decided in *Sentell v. New Orleans and Carrollton Railroad Company* (qtd. in Favre 36). Thus, initially dogs did not appear in the law as property because they were not considered "domestic animals" (Favre 36-37). Since the 1930s, the trend of courts is to treat pets like any other domestic animal.

⁶¹ It is no wonder that current legal rhetoric recursively and symptomatically returns to slavery in order to advocate for animals. See People For the Ethical Treatment

of Animals' *Animal Slavery Campaign* or Steven M. Wise's "Legal Personhood and The Nonhuman Rights Project." <http://www.nonhumanrightsproject.org/overview/>.

⁶² 21 Tex. 748, Supreme Court of Texas. THE STATE v. JOSHUA SMITH. 1858. 4 Cranch C.C. 483, Case No. 15,453 and 4 Cranch, C. C. 4831 Circuit Court, District of Columbia. UNITED STATES v. JACKSON. Nov. Term, 1834. These cases also make direct reference to slavery as analogue. 1 N.M. 415, Supreme Court of the Territory of New Mexico. NESTOR GARCIA v. TERRITORY OF NEW MEXICO. Jan. 1869. This is an interesting case because it uses slavery as an analogue to think through the meaning of cruelty as it relates to the states use of lashes in a case where the accused was convicted for stealing the animal of another.

⁶³ A leading proponent of animal rights, and in particular the extension of personhood to at least some animals, Gary Francione has argued that animal cruelty cases adopted some of the logic governing slavery, such that courts assumed that the master has self-interest in his property that should militate against unnecessary punishment. Historically, animals' only legal representation has been as property, and as such, they have had no legal rights under the law. Laws tend to regulate the uses of property rather than to protect animals. It also stands to reason that the production of the animal zero-status in the law would negatively impact blackness, as animals and slaves are analogues in the history of American law. However, one must ask from what vantage point can one assume that personhood equals an unambiguous relation to rights or protection when it has not proven itself as such for people of color? pg 111

⁶⁴ On the other hand, for a book that centralizes women's folk expressions, see Stallings, L.H. *Mutha' Is Half a Word: Intersections of Folklore, Vernacular, Myth, and Queerness I Black Female Culture*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2007. Print. She argues that it is not that women have been excluded from producing folklore; rather scholars have privileged male expression and male dominated sites of cultural production.

⁶⁵ Anti-black "domestication" did not just symbolically analogize blackness to animality; its practice of violence literally intersected human and animal bodies. In *My People, My People*, Hurston recalls a particularly brutal episode of white violence: "They had Bronner down there tied down on all-fours, and de men was taking turns wid dat bull whip. They must have been standing on tip-toes to do it. You could hear the licks clear out de road." pg 729

⁶⁶ Note that the passage is largely gender neutral, the "active" role of the "sister calyxes," and Janie's engaged receptivity mark this scene as queer indeed.

⁶⁷ Before *Their Eyes* was adapted by Oprah Winfrey in 2005 for television, film's vocabulary inspired Hurston's imagination even if filmic versions were not produced in her lifetime. See Elizabeth Bingelli. "Hollywood Wants a Cracker: Zora Neale Hurston and Studio Narrative Culture." from *"The Inside Light: " New Critical Essays on Zora Neale Hurston* Ed. Deborah Plant pg 33-54

⁶⁸ Bee pollination is an act of cooperation and interdependence in nature, as bees are pollinators that carry or move the pollen from the anther to the receptive part of the carpel or pistil. Most plants rely on pollinators, such as bees, for fertilization and sexual reproduction with fruiting as the end result. See US Forest Department: "Pollinator Fact Sheet." Some Florida pear trees, such as the Pineapple Pear, are self-fertile and serve as

their own pollenizers, even if bees aid in their pollination. Furthermore, bees' socialization is not free from violence or exploitation as competition between female bees often leads to death of one or more competing females, and the "queen bee," despite the power associated with the name, is typically collectively killed once her reproductive capability has been expended. However, pain is present in this scene as well, so it is not a simplistic vision of a painless world. Claire Preston's *The Bee* does an excellent job synthesizing both what we know about the actual lives of bees and the prevalent use of bees in the Western religio-philosophical tradition. See Peterson, Claire. *The Bee*. London: Reaktion Books, 2006. Print.

⁶⁹ Rachel Stein in "Rerooting the Sacred Tree: Nature, Black Women, and Voodoo," argues that Hurston "embalmed" her growing knowledge of voodoo spirituality within the nature imagery; this facilitated Hurston's locating of the sacred within nature and (black) female sexuality. See Stein, Rachel. "Zora Neale Hurston's *Tell My Horse* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*." *Shifting the Ground: American Women Writers' Revisions of Nature, Gender, and Race*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997. 53-83 Print. Additionally, scholars have rarely mentioned Hurston's affinity and active interest in the work of Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, for whom God and nature are inseparable. Garrett, Don. "Benedict de Spinoza, Ethics (1677): The Metaphysics of Blessedness." *Classics of Western Philosophy*. Eds. Jorge E. Garcia et al. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003. 245-260. Print. Deborah Plant discusses at great length Hurston's affinity with Spinoza in her brilliant book on Hurston, *Every Tub Must Stand On Its Own Bottom: The Philosophy and Politics of Zora Neale Hurston*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995. Print.

⁷¹ Jones has been represented by Island Records since the 1970s. Her first three albums—*Portfolio* (1977), *Fame* (1978), and *Muse* (1979)—generated a string of hits, including "Do and Die," "On Your Knees," and a cover of Edith Piaf's "La Vie En Rose." Her live act garnered a large gay disco following, causing some to crown her "the queen of gay disco." During this period she became a muse of Andy Warhol's, and he photographed her often. (Getty Museum) Another of Warhol's longtime collaborators, *Interview* magazine cover illustrator Richard Bernstein, created her first three album covers and accompanying single releases. (Berenstein) Toward the end of the 1970s, Jones altered her music and image and became an influential New Wave music artist. She released the acclaimed albums *Warm Leatherette* (1980) and *Nightclubbing* (1981). Her post-disco dance track "Pull Up to the Bumper," a metaphorical song about the pleasures of anal sex, was a hit on the U.S. Billboard chart. As her music transformed, so did her image with dramatic results created in partnership with the French illustrator, graphic designer, photographer, and advertising film director Jean-Paul Goude, with whom she had a son. The cover photographs of *Nightclubbing*, and subsequently, *Slave to the Rhythm* (1985), exemplified this new identity. The cover photo of *Nightclubbing*, *Blue-black in Black on Brown* (1981) is discussed later in this chapter.

In 1981 and 1982 Jones toured the United Kingdom, Continental Europe, Scandinavia and the U.S. with her *One Man Show*, a filmed performance and live art show devised by Jones and Jean-Paul Goude. She performed tracks from the albums *Portfolio*, *Warm Leatherette*, and *Nightclubbing* dressed in elaborate masks and costumes including that of a gorilla. She reprises Marlene Dietrich's striptease in Josef Von

Sternberg's *Blonde Venus*. Although she is an avant-garde recording artist, many of her songs are regarded as classics to this day. (Salewicz 120)

⁷¹ Soundlab article <http://soundlab.com/content/content/view/id/3862>; Gender Bender 2/11/2005 <http://www.genderbender.it/eng/gb05/dettaglio.asp?id=9>

⁷² However, in England it has historically been the opposite: 'if a white cat crosses your path, turn around completely, spit on the ground, and make a cross.' See McNeill 8.

⁷³ In this section when I refer to women, I am referring to women in pre and modern European contexts. The terms woman and European are used for practical purposes, but I am aware that these along with the terms humanity and animality will take on greater significance with the historical emergence of slavery and colonial expansion. I will gradually begin to discuss the modern implications of these myths as they pertain to black women in racialized contexts.

⁷⁴ Rogers suggest that "those in a weak position often have to manipulate, and cautions against "overestimating what they succeed in getting" (165).

⁷⁵ We can think of Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman* or William Faulker's *Absalom, absalom!* as literary examples of how the image of the cat merged with representations of women of African descent. In both texts, women of color are compared to the sphinx.

⁷⁶ Initially a publicity image for Jones's 1978 Halloween show at the Roseland dance space, *Grace in a Cage* has been heavily reproduced and decontextualized. It has been transnationally circulated over the Internet without context. Additionally, it was cropped and placed on Goude's book, aptly titled *Jungle Fever*, without the potentially subversive implications of interrogating spectatorship because the spectators, the stage, and the two white male hands were cropped out of the image.

⁷⁷ Although I find myself in disagreement with Kershaw, she provides a much more detailed description of the Paradise Garage performance than I do here. see Kershaw 19-25.

⁷⁸ Somerville expands on the arguments cited here in *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. Print.

⁷⁹ I use Kessler's term in order to avoid the pathologizing connotations of the medical establishment term "genital ambiguity." This ambiguity is generally seen as a *problem* in need of "medical/surgical intervention" by the medical establishment.

⁸⁰ In the July 27, 1983 of Jet: "Dear Editor, In response to Ms. Jones' statement in (JET, May 16) about Black men not being attracted to her. Ms. Jones is freaky because she chooses to be. Most of the black men that I know are looking for a traditional woman. Cynthia Spencer, Philadelphia, Pa." And in September 1979 issue of EBONY: "What a big joke Grace Jones is! She is the perverted fantasy White people have of Blacks. The majority of her audience is White. Please find a more worthwhile person who has given our people something positive. Margaret Buckhannon, Nyack N.Y." This letter followed: "Thank you Ebony for presenting Grace Jones (July 1979). Being a Black native of the Caribbean and a model myself, I take my hat off to EBONY and Grace Jones for being very positive sources of inspiration. The July cover is one of the best EBONY covers I have ever seen. Walter Greene, New York N.Y."

⁸¹ Her song “Slave to the Rhythm” would contradict this point. But her contradictions and complexity is exactly what I am theorizing. Jayna Brown’s *Babylon Girls: black Women Performers Shaping the Modern* does a great job discussing how black women dancers working in and against such stereotypes. As she describes, dancing was an act of self-possession. See J. Brown 85.

⁸² *New York Times* film critic Armond White called him “the least well-known great American filmmaker.”

⁸³ See Adam for examples of Muybridge’s plates.

⁸⁴ Barber’s *Adagio for Strings* is his most well-known composition and is widely considered of a masterpiece modern classical music. He was twice awarded the Pulitzer Prize for music, for his opera *Vanessa* and his *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*. (Heyman 142)

⁸⁵ During the Great Depression, in the summer of 1936, Agee spent eight weeks on assignment for *Fortune* with photographer Walker Evans. (Madden 248) They lived among sharecroppers in Alabama. No article was published by *Fortune*, but Agee did turn the material into the book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, published in 1941. (H. Davis 36) Originally ignored as a first publication, it has since been placed among the greatest literary works of the twentieth century by the New York School of Journalism and the New York Public Library. (Agee *Let* 418) In the 1940s, Agee was one of the most influential film critics in the United States, having been a critic for *Time*, *The Nation*, and *Life*. As a freelancer in the 1950s, Agee continued to write magazine articles but found himself drawn into the movie industry as a screenwriter. He was a screenwriter for two of the most revered films of the 1950s: John Hurston’s *The African Queen* (1951) and Charles Laughton’s *Night of the Hunter* (1955). (See Sragow) (Texts On Barber: Aiken, Charles S. *The Transformation of James Agee's Knoxville*. Geographical Review, Vol. 73, No. 2, pp. 150–165. 1983; Heyman, Barbara B. *Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992; Kreiling, Jean Louise. *The Songs of Samuel Barber: A Study in Literary Taste and Text-Setting*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: 1986; Felsenfeld, Daniel. *Britten and Barber: Their Lives and Their Music*. Pompton Plains, N.J.: Amadeus Press, 2005

⁸⁶ As defined by Robert Kolker in *Film, Form, and Culture*, shot reverse shot is any pair of shots in which the second shot reveals what is on the other side of the previous shot. If, for example, the first shot is a hat and the second is a character looking at something, the character constitutes the reverse shot, and we presume that character is looking at the hat.

⁸⁷ It is still relatively uncommon to see a shot reverse shot structure across the lines of species, and when it is done, it is often a humorous commentary on anthropomorphism. The joke is the anthropomorphism implied by extending the intersubjectivity across lines of species.

⁸⁸ See Robert Redford’s *Legend of Bagger Vance* (2000) This is a film that in terms of representational and filmic strategies disavows customary practices of deference between black and white men. For instance, when Bagger Vance (Will Smith) meets Rannulph Junuh (Matt Damon) for the first time, Vance offers his hand first. The gestural codes of Jim Crow required that if hands were to be extended, the white male should initiate it.

⁸⁹ That the film focuses on the eye rather than horse's incredibly sensitive nervous system is anthropocentric. However, that aside, the film still accomplishes a critique of both anthropocentrism and Sacrifice.

⁹⁰ While no doubt many people have identified the significance of the intersection of gunshot with film shot, one article, in particular does an excellent job locating this relation in imperialist context. See Ryan 205-222.

⁹¹ Robeson was a staunch defender of socialism and economic equality. (Robeson *Here* 39; Robeson *Speaks* 19-22) As an internationalist, Robeson drew comparisons between apartheid in South Africa and Jim Crow in the Southern U.S., as well as between French domination in Haiti and in Vietnam. (*Here* 107) He accused the U.S. of genocide on the world stage when the 1951 document *We Charge Genocide* was delivered to the United Nations, a document indicting the U.S. government's failure to intervene in the lynching of African Americans. (*Speaks* 561, 581) Increasingly isolated, his movement and professional opportunities were curtailed by the U.S. government. Robeson's reputation was tarnished by government-orchestrated attacks against him. The Hoover administration and the NAACP co-authored a ghost written article for the NAACP magazine, *Crisis*. Fitting for this discussion, the *Crisis* article was titled "Paul Robeson: Lost Shepherd." The article laments what the authors believe is Robeson's misplaced interest in internationalism and economic justice, encouraging him to retreat from these matters and focus on a less confrontational integrationist politics. Figuring Robeson as, at best, naïve, at worst, dangerously zealous, the article pitted economic and racial justice as well as local and transnational calls for justice against each other, despite their intersecting resonance in the lives of African Americans. (*Speaks* 40)

⁹² "The House I Live In" was featured in the Oscar-winning Frank Sinatra short film of the same title. (Margolick 19) The film sought to critique anti-Jewish racism but ironically chose to convey this message by promoting equality and togetherness among white immigrants in the face of a "Jap" threat. The film's white chauvinism went as far as to alter the song itself; its second stanza, "my neighbor black and white," was removed, which promoted racial equality between whites and blacks (Robeson; "Race – The Power of Illusion"). Meeropol was the lyricist behind Billie Holiday's famous rendition of the anti-lynching song "Strange Fruit." Meeropol often wrote songs that parodied America due to his frustration with American injustice, and even wrote scathing songs about the same subject before being targeted and blacklisted in the anti-communist sweep of American cultural industries. (Margolick 81)

⁹³ See Cameron's "Please Come Flying" blogspot for more details on the history of the song. <http://www.pleasecomeflying.com/2007/10/goin-home-antonin-dvorak-william-arms.html>

⁹⁴ This is essential the argument of Derrida's "Force of Law" and "Eating Well."

⁹⁵ The *Slaughterhouse Cases* were the Supreme Court's first interpretation of the recent Fourteenth Amendment. It is considered one of the pivotal cases in early Civil Rights legislation, despite the fact that there were no African American plaintiffs as it was largely a case about monopoly capitalism. However, some have suggested that the Court's ruling enabled African Americans to enter an industry that had formerly barred their admittance. Prior to the ruling, slaughterhouse owners had to invest in construction and maintenance of the slaughterhouses. After the Court's 1873 ruling, the only startup

capital needed was that with which to purchase the animals. Because it opened the industry up to people who lacked money, African Americans could potentially enter the trade as owners and not only employees. However, in the context of racial capitalism, the dynamic of racial stratification of owner, skilled, and unskilled workers continues into the present. See Lindgren Johnson

⁹⁶ A perspective that I argue the film rejects as black women are overwhelming shown as having justifiable anger in the face of black male sexism.

⁹⁷ Hartman describes fungibility as the abstractness and immateriality of blackness and the replaceability and interchangeability of black people within the logic and practices of enslavement in the US.

⁹⁸ The full report is on “The Black Past” website:

<http://www.blackpast.org/?q=primary/moynihan-report-1965>. Retrieved April 15, 2012.

⁹⁹ For Lacan, the Name-of-the-Father is the fundamental signifier, which permits signification to proceed in accordance with the values of our patriarchal society. It both confers identity to the subject, naming and positioning the subject within heteropatriarchal Symbolic Order, and signifies the Oedipal prohibition. In other words, the “no” of “anti-social” and “deviant” desires. Lacan distinguishes between the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real Father. The Symbolic Father is not one’s actual father but a position, a function. The paternal function imposes a law that regulates and disciplines desire. It attempts to unite one’s desire with the Law. The Imaginary Father is an imago: a constellation of constructs Father bears little resemblance to the actual father. For instance, he can be and associations that the subject builds up around the figure of the father. The Imaginary read as an ideal father or a bad father. In either case, he is not synonymous with our fantasy of him. The Real Father is the agent who negates desire, punishes, and rewards for one’s compliance with the Law. Importantly, the Real Father is an effect of language, a materialization of an inherited Law. Our society places a heavy emphasis on the symbolic aspects of fatherhood, which serves to obscure the concrete experience of fatherhood. The function of the father is that of authority and the specter of punishment if one fails to conform to the family’s hierarchy of power and resources, which we refer to as “The Law of the Father.” The son must identify with his father’s authority, while deferring that authority for himself until he has reached maturity, repressing the desires that would challenge his father’s power. Additionally, in many households, people of various genders might share the symbolic function of “the father”. To chart the development of these concepts see Millers’s Seminar *I, II*, pages X-X, and Lacan’s *Ecrits*.

¹⁰⁰ Yet, it would be a mistake to presume that black men are always and unilaterally placed under the sign of deficiency. Black men have also been seen as superior in some aspects of masculine purview: virility, bodily strength, physical combat, sexual prowess, and fecundity. But it is these aspects of masculinity that tie the male body to the animal within—the body in its base animality. That black men are seen as superior in this respect reinforces not only the bestialization of blackness but also the animalization of “the animal.” This post-Cartesian debasement of our shared animality and corporeality is strengthened by the traffic between racial discourse and humanist exceptionalism.

¹⁰¹ While this chapter has focused on Burnett's exploration of the existential conditions of black masculinity, we need not accuse Burnett of positing black masculinity as an entitled representative of blackness over and against the existential conditions that accompany black femininity, such that the crises of black masculinity becomes privileged in our evaluation of the strides of "the race." One could easily write about Burnett's interventions into racial femininity in his films such as *Killer of Sheep* and *Night John*. For many years, Burnett tried to acquire funding to make a film about the murder of a black woman at the hands of her community, but could never procure the funds. This anecdote is emblematic of how sexism and racism is built into the material politics of film's production. However, he has consistently shot black women in a manner that troubles sexist depictions of black womanhood. See Martin and Julien

¹⁰² Marc Miller and Paul Tschinkel produced the ART/new york project from 1981-1985 and recorded approximately 75 interviews during that time.

¹⁰³ See Rene Ricard's article "Radiant Child" on Basquiat for this kind of language. Ricard states, "If Cy Twombly and Jean Dubuffet had a baby and gave it up for adoption, it would be Jean Michel." Jeffrey Dietch also stated, Basquiat was "the wild boy raised by wolves" and "a freak of nature."

¹⁰⁴ Marc Miller quoted in *Art in America* from "Basquiat: Behind the Interview." Chou, Kimberly. "Basquiat: Behind the Interview." *Art in America*. July, 21 2010 Retrieved March 18th, 2012 By Kimberley Chou 7/21/10.

<http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-opinion/news/2010-07-21/basquiat-behind-the-interview/>

¹⁰⁵ This statement is taken from the final episode of State of the Art (episode 6), a series of documentaries about the visual arts in the 1980s. www.illuminationsmedia.co.uk

¹⁰⁶ see Ricard, Dietch, D'Arcy

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Andy Warhol Diaries, ed. Pat Hackett (New York: Warner books, 1989).

¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, cougars do not prey on males of their species and rarely attack humans, so the very indexicality of this analogy is unsupportable.

¹⁰⁹ However, in a context of blackness, black men are also popular emblems of over consumption. Black men are often figured as pathological consumers and undeserving of the pleasure of consumption. Black men are burdened with representing the hyper and conspicuous consumption that characterizes contemporary America.

¹¹⁰ The film features a scene where a European model from Milan driving an expensive car, picks up a homeless Jean, offering him a ride. For those uncritical of and blinded by the lure of masculinity, this film supports the pleasurable fantasy that this encounter is simply a pleasurable reversal of quotidian gendered scenes of sexual harassment; yet, this reversal is only made possible by a commercial economy that privileges white femininity on a global scale, providing her with the means and entitlement to "take care of him for the rest of his life." As Jean states sarcastically, "she hasn't seen me in the magazines," only reinforces this point. Yet, this scene is presented as a fulfillment of Jean's wish even though his voice over reveals: "I didn't even know I was struggling. I guess that is what artists are supposed to do. She was beautiful. She was rich. She wanted me. I didn't want to disappoint her (O'Brien)." Now what makes this scene and the one featuring Mrs. Cavalcanti so fascinating is that they both reveal the

queer reproduction of heteronormativity and anxiously re-establish sexism through a presentation of the artist's bravado. But, bravado itself, does not nullify the queer material relations of gendered racial power.

¹¹¹ Glen O'Brien would claim that the film was based on his observations of Basquiat's actual life: "Penniless, Jean-Michel was kicked out of his apartment, then tried to sell his paintings for daily income. He showed up at clubs and tried to pick up girls to go to her apartment to have someplace to sleep. Basically, it was based on his real life..." But, in the movement from nightclub to plush apartment, Glen O'Brien may actually risk erasing Basquiat's vulnerability to white wealthy patrons rather than base his depiction on the reality of Basquiat as a "hustler." Taka Kawachi(ed.) *King for a Decade: Jean-Michel Basquiat*. Kyoto: Korinsha Press, 1997.

¹¹² Picasso has emphatically denied that his 1907 painting was influenced by African art, contending "African art? Never heard of it!" (*L'art nègre? Connais pas!*) Instead he attributed the painting's seeming African influence to his mining of Iberian sculpture. However, several experts maintain that, at the very least, Picasso visited the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro (known today as Musée de l'Homme) in the spring of 1907 where he saw and was in all likelihood influenced by the African and Tribal art he saw several months before completing *Demoiselles*. There are photographs of the artist in his studio surrounded by African masks during the same period, and there are reports of friends introducing him to Fang masks as early as 1904. The visual vocabulary of the painting itself, experts contend make a case for overriding Picasso's protest. Richardson, John. *A Life Of Picasso, The Cubist Rebel 1907-1916*. pp. 24-26, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991; Green, Christopher. *Picasso: Architecture and Vertigo*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005; Edwards, Steve & Wood, Paul. *Art of the Avant-Gardes: Art of the Twentieth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004; *The Private Life of a Masterpiece*. BBC Series 3, Episode 9. 17, 18; Picasso's words were transcribed by Fels F., "Opinions sur l'art nègre". *Action*, Paris, 1920; and Daix, P.. "Il n'y a pas d'art nègre dans les *Demoiselles d'Avignon*". In *Gazette des Beaux-Arts Paris*, October 1970. Both are quoted in Anne Baldassari, "Corpus ethnicum: Picasso et la photographie coloniale", in *Zoos humains. De la Vénus hottentote aux reality shows*, Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch, Eric Deroo, Sandrine Lemaire, Edition La Découverte, 2002. 340–348 Basquiat's *Untitled*, 1983 appears to be in dialogue with or reference *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*.

¹¹³ Basquiat work was also influenced by artists, athletes, musicians, writers, scientists, and popular culture including visual artists African Rock Art, Willem De Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Leonardo Da Vinci, Cy Twombly, Van Gogh; writers Mark Twain, James Joyce, John Giorno, William Burroughs, Surrealists; musicians Miles Davies, Dizzy Gillespie, John Cage, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker; athletes Muhammad Ali and Joe Louis, as well as advertising, comics, cartoons, and popular culture, science—Charles Darwin, Gregor Mendel. (*The Radiant Child*)

¹¹⁴ At six years old he was already a "junior member" of the Brooklyn Museum of Art. (*The Radiant Child*)

¹¹⁵ See Petrine Archer Shaw. *Negrophilia: Avant-garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s*, Thanmes and Hudson 2000. This book provides a great overview of African

and African American representation and influence on artists in Paris including Man Ray and Picasso. See also Torgovnick

¹¹⁶ Pollock, Jackson. "My Painting." *Possibilities*. New York. (Winter 1947-48):78-83. in *Jackson Pollock: Interviews, Articles, and Reviews*. Karmel, Pepe, Varnedoe, edited by Kirk. Museum of Modern Art New York 2002 Pg.18

¹¹⁷ "The Wild Ones". Time (magazine). 1956-02-20. Retrieved 2008-09-15.

Karmel, Pepe, (Ed), Jackson Pollock: Key Interviews, Articles and Reviews Museum of Modern Art, Pepe Karmel, and Kirk Varnedoe (Editors), Publisher: Abrams, Harry N Inc., 1999.

¹¹⁸ Basquiat would insist that his graffiti tag "samo" short for "same old shit" be pronounced correctly. Whereas many had taken to pronouncing the tag "sam-o," Basquiat was disturbed by the close parallel this pronunciation had with the racial, gendered, and sexual epithet "sambo:" a black male figure of neutered sexuality, child-like simplicity, and gleeful compliance to white authority. He would insist that the tag be pronounced "same-o," which was consistent with the fact that it was short for "same old shit"—a inside joke shared between himself and fellow artist Al Diaz. (O'Brien TV Party)

¹¹⁹ *The Universe of Keith Haring* is a documentary on Haring: the first graffiti artist to receive recognition from the gallery system and a personal friend of Basquiat and Freddy.

¹²⁰ Dir. Christina Claussen *The Universe of Keith Haring*. 2008 UK

¹²¹ Mbembe 142

¹²² Dir. John Reiss, *Bomb It*. Antidote Films, 2007 USA

Legendary graffiti artist, Rammellzee's graffiti art were based on his theory of *Gothic Futurism*, which describes the battle between letters and their symbolic warfare against any standardizations enforced by the rules of the alphabet. His treatise, *Iconic Panzerisms*, details a blue-print on how to revise the role and deployment of language in society.

¹²³ Basquiat claimed to cross out words in order to entice the viewer, who will want to see all the more, once something is crossed out. Kawachi, Taka. "Gray+Interview." *King for a Decade: Jean Michel Basquiat*. ed. Taka Kawachi. Kyoto: Korinsha Press, 1997, p. 97.

¹²⁴ It won the 1934 Academy Award for the "Best Short Subject: Cartoons" and was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress. <http://www.imdb.com/event/ev0000003/1934>

¹²⁵ The song Frank Churchill song "How's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf" was a best-selling single and became a kind of national anthem in the face of a mounting Nazi threat. This is ironic considering that in the original version of the film, the wolf's character, displayed overt racial stereotypes of Jews and arguably blacks—the wolf's and the pig's white gloves owe a debt to the minstrel stage.

<http://www.disneyshorts.org/shorts.aspx?shortID=187>

<http://classiccartoons.blogspot.com/2007/05/did-you-miss-me-three-little-pigs.html>

<http://disney.go.com/disneyinsider/history/legends/Frank-Churchill>

¹²⁶

Leonardo Squared the Circle! -- Da Vinci's Secret Solution in the Vitruvian Man Decoded by Tom Pastorello

http://arthistory.about.com/library/weekly/bl_leo_vitruvian_man.htm;
Klaus Schröer (Das Geheimnis der Proportionsstudie, Waxmann Publisher, Germany, 1998)

¹²⁷ Capra, Fritjof. The Science of Leonardo; Inside the Mind of the Genius of the Renaissance. (New York, Doubleday, 2007)

¹²⁸ Interestingly, the Vitruvian Man is placed on the Italian Euro Coin as of 2002.

¹²⁹ See Eloge de l'Art par Alain Truong blog spot. Posted 27 September 2010
<http://elogedelart.canalblog.com/archives/2010/09/27/19179667.html>

¹³⁰ *Origin of Cotton* was a collaboration between the artist and Francesco Clemente and Andy Warhol.

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