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On How We Mistook the Map for the  
Territory, and Re-Imprisoned Ourselves  
in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being,  
of *Désêtre*

Black Studies Toward the Human Project

Sylvia Wynter



I

*An Argument*

[T]he idea that Western thought might be exotic if viewed from another landscape never presents itself to most Westerners.

—*Amiri Baraka (1963)*

It is the opinion of many Black writers, I among them, that the Western aesthetic has run its course.... We advocate a cultural revolution in art and ideas.... In fact, what is needed is a whole new system of ideas.

—*Larry Neal (1971)*

I would like to refer you to an essay by the late Dr. Du Bois where he ... says that, up until the point that he really came to terms with Marx and Freud, he thought “truth wins.” But when he came to reflect on the set of lived experiences that he had, and the notions of these two men, he saw ... that if one was concerned about surviving ... about ... “the good life” and moving any society

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toward that, then you had to include a little something other than an interesting appeal to “truth” in some abstract, universal sense.

—Gerald McWhorter (1969)

The emergence of the Black Studies Movement in its original thrust, before its later cooption into the mainstream of the very order of knowledge whose “truth” in “some abstract universal sense” it had arisen to contest, was inseparable from the parallel emergence of the Black Aesthetic and Black Arts Movements and the central reinforcing relationship that had come to exist between them.\* As with the latter two movements, the struggle to institute Black Studies programs and departments in mainstream academia had also owed its momentum to the eruption of the separatist “Black Power” thrust of the Civil Rights Movement. It, too, had had its precursor stage in the intellectual ferment to which the first southern integrationist phase of the Civil Rights Movement had given rise, as well as in the network of extracurricular institutions that had begun to call for the establishment of a black university, including, *inter alia*, institutions such as the National Association for African-American Research, the Black Academy of Arts and Letters, the Institute of the Black World, the New School of Afro-American Thought, the Institute of Black Studies in Los Angeles, and Forum 66 in Detroit. The struggle for what was to become the institutionalization of Black Studies was to be spearheaded, however, by a recently enlarged cadre of black student activists at what had been, hitherto, almost purely white mainstream universities, all of whose members had been galvanized by Stokely Carmichael’s call, made in Greenwood, Mississippi, for a turning of the back on the earlier integrationist, “We shall overcome” goal of the first phase of the Civil Rights Movement, and for the adoption, instead, of the new separatist goal of Black Power.

All three movements had been moved to action by the 1968 murder of Martin Luther King, Jr., and by the toll of burning inner cities and angry riots that followed in its wake. These events were particularly decisive for the Black Studies Movement. The new willingness of mainstream university administrators to accede to the student activists’

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\*This chapter is the original, full-length version of an essay bearing the same name that appears, in significantly shortened and revised form, in *A Companion to African-American Studies* (2006). (It appears with apologies to June Jordan, riffing on Milan Kundera, and to Aimé Césaire for the term *désêtre* [translated as *dysbeing* on the model of *dysgenic*]).

demands for the setting up of Black Studies programs and departments was made possible by the trauma that gripped the nation. Once established, these new programs and departments functioned to enable some of the major figures of the then far more powerful and dynamic Black Arts and Black Aesthetic Movements to carry some of their work into the academic mainstream, even where they, too, like Black Studies as a whole, were to find their original transgressive intentions defused, their energies rechanneled as they came to be defined (and in many cases, actively to define themselves so) in new “multicultural terms” as African-American Studies; as such, this field appeared as but one of the many diverse “Ethnic Studies” that now served to re-verify the very thesis of Liberal universalism against which the challenges of all three movements had been directed in the first place.

The destinies of the three movements would, in the end, differ sharply. The apogee years for all three movements (1961-1971) were to see the publication of a wide range of anthologies of poetry, theater, fiction, and critical writings, but also the publication of three scriptural texts specific to each. Whereas 1968 saw the publication of *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writings*, edited by Leroi Jones and Larry Neal, as *the* definitive anthology that crystallized the theoretical discourse and practice of the Black Arts Movement, the year 1969, which saw the publication of *Black Fire* in the paperback version, marked the publication of the proceedings of a 1968 symposium, “Black Studies in the University,” which had been organized by the Black Student Alliance at Yale University. The conference was financed by the Yale administration. In 1971, the edited collection of essays by Addison Gayle, Jr., *The Black Aesthetic*, as *the* definitive text of what was to become the dominant tendency of that movement, was also published.

The paradox here, however, was that despite the widespread popular dynamic of the Black Arts and Black Aesthetic Movements, they disappeared as if they had never been. They were done in by several major developments. One was a tapering off of the movement of social uprising that had been the Black Civil Rights Movement, in the context of affirmative action programs that enabled the incorporation of the black middle and socially mobile lower-middle classes into the horizons of expectation of the generic white middle classes (if still at a secondary level), ending with the separation of their integrationist goals from the still ongoing struggles of the black lower and under classes. This separation had itself begun to be effected in the wider national context, both by the subsiding of

radical new-left politics subsequent to the ending of the Vietnam War and by the rightward swing taken by the society as a whole in reaction against the tumultuous years of the 1960s.

Second, their demise was hastened by the defection of the most creatively original practitioner of the Black Arts Movement, Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka, and his conversion from Black Power nationalism (of which the Black Arts and Black Aesthetic Movements had been the “spiritual arm”) to the Maoist wing of Marxism-Leninism as a universalist counter to the universalism of Liberalism. The Black Nationalist Movement had arisen to contest the latter, which he hoped would avoid the trap of the cognitive and psycho-affective closure into which the Black Arts and Black Aesthetic Movements seemed to have fallen.

A third development—the rise of black feminist thought and fiction, which took as one of their major targets the male and macho hegemonic aspect of the black nationalist aesthetic and its correlated Black Arts Movement, even where black women had played as creative a role as the men—also took its toll.<sup>1</sup>

Jones/Baraka’s Maoist-Leninist defection as well as the feminist defection by black women were serious blows. The *coup de grace* to both the Black Arts and the Black Aesthetic Movements, however, was to be given by the hegemonic rise of a black (soon to be “African-American”) poststructuralist and “multicultural” literary theory and criticism spearheaded by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. It was this thrust that would displace and replace the centrality of the Black Aesthetic Movement, redefining the latter’s Reformation call for an alternative aesthetic able to contest what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) was later to identify as the “monopoly of humanity” of our present mainstream bourgeois aesthetics, with the reformist call for an alternative “African-American” literary canon ostensibly able to complement the Euro-American literary one and, therefore, to do for the now newly incorporated black middle classes what the Euro-American literary canon did and continues to do for the generic, because white, and hegemonically Euroamerican middle classes.

In her book entitled *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic* (1994), Madhu Dubey perceptively summarizes Gates’s critique of the two movements whose disappearance he was instrumental in effecting. While not refuting this critique—which argued, *inter alia*, that the black aestheticians had been duped by the tropes of figuration

of the “text of blackness”—Dubey nevertheless poses a fundamental question, one that gave rise to both the title of this chapter and the thrust of my Argument. While she first notes that both the Black Aesthetic and Black Arts Movements had sought to “unfix the notion of Blackness from the traditional color symbology of the West” and to challenge the “Western equation” of blackness “with ugliness, evil, corruption, and death,” Gates’s poststructuralist critique had now come to accuse practitioners of Black Aesthetics and Black Arts, in Derridian terms, of putting forward a “metaphysical concept” of blackness as presence and, thereby, instead of displacing an essentialist notion of identity, of having merely installed blackness as “another transcendent signified.” This had then caused them to become entrapped by “racial essentialism,” which by its “reversal of the Western definition of blackness,” had come to depend “on the absent presence of the Western framework it sets out to subvert” (Dubey 1994: 28–29). The fact that Gates’s poststructuralist activity itself depends on the “absent presence” of the very same Western framework that it was also ostensibly contesting did not detract from the success of his ongoing attacks on the Black Arts/Black Aesthetic notion of identity in terms of poststructuralism’s “critique of the humanist subject.”

However, while admitting the effectiveness of Gates’s counter-discourse in putting the seal on the demise of these two earlier movements (as well as of Black Studies in its original 1960s conception rather than in the pacified, ethnically re-christened *African-American* Studies that it has now become), Dubey then poses the following question: Why, she asks, had it been that with all its undoubted “theoretical limitations,” the Black Aesthetic “rhetoric of blackness” should so powerfully have “exerted an immense emotional and ideological influence, transforming an entire generation’s perception of its racial identity”? What had lain behind the “remarkable imaginative power” of the nationalist “will to Blackness,” “bristling with a sense of the possibility of blackness” that had characterized the writings of political activists like Stokely Carmichael and Eldridge Cleaver; writer activists like Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Don L. Lee, Sonia Sanchez, Jayne Cortez, and Nikki Giovanni; cultural nationalists like Maulana Karenga; and literary critics and theoreticians like Carolyn Gerald, Hoyt Fuller, Addison Gayle, Jr., and Stephen Henderson? What had been the unique dynamic that had enabled the rhetorical energy of the black nationalist discourse so powerfully “to mobilize the sign of blackness”?

If Dubey's question can be answered only by making visible what Gates terms the absent presence of the very Western framework in whose terms *blackness*, like its dialectical antithesis *whiteness*, must be fitted onto a symbology of good and evil—"The white man," Fanon writes, "is sealed in his whiteness, the black man in his blackness.... How do we extricate ourselves?" (Fanon 1967b: 9-10)—and, therefore, with any attempt to unfix the sign of blackness from the sign of evil, ugliness, or negation, leading to an emancipatory explosion at the level of the black psyche, then Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka's implicit proposal that Western thought (and therefore the cultural framework of this thought) needs to be exoticized—that is, viewed "from another landscape" by its Western, and indeed in our case, Westernized, bearer subjects—can provide us with the explanatory key to the answering of Dubey's question.

In addition, recall that the Black Arts and Black Aesthetic Movements were themselves historically linked to a series of other earlier such movements across the range of the Black African Diaspora: not only the United States' own Harlem Renaissance Movement but also the Negritude Movement of Francophone West Africa and the Caribbean, the Afro-Cuban and Afro-Antillean Movements of the Hispanic Caribbean, and the ongoing Rastafari-Reggae religiocultural movement—an invention of the endemically jobless underclass of Jamaica, which explosively flowered at the same time as the Black Arts and Black Aesthetic Movements, musically interacting (by means of the transistor radio) with the "Black Power" musical popular expressions of the 1960s and '70s as iconized in the archetypal figure of James Brown. They were also linked synchronically to the global field of the anti-colonial movements as well as to the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Any attempt to "exoticize" Western thought by making visible its "framework" from "another landscape" links us, then, to a related paradox defining all three movements. This paradox was that of their initially penetrating insights gained by the very nature of a wide range of globally subordinated peoples moving out of their Western assigned places and calling into question what was, in effect, the structures of a global world system, as well as the multiple social movements of other groups internal to the West, such as feminists, gay activists, Native Americans, Chicanos, Asian-Americans, and students, all mounting similar challenges—insights, therefore, into the nature of that absently present framework which mandated all their/our respective subjections.

All this led, for a brief hiatus, to the explosive psychic *cum* political emancipation not only of blacks but of many other non-white peoples and other groups suffering from discrimination, yet also, on the other hand, to their ultimate failure, in the wake of their politically activist phase, to complete intellectually that emancipation.

The literary scholar Wlad Godzich (1986) perceptively identifies the nature of this paradox when he notes that although it should have been obvious at the time that the great sociopolitical upheavals of the late 1950s and '60s, especially those grouped under the names of decolonization and liberation movements, would have had a major impact on our ways of knowledge, this recognition has not occurred for two reasons. The first is due to the "imperviousness of our present disciplines, to phenomena that fall outside their pre-defined scope"; the second, to "our reluctance to see a relationship so global in reach—*between the epistemology of knowledge and the liberation of people*—a relationship that we are not properly able to theorize." This reluctance was, therefore, not an arbitrary one, as proved in the case of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. For while the earlier goals of the movement as it began in the South, because directed against segregation and therefore couched in terms of the universalist premises of mainstream Liberal discourse, could be supported (once the move to include the North and the West and therefore the economic apartheid issue of an institutionalized jobless and impoverished underclass, all interned in the inner-city ghettos and their prison extensions, had led in the direction of the call for Black Power), the situation had abruptly changed. Godzich suggests that an epistemological failure emerged with respect to the relation between the claim to a black particularism over against Liberalism's counter-universalism, on the one hand, and over against that of Marxism as a universalism, on the other. Since in the case of the latter, because based on the primacy of the issues confronting the Western working classes postulated as the globally generic working class, this in the same way as their issue, postulated as that of the struggle of labor against capital, had also logically come to be postulated as *the* generic human issue. While given that Liberal humanism is itself based on the primacy of the issue of the Rights of Man as *the* defining premise that underlies both our present order of knowledge and its correlated mainstream aesthetics, the claims to the particularism of a Black Arts and a Black Aesthetic as well as to

Black Studies in its original conception—these are the correlates of the claim to Black Power, which had itself been based on a return to the earlier recognition made in the 1920s by Marcus Garvey that, in the later words of the Barbadian novelist George Lamming, “the Rights of Man’ cannot include the ‘Rights of the Negro’ who had been institutionalized discursively and empirically, as a different kind o’ creature to ‘Man’” (Lamming 1970 [1953]: 297)—were to find themselves met with outright hostility on the part of mainstream intellectuals/academics and aestheticians.

The implacability of this hostility was to lead swiftly, as Godzich further notes, to a “reterritorialization,” whose goal was to reincorporate these movements, sanitized of their original heretical dynamic, into the Liberal-universalist mainstream. However, while this reincorporation was effected, in the case of Black Studies, by its re-invention as “African-American Studies,” and as only one “Ethnic” Studies variant among a diverse range of others, all contrasted with, at the same time as they were integrated into, the ostensible universalism of Euro-American-centered mainstream scholarship, the other two movements—by the very nature of their self-definition as a black particularism, which called into question the mainstream art and aesthetics together with their “monopoly of humanity”—were not amenable to such pacification and reincorporation. As a result, their rapid disappearance, their extinction even, hastened along by Gates’s neo-universalist, poststructuralist critique, logically followed. For it had been precisely their original claim, as Godzich notes, to a black particularism over against the universalist premises of our present mainstream aesthetics and order of knowledge—their claim, in Gerald McWhorter’s terms, to “something other than ‘truth’ in an abstract universal sense,” or, in Neal’s terms, to a post-Western aesthetics based on a new system of ideas, with these claims, linked to their insistent revalorizing of the negative-value connotations that both the mainstream order of knowledge and the mainstream aesthetics placed upon all peoples of Black African descent, thereby imposing upon us “an unbearable wrongness of being”—that can be identified, from hindsight, as *the* dynamic that was to exert what Dubey defines as the immense emotional influence on an entire generation’s self-conception (including the kind of intellectual self-confidence that a Gates, for example, as a member of the beneficiary generation, would now come to possess).



Nevertheless, the eventual defeat both of the Black Aesthetic and Black Arts Movements as well as of Black Studies in its original conception resulted from the very process that had occasioned their initial triumph—that is, from their revalorization of their “racial blackness” as systemically devalorized by the logic of our present mainstream order of knowledge, its art, and its aesthetic. For while this strategic inversion had functioned for a brief hiatus as a psychically emancipatory movement, by its calling into question of the systemic devalorization of our physiognomic and original ethno-cultural being as a population group, its eventual failure can be seen not only in the psychic mutilation of the tragic figure of Michael Jackson, as expressed in his physically mutilated face, but also in the widespread use of plastic surgery not only by blacks but also by a wide range of other non-white groups, as well as by white non-Nordic groups themselves.<sup>2</sup> This latter instance provided a clue to the fact that the systemic devalorization of racial blackness was, in itself, *only* a function of another and more deeply rooted phenomenon—in effect, only the map of the real territory, the symptom of the real cause, the real issue. This was the territory that, for example, Eldridge Cleaver had glimpsed when, in his book of essays *Soul on Ice* (1968), he tried to account for the almost reflex-instinctual nature of his attraction to white women as contrasted with his lukewarm response to, for him, the always already devalorized black woman; that Gwendolyn Brooks had charted, in trying during an interview to account for the reason that successful black men also seemed instinctively to prefer lighter-skinned black women (Tate 1983); that over half a century earlier W. E. B. Du Bois, in trying to come to grips with his own double consciousness that made it difficult for him to be an American without being anti-Negro, had recognized as a new frontier with respect to the study of the still-unresolved issue of what determines—indeed, what structures—the nature of human consciousness; that Larry Neal had identified in agonistic terms as “the white thing within us.” Yet, and this is *the* dilemma, all this is so as a territory or issue that cannot be conceptualized to exist in terms of the *vrai* or “regime of truth” of our present order of knowledge. Any more than—as Foucault also pointed out in the case of the eighteenth-century Classical episteme or order of knowledge that preceded our contemporary one, which was to displace/replace it during the nineteenth century—the conception of biological life

could have been imagined to exist in terms of its *vrai* or “regime of truth” (Foucault 1980: 78; see also pp. 109–133). Nevertheless, as a territory, an issue—to whose empirical existence the particularity of the black experience, and therefore of our necessarily conflictual and contradictory consciousness, together with the occasional emotional release from such a consciousness—attests, as definitively as a Geiger counter attests to the empirical presence of radioactive material. This, therefore, as a hitherto unknown territory, the territory of human consciousness and of the hybrid nature-culture laws by which it is structured, was only to be identified, in the context both of the global anti-colonial struggles and of the social movements internal to the West itself, by the political activist and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, doing so from the ground of the particularity of the black experience. “Reacting against the constitutionalist tendency of the late nineteenth century,” he wrote, “Freud insisted that the individual factor be taken into account through psychoanalysis. He substituted for a phylogenetic theory the ontogenetic perspective. It will be seen that the black man’s alienation is not an individual question. Beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny” (Fanon 1967b: 11).

Fanon’s book was published in its original French version in 1952, one year before the publication of the Watson/Crick paper cracking the DNA code specific to the genomes of all species, including the human being. This therefore helped to emphasize that, given the genetically determined narcissism that would be endemic to all living beings in their species-specific modality, the fact that a black person can experience his or her physiognomic being in anti-narcissistic and self-alienating terms (as iconized in the tragic figure of Michael Jackson) means that human beings *cannot* be defined in purely biogenetic terms—that is, from a purely phylogenetic *cum* ontogenetic perspective, or, in other words, from the perspective of the purely physiological *conditions* of being human (i.e., phylogeny and ontogeny), as we are now defined to be in terms of our present liberal or bio-humanist order of knowledge. Indeed, as we are induced, as contemporary subjects, to psycho-affectively experience ourselves to *be*, in terms of our also bio-humanist mainstream aesthetics.

However, if, in Fanon’s terms, the prognosis for black self-alienation is to be favorable, the human must be redefined in terms of

the hybrid phylogony-ontogeny *cum* sociogeny mode of being that it empirically is, which is composed of descriptive statements or modes of sociogeny—in effect, of *genres* or *kinds* of being human, in whose always auto-instituted and origin-narratively inscribed terms we can alone experience ourselves *as* human. Let us note here, in passing, that the term “genre,” meaning *kind* of human (as in the case of our present *kind* of human, *Man*, which *sociogenically* defines itself, in biocentric terms, on the model of a natural organism), as the model that aprioristically underlies all our present disciplines (Foucault 1970 [1973]), stems from the same etymological roots as the word “gender.” This, given that from our origins on the continent of Africa until today, gender role allocations mapped onto the biologically determined anatomical differences between male and female have been an indispensable function of the instituting of our *genres* or sociogenic *kinds* of being human. This latter is so as a process for which our species-specific genome as uniquely defined by the co-evolution of language and the brain has bioevolutionarily preprogrammed us.

In effect, because the systematically induced nature of black self-alienation is itself (like that, correlatively, of homosexual self-alienation) only a function (a map), if an indispensable one, of the enacted institutionalization of our present genre of the human, *Man* and its governing sociogenic code (the *territory*), as defined in the ethno-class or Western bourgeois biocentric descriptive statement of the human on the model of a natural organism (a model that enables it to over-represent its ethnic and class-specific descriptive statement of the human *as if* it were that of the human itself), then, in order to contest one’s function in the enacting of this specific genre of the human, one is confronted with a dilemma. As a dilemma, therefore, it is a question not of the essentializing or non-essentializing of one’s racial blackness, as Gates argues, but rather of the fact that one *cannot* revalorize oneself in terms of one’s racial blackness and therefore of one’s biological characteristics, however inversely so, given that it is precisely the biocentric nature of the sociogenic code of our present genre of being human that imperatively calls for the devalorization of the characteristic of blackness as well as of the Bantu-type physiognomy—in the same way as it calls, dialectically, for the over-valorization of the characteristic of whiteness and of the Indo-European physiognomy. This

encoded value-difference then came to play the same role, in the enactment of our now purely secular genre of the human *Man*, as the gendered anatomical difference between men and women had played over millennia, if in then supernaturally mandated terms, in the enactment of all the genres of being human that had been defining of traditional, stateless orders. This therefore led, in our contemporary case, to the same asymmetric disparities of power, as well as of wealth, education, life opportunities, even mortality rates, and so on, between whites and blacks that—as the feminist Sherry Ortner has pointed out in her essay “Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?”—were defining of the relations between men and women common to all such orders (Ortner 1974).<sup>3</sup>

If, therefore, it is the very institutionalized production and reproduction of our present hegemonic sociogenic code—as generated from its Darwinian origin-narratively inscribed biocentric descriptive statement of the human on the model of a natural organism—that calls, as the indispensable condition of its enactment, for the systemic inducing of black self-alienation, together with the securing of the correlated powerlessness of its African-descended population group at all levels of our contemporary global order or system-ensemble, then the explosive, psychic emancipation experienced by black peoples in the United States and elsewhere—as in the case of the indigenous “black fellas” people of Australia and Melonesia, as well as the black peoples of the Caribbean and of the then still apartheid South Africa—can now be seen in terms that explain the powerful emotional influence of the three movements that arose out of the sociopolitical black movements of the 1960s (i.e., the Black Aesthetic, Black Arts, and Black Studies Movements in their original conception), with this experience coming to an end only with their subsequent erasure and displacement. And this logically so, given that while the psychic emancipation that these movements’ revalorization of the characteristics of blackness had effected was an emancipation from the psychic dictates of our present sociogenic code or genre of being human and therefore from “the unbearable wrongness of being,” of *désêtre*, which it imposes upon all black peoples and, to a somewhat lesser degree, on all non-white peoples, as an imperative function of its enactment as such a mode of being, this emancipation had been effected at the level of the map rather than at the level of the territory. That is, therefore, at the level of the

systemic de-valorization of blackness and correlated over-valorization of whiteness, which are themselves only proximate *functions* of the overall devalorization of the human species that is indispensable to the encoding of our present hegemonic Western-bourgeois biocentric descriptive statement of the human, of its mode of sociogeny. In other words, because the negative connotations placed upon the black population group are a function of the de-valorization of the human, the systemic revalorization of black peoples can be fundamentally effected only by means of the no less systemic revalorization of the human being itself, *outside* the necessarily devalorizing terms of the biocentric descriptive statement of *Man*, over represented as if it were by that of the human. This, therefore, as the territory of which the negative connotations imposed upon all black peoples and which serve to induce our self-alienation as well as our related institutionalized powerlessness as a population group are a function, and as such, a map. As, correlatively, are all the other “ism” issues that spontaneously erupted in the United States in the wake of the black social liberation movement, all themselves, like the major “ism” of class also, specific maps to a single territory—that of the instituting of our present ethno-class or Western-bourgeois genre of the human.

Nevertheless, because it is this territory, that of the instituting of our present biocentric descriptive statement of the human on the model of a natural organism that is elaborated by our present order of knowledge and its macro-discourse of Liberal humanism, as well as enacted by our present mainstream aesthetic, together with the latter’s “monopoly of humanity” (Bourdieu 1984), with our present order of knowledge being one in whose foundational “regime of truth,” objects of knowledge such as Fanon’s auto-instituted modes of sociogeny or Bateson’s “descriptive statements” at the level of the psyche (Bateson 1968), in effect, our *genres* or *kinds* of being human, cannot be imagined to exist, neither McWhorter’s call for another “truth” able to secure the good life for black and all other peoples, nor, indeed, Larry Neal’s call for a post-Western aesthetic, could have been incorporable, as they themselves had hoped, in terms of our present order of knowledge and its biologically absolute conception of the human. That is, in the way in which a later re-territorialized and ethnicized “African-American Studies,” as exemplarily elaborated and brilliantly put into place by Harvard’s Henry Louis Gates, Jr., would prove to be.

In this context, Jones/Baraka's implied call for the exoticization of Western thought, in order to make this thought itself, its presuppositions, together with, in Gates' terms, the "absent presence" of its framework, into new objects of knowledge, to be examined from the landscape or perspective of the *blues* people—and therefore from the perspective, not of the-people-as-*Volk* as in the cultural nationalist aspects of the Black Aesthetic and Black Arts Movements, but, as in the *popular* aspect of these movements, of the people as the movements of people who are logically excluded, as "the waste products of all modern political practice whether capitalist or Marxist" (Lyotard 1990, citing Grand 1990: 93), with their exclusion being indispensable to the reproduction of our present order—links up with Fanon's recognition that "black self-alienation" cannot be detached from the de-valorized conception of the human on the purely phylogenic/ontogenetic model of a natural organism, that is as defining of this thought as, indeed, of its correlated aesthetics. In the case of the former, as an episteme, one whose biocentric order of truth calls for the human to be seen as a "mere mechanism," and as such, one whose members are all ostensibly naturally dyselected by Evolution until proven otherwise by his/her or that of his/her population group's success in the bourgeois order of being and of things: "The advancement of the welfare of mankind," Darwin wrote at the end of *The Descent of Man* (1981 [1871]: 403), "is a most intricate problem: all ought to refrain from marriage who cannot avoid abject poverty for their children.... [A]s Mr. Galton has remarked, if the prudent avoid marriage, whilst the reckless marry, the inferior members of society will tend to supplant the better members of society." Against this biocentric, eugenic thought, and the "absent presence" of its bio-evolutionary framework or conception of the human, Fanon wrote:

What are by common consent called the human sciences have their own drama. *Should one postulate a type for human reality and describe its psychic modalities only through deviations from it, or should one not rather strive unremittingly for a concrete and ever new understanding of man? ... [A]ll these inquiries lead only in one direction: to make man admit that he is nothing, absolutely nothing—and that he must put an end to the narcissism on which he relies in order to imagine that he is different from the other "animals."* ... Having reflected on that, I grasp my narcissism with both hands and I turn my back on the degradation of those who would make man a mere mechanism. (Fanon 1967b: 22-23)

II

*On Exoticizing Western Thought, Visibilizing Its Framework(s), Its Invention of Man, and Thereby Also of Our “Unbearable Wrongness of Being,” of Désêtre: Modernity, Secularism, and Its Epochal Transformation of the “Supreme Source of Legitimacy”*

The modern collapse of “Reason” and “History” into all things European represented a failure of Reason and History that required a self-deception regarding Europe’s scope. Put differently: Europe sought to become ontological; it sought to become what dialecticians call “Absolute Being.” Such Being stood in the way of human being or a human way of being. It thus presented itself as a theodicy ... : If God has the power to do something about injustice and evil, why doesn’t He? ... Theodicy does not disappear with modern secularism. Whatever is advanced as a Supreme Being or Supreme Source of Legitimacy faces a similar critical challenge.

—*Lewis Gordon*

Man: A human being (irrespective of sex or age).... An adult male person.... The male human being.... To be at one’s own disposal, to be one’s own master.

—*Oxford English Dictionary*

Native: One of the original or usual inhabitants of a country as distinguished from strangers or foreigners: now especially one belonging to a non-European and imperfectly civilized or savage race.... A coloured person or Black.... Born in a particular place or country: belonging to a particular race, distinct etc. by birth. In mod. use espec. with connotation of non-European.

—*Oxford English Dictionary*

Negro: an individual (esp. a male) belonging to the African race of mankind which is distinguished by a black skin, black woolly hair, flat nose and thick protruding lips.... Negress ... A female negro ... negro dog. A dog used in hunting negro slaves.... Nigger ... A negro (coll. and usu. contemptuous ... loosely incorrectly applied to members of other dark-skinned races).

—*Oxford English Dictionary*

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Miranda: Abhorr'd slave,  
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,  
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,  
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour  
One thing or another. When thou didst not, savage,  
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like  
A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes  
With words that made them known. But thy vile race,  
Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures  
Could not aside to be with. Therefore wast thou  
Deservedly confined into this rock, who hadst  
Deserved more than a prison.

—*Shakespeare's The Tempest*

The argument proposed in this section is that if post-medieval Renaissance Europe was to usher in the world of contemporary modernity on the basis of the epochal secularization of human identity, which it effected by means of the intellectual revolution of lay humanism, this as a revolution that, by taking to its logical conclusion St. Thomas Aquinas's medieval Christian-Aristotelian thrust toward the making of *Christian* and *Man* into conceptually different notions, was thereby to initiate, together with the religious movement of Reformation, the gradual privatization of its formerly Judaeo-Christian identity. This privatization was also of the identity that, because then functioning as the *public* identity of medieval Latin Christian Europe, had underpinned and legitimated the ostensibly supernaturally guaranteed hegemony of the institution of the Church and its celibate Clergy over the institutions, the non-celibate laity, including those of commerce and of the political state. Nevertheless, the thinkers of Renaissance Europe were to effect this secularization of its public identity in terms that were themselves generated from the monotheistic framework of Judaeo-Christianity. In consequence, if, as Jean-François Lyotard (1990: 81) has noted, the "Greco-Christian Occident" could not, and cannot, conceive of an Other to what it calls God, this characteristic was to be carried over in secular terms as the humanist intellectuals of Renaissance Europe replaced the earlier public identity *Christian* with that of their newly invented *Man* defined as *homo politicus*, and, as such, primarily the political subject of the state. It was therefore to effect this secularization of its public identity by over-representing both



its first variant of *Man*, defined as political citizen and/or subject of the state, and, from the end of the eighteenth century onward, its second variant of *Man*—defined in now purely secular, because biocentric, terms as *homo oeconomicus*, and, as such, primarily as the Breadwinner/Investor subject of the nation-state—as if each such definition of *Man* were at the same time definitions of the human itself. In consequence, the intellectuals and creative artists of Western Europe were able to bring together their hitherto theocentric notion of *Christian* and that of their now-secular notion of *Man* (in its two variants) into conceptually different notions into the contemporary world of modernity, both in its dazzling triumphs and achievements and in its negative underside. But they were able to do so only on one condition: that they would make their culture-specific notions of *Man*—both in its first still partly secular and partly religious form, and in its now purely secular, because biocentric, form (i.e., one whose origin was now narrated as being in Evolution rather than as before, in Divine Creation)—into notions that were and are ostensibly conceptually homogenous with the reality of being human in all its multiple manifestations. With this, they were thereby making it impossible for themselves to conceive of an Other to what they called and continue to call *human*.

This central over-representation was to be effected by means of two foundational strategies, both of which function to reinforce each other, and a challenging third. The first is that of a sustained rhetorical strategy, which enables the similarity of sound between the words *Man* and the *human* to suggest the empirical existence of a parallel similarity between, on the one hand, the West's definitions or descriptive statements (Bateson 1968) of the human—i.e., *Man*<sup>1</sup> and *Man*<sup>2</sup>—and, on the other, what the descriptive statement of the human, as one able to incorporate both of these definitions as members of its class of all possible such definitions/descriptive statements, would have to be. Second, as if a parallel similarity also existed between the real-life referent categories of each such descriptive statement and their Fanonian modes of sociogeny (i.e., as in the case of the referent category of contemporary *Man*, who comprise, at the global level, the wealthy, developed countries of the North, or of the First World), and the real-life referent categories of that descriptive statement's Human Other: those of the Third World/Underdeveloped nations and the jobless underclasses whose

members are made to function as the “waste products” of their respective nation-state’s order. Third, the imperative of securing the interests and well-being of contemporary Man and its real-life referent categories need to be the same as securing the interests of the human species as a whole.

It is, however, the second foundational strategy to which the title of my argument directly refers. What is this strategy? At the end of *The Order of Things*, Foucault makes the point that *Man* is an invention not only of a recent date but one that had been specific to a “restricted geographical area”—namely, that of “European culture since the sixteenth century.” As the anthropologist Jacob Pandian (1985) has also pointed out, however, this invention of *Man* had been made possible only by means of a parallel invention. And it is this invention that would define the second foundational strategy by means of which the over-representation of *Man* as if it were the human was to be institutionalized in the wake of Western Europe’s expansion from the early decades of the fifteenth century onward, together with its post-1492 putting in place of the structures of what was to become our contemporary world system, the first truly global system in human history.

This second strategy, as Pandian defined it, was one by means of which Western intellectuals were to be enabled to reinvent the terms—as well as the real-life referent categories that had functioned for medieval Latin-Christian Europe as *its* theocentric metaphysical category of Otherness and, therefore, of symbolic death,<sup>4</sup> to the symbolic life embodied in their Judaeo-Christian matrix as the *True Christian* Self, and as a category of Otherness whose real-life referent categories were those groups classifiable as being, *inter alia*, *heretics*, *infidels*, *pagan*, *idolators*, or *Enemies of Christ* (i.e., those who having been preached the Christian word had refused it)—into new, and now secularizing, terms. That is, as a category of Otherness or of symbolic death, now defined as that of *Human* Others to the True *Human* Self of Western Europe’s self-conception as *Man*, and, as such Others, logically classifiable and thereby only seeable and behavable toward as the Lack of this ostensibly only possible conception of what it is to be human.

The real-life referent categories of the discursively and institutionally invented Human Others to Man in its first *homo politicus* conception as the rational citizen or subject of the now-hegemonic

monarchical European state system (which had come to reoccupy the earlier hegemonic place of the pre-Reformation Church) were to be two peoples, forcibly uprooted from their own indigenous genres of being human and, therefore, from their once-autocentric self-conception and classified instead, as now subordinated groups, in Western Europe's new secularizing classificatory terminology, as *Indians* and *Negroes* (i.e., in the original Spanish as *indios*, men, and *indias*, women; and as *negros*, men, and *negras*, women).<sup>5</sup> It was therefore to be the peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean who—after being conquered, Christianized, and enserfed in the imposed *encomienda* labor system, with their lands and sovereignty forcibly expropriated—were now to be made discursively and institutionally into, as Pandian points out, the embodiment of an ostensibly “savage and irrational humanity,” and, as such, the Human Other to *Man*, defined as the rational political subject or citizen of the state. Nowhere was the dialectic of this epochally new, Western-imposed identity system to be more dramatically configured and enacted than in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, as expressed in the plotline dynamics of the relation between the “reasons of state” hero character Prospero and his daughter Miranda, on the one hand, and the expropriated and enslaved Caliban, on the other. With the latter, therefore, having logically to be seen by the former *not* as the alternative, because a geographically, ecologically, and geopolitically *different* genre or mode of the human than he empirically embodied, but rather as the Lack of what they themselves were; as such, as the “vile Race” Other to *their* “true” humanness, the evil nature as opposed to their “good natures.”<sup>6</sup>

This was also to be the case, even more extremely so, with the population group of blacks of African descent transported in chains as slaves across the Atlantic and made to provide the fixed and coerced labor for the large-scale export plantations owned by Western-European settlers. In that these latter were once classified not only as Negroes but as trade goods denominated as *piezas*<sup>7</sup> or pieces, they were, as Pandian points out, to be also assimilated to the category of Human Otherness embodied in the “Indians,” as, however, the latter's most extreme form; as, ostensibly, the furthest boundary limits of irrational humanity, and the “missing link” between humans defined by their rationality and apes defined by their Lack of it, in what was then defined, in Western classificatory

logic as “the Great Chain of Being” that supposedly reached from the highest forms to the lowest (Mosse 1985); and with the Western European population’s ruling class being placed at the apex of the Chain. Toward the end of the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth, however, as Pandian also points out, a mutation in terms of Human Otherness was to occur. This, not only in the empirical context of the abolition of African slavery in the Caribbean and the Americas linked to the second wave of Western imperial expansion, but also and, centrally so, in the wake of the Western intellectual’s reinvention of *Man*, in now purely secular because biocentric, *homo oeconomicus*, and therefore specifically bourgeois-capitalist terms, as distinct from the earlier landed-gentry mercantilist ones, which had come to underpin the eighteenth-century variant of the first civic humanist *homo politicus* conception of *Man*. As Pandian further notes, while the real-life referents of the Human Other to *Man* in its new conception were to be all non-Western population groups, once colonized and discursively and institutionally classified (outside the terms of their own once-autocentric self-conceptions and kinds of being human), as “Natives,” it was to be the population groups of sub-Saharan Black African descent (including the now-free New World descendants of the former Middle Passage slaves) who would now be made discursively, as well as institutionally, into the primary referent of racially inferior humanity.

In consequence, our imposed and experienced “wrongness of being” and of *désêtre* (i.e., dys-being), together with its systematically induced self-alienation, would directly result from our Human Other role in the identity apparatus of the Western bourgeoisie in terms of its then new biocentric and *homo oeconomicus* descriptive statement of the human. In our role, therefore, as the primary empirical referent category of the idea, central to the now purely secular, half-scientific, half-mythic Origin Narrative as elaborated in Darwin’s *The Descent of Man* (1981 [1871]), that some human beings can be, as ostensibly naturally dysselected by the processes of Evolution, in the same way as other human beings can ostensibly be naturally selected. It was therefore to be as a function of the materialization of this idea that, as Fanon points out, two population groups, one classified as white, the other as Negro and/or black, were to find themselves, the one locked into their whiteness, the other into their blackness. In that, in the same way as in the

allegedly “proven case” of the “backward,” primitive, and atavistic population groups of Black African descent, all therefore now held “to be a mere stage” in the slow process of evolution from monkey into man, and, as such, totally dysselected, so all members of the population group of European descent, classified as the white race, allegedly proven by the very nature of their dominant position in the global order over all other groups, now classified as non-white “native” races, that they had been, as a “race,” optimally selected by evolution to embody ostensibly the biological *norm* of being human. With, therefore, this institutionalized dialectic between the two groups, each discursively and institutionally represented, one as the norm, the other as the anti-norm, now made indispensable to the enactment of the new *eugenic/dysgenic* sociogenic code, as the code in whose terms the Western bourgeoisie, unable hitherto to legitimate its role as a ruling class on the basis of the noble blood and birth model of the landed aristocracy, was now to legitimate itself as a *naturally selected* ruling class, because the bearers and transmitters of an alleged eugenic line of descent. Hence the logic of the bourgeois male titles—so and so the first (I), so and so the second (II), so and so the third (III), and so on, or, alternatively, as Senior and Junior.

Hence, also, the power and force of negation of the term “nigger” as ostensibly the dysgenic negation of what it is to be an autonomous, fully evolved human being in the ethno-class terms of Darwinian *Man* over-represented as the human. Hence, too, the logical correlation between blackness and poverty, given that, as Darwin reveals in *The Descent of Man*, the ostensibly selected most “able,” who were economically successful, should be encouraged to bear many children, whereas the “poor,” as a dysselected, inferior kind of human, should be discouraged from giving birth to many children, thereby reducing the transmission of their alleged biologically determined inferiority and/or dysgenicity (Darwin 1981 [1871]: 403). This is so at the same time as, at the global level, the discursive representing, as well as the empirical instituting, of all the then-colonized non-white categories of peoples, classified as *Indians, Negroes, Natives, Niggers*, as well as the “underdeveloped” Third World, the South, and, therefore, as such, made into the embodiment of the ostensible Lack of Man’s True Human Self, itself represented as optimally embodied, no longer in the “reasons of

state” landholder figure of Shakespeare’s Prospero, but instead in the no less imperative “reasons—of the economy” figure of the global capital-accumulating Stockholder. This latter, as the new hero-figure who, by providing capital as the means of production of the then-new techno-Industrial system thereby serving to enable the mastering of the threat of the ostensibly empirical threat of “Natural Scarcity,” as put forward in the Malthusian-*cum*-Ricardo economic discourse, was now made to embody iconically the new bread-winning criterion of being that is indispensable to the class supremacy of the Western, as well as the globally westernized, bourgeoisie. While if it were by their represented successful “mastering” of such scarcity (as a condition now attached, as Hans Blumenberg perceptively notes, for the first time in human history to reality as a whole)—“Mankind has always known want and the distress of being hard-pressed by nature, but the generalization of such experiences to the evaluation of reality as a whole” is linked to “a motif of modern intellectual history unknown in previous epochs[:] ... the [Malthusian] idea of *overpopulation*, of growth of a number of men beyond a natural living space (considered to be constant), and beyond the quantity of food (considered to be growing at a rate less than proportional to that of the population)” (Blumenberg 1983: 221)—that the bourgeoisie legitimated the economic projection of capitalism, a logical corollary had also followed. This was that it was precisely by such mastering that the wealthier members were/are held to have “proved,” retroactively, the fact of their having been “naturally selected” by evolution to belong to the no less represented to be, in terms of the then new Darwinian Origin Narrative complex, “naturally scarce” category of fully evolved and, thereby, eugenic or “able” human beings. With the upper-class, because wealthier, members of the bourgeoisie thereby being logically represented as having been extra-humanly, because bio-evolutionarily, mandated to be the ruling class, parallel to the way in which the rule of the Emperor of Imperial China had been represented as having been as extra-humanly, if then supernaturally, ordained to be by the Mandate of Heaven (Krupp 1992).<sup>8</sup>

In this context, the invention of the global category of Human Others on the basis of the institutionalized inferiorization and subjugation of those human beings classified as *Indians*, *Natives*, *Negroes*, *Niggers* was indispensable not only to the enactment of the new sociogenic code and its dialectic of evolved/selected “symbolic

life” and non-evolved dysselected “symbolic death” but also to the over-representation of this ethno-class or Western bourgeois genre or mode of being human, *as if* it were that of the human itself. An over-representation, which therefore had to repress the reality of the quite different self-conceptions and sociogenic codes of the multiple groups now subordinated and classified as *natives*, in order to enable their multiple societal orders to be studied by anthropologists, *not* as the institutions of the alternative genres of the human that they were (as studies that would have called for the relativization of the perspective of the biocentric *homo oeconomicus* genre of the human as the perspective that alone makes the discipline of anthropology itself possible) but, rather, in Western classificatory terms, as “cultures.” The latter as a term taken from the agrarian, agricultural era of history of the West itself, and generalized to apply to all humans, even though not applicable, as a term, to the hunter-gatherer societies that had instituted themselves as such for the earliest and longest period of human history (Waswo 1987: 547–564).

Further, given that it was not only anthropology but also all the disciplinary discourses of our present order of knowledge, as put in place from the nineteenth century onward, that had to be elaborated on the *a priori* basis of this biocentric, *homo oeconomicus* descriptive statement and its over-representation as if it were that of the human, what McWhorter challenged as their “truth” in “some universal abstract sense,” necessarily functioned and functions to effect the retroactive conflation of *Man* and the *Human*, as if they were conceptually one and the same notion; as if, therefore, Western Man’s Project—one put in place in the wake of the epochal revolution of Renaissance humanism based on its separation of *Christian* and *Man* into conceptually different notions, as a separation that was to fuel both its global conquests and expansion and its invention of an entirely new mode of cognition, that of the natural sciences—was and is what a truly, and therefore inclusively, Human Project would have to be.<sup>9</sup>

If the use by academic scholarship of the pronoun “he” as if it were a *generic* term, which suggests that its real-life referent categories were both male and female scholars, can only be empirically validated, as Jane Gallop—coming from the perspective of Feminist Studies, which arose in the wake of multiple social movements of the 1960s—pointed out, by “veiling” the male attributes of the perspective that makes it possible for this “he” to be seen as an ostensibly

neutral term as inclusive of female scholars as they were/are of the male ones, a parallel strategy with respect to the term “Man” can be seen to be at work here. If, as Gallop further proposes, this “veiling of the male attributes” had only been made possible by women scholars’ acceptance of their non-generic assigned roles, until the rise of the feminist movement put an end to this acceptance, nevertheless, that earlier acceptance itself been enabled only because of the acceptance by middle-class women, both Western and westernized, of their pre-assigned role as homemakers, one complementary to their male peers’ acceptance of *their* pre-assigned roles as breadwinners. This therefore meant that the attributes of the perspective that would have to be veiled in order to enable the pronoun “he” to be used as a neutral term—ostensibly inclusive of men and women scholars, at the same time as it ensured the male’s superior status as the generic sex—were not only *male* (the issue of gender) but also *bourgeois* (the issue of class) and *ethnic*, and/or “local cultural,” that is, the issue of *genre* classified in *Man*’s terms, as that of *race*.

Hence the fact that when Western feminist scholars came to use the pronoun “she” as an ostensibly neutral term inclusive of both Western and non-Western feminist scholars, of both Western and westernized women, of both middle-class and lower/underclass women, some feminists, such as, for example, Carole Boyce Davis and Elaine Savory-Fido (1990: vii–xix), in their collection of essays *Out of Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*, challenged the neutrality of that “she” by insisting on correlating, and thereby unveiling, the attributes of “race” and “class” alongside of gender: since gender, when taken by itself, at once transformed Western middle-class feminists, for whom gender is the *only* issue that blocks their full incorporation into the Western-bourgeois global structures of power, into generic feminists—indeed, into generic women.

If we see our present noun “Man” as playing a parallel role at the level of *genre*—and, here, the shared etymological roots of both terms, *genre* and *gender*; need to be recognized as the non-arbitrary ones that they are, given that in all human orders the narratively mandated gender roles are everywhere a central function of the enacting of our no less narratively instituted genres or modes of being human—a logical corollary follows. That is, the noun “Man” now also functions as an ostensibly neutral and universal term, whose real-life referent categories are imagined to include, at the level of gender, all women



as well as all men (thereby transforming the latter into the *generic sex*); at the level of class, all classes (thereby making the Western and westernized members of the bourgeoisie into the *generic class*); at the level of sexual preferences, all sexual preferences (thereby making heterosexual preference into the *generic preference*); and, at the level of “race” or human hereditary variations, together with their genres of being human classified as “cultures” and “religions,” all such “races,” their hereditary variation and genres or “cultures”/religions, thereby making the Indo-European race or hereditary variation into the generic “race,” at the same time as it makes its contemporary Western civilization, and/or its culture and now-privatized Christian religion, into the *generic civilization, culture, religion*. With these altogether, making its globally instituted ethno-class, or biocentric *homo oeconomicus* genre of being human, into the ostensibly *generic* or “true” human.

At the same time, it is a given that our present techno-industrial capitalist mode of economic production, as the mode of material provisioning indispensable to the continued processes of auto-institution of our present hegemonic biocentric, *homo oeconomicus Man*, over-represented as if it were the human, is thereby also represented as an economic system that is ostensibly inclusive of the interests of the “developed” and wealthy countries of the North, together with those of the Western and westernized middle classes—as interests specific to the real-life referent categories of *Man*—as well as the interests of the impoverished “underdeveloped” countries of the South/the Third World, together with the interests of the global category of the jobless Poor both North and South, who are the real-life referent categories, in *economic* terms of *Man’s* ostensible non-breadwinning Human Others, subordinated to Natural Scarcity, and, as such, imperfectly evolved. In the same way, therefore, as Jane Gallop’s observation with respect to the pronoun “he,” and of its over-representation as a neutral term able to include both male and female scholars, had been made believable only by the veiling of its male attributes, so in the case of the noun “Man,” and its over-representation as a neutral term able to include all of the categories cited, and as an inclusion that then enables it to represent the imperative securing of *its* interests, the imperative that now governs our collective behaviors, as if it were the same as that of the securing of the interests of the human species itself, continues to be made believable only by means of a parallel systemic “veiling.” By the veiling, that is, of *Man’s* specific ethno-class attributes, a veiling

effected by the projected truth, “in a universal abstract sense,” of our present order of knowledge, as well as by the psycho-affective closure effected by our present mainstream aesthetics. And, therefore, with both our present epistemological order and mainstream aesthetic now coming to function, in Lewis Gordon’s terms, as a purely secular form of theodicy. More precisely, perhaps, as a *biodycy*, which, by replacing *Evolution and Natural Selection* in the re-occupied locus of Christian theodicy’s Divine Creator, enables these bio-agencies to serve as the now de-supernaturalized Source of Legitimacy that serves to validate the functioning of our contemporary order, thereby enabling the injustice and evil of the large-scale costs to which its functioning leads—as costs that are the negative underside of the dazzling triumphs and achievements of its now purely biologized order of being and of things—to be explained *away* rather than to be explained, recognized, and confronted.

These costs have been summed up by Gerald Barney, as cited by Loyal La Rue in his book *Everybody’s Story: Wising Up to the Epic of Evolution*. Calling these overall costs “the global problematique,” Barney had defined it in these terms: “As we humans have begun to think globally, it has become clear that we do not have a poverty problem, or a hunger problem, or a habitat problem, or an energy problem.... What we really have is a poverty-hunger-habitat-energy-trade-population-atmosphere-waste-resource problem” (La Rue 2000: 3). “We humans,” however, have not created this “problematique.” Nor indeed, have we humans created the brilliant achievements and triumphs of which the global problematique is the negative underside. Rather, as Gordon’s seminal insight here suggests, both are the creations of a Western Europe that sought to become *ontological*—to become, for both good and ill, what dialecticians call “Absolute Being” (Gordon 2002c: 10).

### III

*Unveiling the Ethno-Class Attributes of Man’s “Inner Eyes” for Which Alone Other Humans Can Exist as “Natives,” “Negroes,” and “Niggers” Rather Than as Other Humans: On De-Universalizing Its Project, Its Genre, Its Aesthetics, Its Truth*

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and

On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory

liquids, and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.

—*Ralph Ellison, The Invisible Man*

I think that tastes, odours, colours and so on are no more than mere names so far as the object in which we place them is concerned, and that they reside only in the consciousness. Hence if the living creature were removed, all these qualities would be wiped away and annihilated.

—*Galileo, Il Saggiatore, cited in Anthony Gottlieb's The Dream of Reason: A History of Western Philosophy from the Greeks to the Renaissance (2000)*

Sephocle: When one leaves home, one approaches and appreciates things in a different way.

Césaire: In the African case, it is even clearer. I realized that there were many things that astonished me in Martinique. I understood afterwards that they puzzled me because we did not have the keys and that those keys were elsewhere. They were in Africa. Let us take the case of the Martiniquan carnival: it is beautiful, it is intriguing. After visiting Africa, one realizes that so many of these masks that intrigue us in the Martiniquan carnival are simply of African origin.

Extraordinary! That mask became here in Martinique the devil because we are a Catholic country, and as we say here: the god of the vanquished became the devil of the vanquisher.

—*Aimé Césaire, "Interview" (1992)*

To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.

And yet, being a problem is a strange experience,—peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe.

—*W. E. B. Du Bois, "On Our Spiritual Strivings," in The Souls of Black Folk (1903)*

In *The Enigma of the Gift*, the anthropologist Maurice Godelier makes a seminal breakthrough point by placing his focus on the institutional practices of traditional societies: While as human beings

we can live only in societies, what tends to be ignored is the fact that we must first produce societies in order to live. *The* central task of all human social orders is that of their production and stable reproduction. Nevertheless, our oversight of the imperative centrality of this process is itself due to the fact that, as Godelier points out, while it is we ourselves who are the individual and collective agents and authors of all such societies, from our origin as human beings, we have consistently and systemically made this fact opaque to ourselves by means of a central mechanism. This mechanism is the projection of our own agency and authorship onto extra-human agencies, with the first of those being the millennially supernatural (Godelier 1999)—that is, whether those of the deified Ancestors, nature spirits, gods, or those of the later monotheistic variants, the respective single God (all of the three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Judaeo-Christianity, and Islam). Frantz Fanon also makes the point that it is “the human who brings societies into being” (Fanon 1967b: introduction); at the same time, his new definition of the human being as a hybrid mode of, so to speak, “nature-culture” or “ontogeny sociogeny,” implies that the processes by which we produce our societies in order to live are the same auto-instituting processes by which we at the same time produce ourselves as this or that modality of an always already socialized, and therefore sociogenic, *kind/genre* of being human; and, as such, an always already inter-altruistically bonded and thereby kin-recognizing mode of the *I* and the *we*. That, in other words, is so in the same way as the projection of our own agency and authorship, with respect to the production and reproduction of our societal orders onto supernatural agencies, had enabled us to keep opaque to ourselves the fact of our own agency and authorship with respect to the putting in place of the role of allocations, divisions of labor, and structuring hierarchies specific to each such order, thereby stabilizing them, so the same projection would have enabled us, and still does, to keep opaque from ourselves our own agency with respect to the auto-instituting, autopoietic processes by means of which we produce ourselves as this or that modality of the human, or kind of an *I* and a *we*.<sup>10</sup>

The literary scholar Wlad Godzich also identified the fact of this projection of agency, in somewhat different terms, when he put forward the idea of the parallel projection of “spaces of Otherness,” as, in effect, the also supernatural or extra-human abode of all such

non-human agencies—“spaces of Otherness” that are therefore indispensable, he argues, to the instituting and legitimating of all human societies. Pointing out that because “for a society to know itself” it “must have a sense that its order is neither anarchic nor nonsensical but must be ... the realization of a true order,” Godzich proposes that for this to be realized, “the foundational principles” on which the societal order is formed “cannot be found in the society itself but must be located in a space of otherness that ensures that they remain beyond the reach of human desire or temptation” (Godzich 1987: 161).

From time immemorial, in consequence, because these “foundational principles” had been attributed to varying supernatural entities, the “space of Otherness” where they and the principles they had allegedly mandated existed, had been mapped upon the physical cosmos, whether in spaces beneath the earth or, even more centrally, upon the celestial heavens. Hence, as E. C. Krupp has shown in his study of the ethno-astronomies of a wide range of human societies from the smallest hunter-gatherer groups, such as the San of the Kalahari, to large-scale ancient empires such as those of Egypt and China, in all such cases, and whatever their differential degrees of complexity, all of their respective ethno-astronomies reveal the ways in which, in each case, knowledge of the physical cosmos had been used adaptively, to map and anchor the foundational principles and, with it, the always already-legitimated status-ordering and role-allocating principles about which each such societal order self-organized itself (Krupp 1997).<sup>11</sup> While given that in each such society the foundational status-ordering and role-allocating principles were themselves generated from the always origin-narratively-inscribed sociogenic principle or code—as in the case of the theocentric order of Latin Christian Europe, where the *Redeemed Spirit/Fallen Flesh* sociogenic code as actualized in the categories of the celibate Clergy and the institution of the Church (the *Redeemed Spirit*), on the one hand, and of the Laity, the non-celibate married and marriageable lay men and women, together with the lay institutions such as of the state and commerce (the *Fallen Flesh*), on the other, functioned to institutionalize the primacy of the religious identity *Christian* over all others—one can generalize Gordon’s insightful concept of a *theodicy* to all such supernaturally legitimated and guaranteed human societal orders. Doing this by

extending the traditional meaning of *theodicy*—that is, as an order that functions to justify the ways of God to mankind—to one in which all supernaturally guaranteed orders must function in a cognitively closed manner, in order to justify the order and its everyday functioning, to its subjects, as the realization of a true, because ostensibly supernaturally mandated, order.

The historical uniqueness of Western Europe was to derive from the epochal rupture that the lay-humanist intellectuals of late medieval Latin Christian Europe had found themselves compelled to effect, if only in its then initial form, with the millennial projection of human agency onto supernatural entities that had been defining of all human societal orders and their genres of being human from our hybridly autopoietic origin on the continent of Africa<sup>12</sup> until the era of pre-Renaissance, late-medieval Latin Christian Europe. Why did they find themselves so compelled? In *The Medieval Imagination*, Jacques Le Goff shows the way in which, in the wake of the Gregorian Reform movement of the Church—which, having taken place between 1050 to 1215 had mandated, *inter alia*, the celibacy of the Clergy—the lay or secular world, including the institution of the political state, as well as of commerce, had become subordinated to the decision-making processes and behavior-prescribing hegemony of the Church. This hegemony had been legitimated not only by the foundational Judaeo-Christian Origin Narrative but also by means of the projected “space of Otherness” mapped upon the heavens by the Christian-Ptolemaic astronomy of the times—mapped, as well, upon the geography of the earth by the sacred Christian geography of the medieval order of knowledge.

With respect to the formulation of a general order of existence created by Judaeo-Christianity, the postulate of a “significant ill,” while common to all such formulations, was uniquely represented as that of mankind’s enslavement to Original Sin, at the same time as *its* prescribed cure or plan of salvation was that of redemption through Christ, by means of His Church and, therefore, of Christian baptism followed by the new converts’ adherence to the prescriptive behavioral pathways laid down by the Church and Clergy. This therefore meant that the sociogenic code of *Redeemed Spirit* (as actualized in the celibate Clergy, who by their celibacy were assumed to have escaped the negative legacy of Adamic enslavement to Original Sin, itself held to be transmitted through the processes

of sexual procreation), as contrasted with the *Fallen Flesh* (as actualized in the category of the married and marriageable lay men and women, as well as in all lay institutions), had functioned, as Le Goff shows, as the status-organizing principle of the social order; with the social category of, for example, the peasantry, who were allocated the manual labor role, held to have been mandated to be placed at the bottom of the social scale because of their alleged wicked indulgence in the carnal lusts of the flesh, while women's subordinate roles were held to be due to the fact that they were more given, like Eve, to sin and temptation than were men. At the same time, this code, and its status-ordering principle, had also been mapped upon the projected "space of Otherness" of the heavens, as well as upon that of the sacred geography of the Earth.<sup>13</sup>

The cognitively closed order of knowledge of late medieval Europe (i.e., that of High Scholasticism whose master discipline was theology) had therefore functioned to ensure that the then-emergent political states of Europe, as well as the ongoing commercial revolution, were subordinated to the hegemony of the Church in the context of the then-absolute primacy of the religious identity, *Christian*. With the result that it was through the symbolically coded "inner eyes" of that specific genre of being human that both the physical cosmos and the social order had been orthodoxly known in the specific terms of Christian-Ptolemaic astronomy and of the sacred geography of the earth, as terms that enabled the stable production and reproduction of the order. It is in the context, therefore, of the Renaissance humanists' revalorization of the "natural fallen man" of the Christian schema, and its invention of *Man* as *homo politicus*, thereby enabling the division of *Christian* and *Man* into two conceptually and institutionally separable notions, and with the latter identity, that of *Man*, coming to take primacy as the political subject of the modern European state that was itself in the process of initiating what was to be its successful challenge to, and displacement/replacement of, the hegemony of the Church, that both the new Copernican astronomy as well as the fifteenth-century voyages of the Portuguese followed by that of Columbus were to be made thinkable, imaginable. This at the same time as the state's new political public identity would come, in the wake of the religious movement of the Reformation, gradually to effect the transformation of the religious identity and practices

of the Church, into a function of securing the new supra-ordinate *this-worldly* goal of securing the order and stability of the state, as well as of legitimating its global imperial expansion of conquest and expropriation of the lands of non-Christian, non-European peoples, as lands classified in Christian theological terms as *terra nullius* (i.e. nobody's land);<sup>14</sup> with the new *this-worldly* goal itself coming to reoccupy as the primary goal, the earlier, then primary, other-worldly goal of the Church—that of Eternal Salvation in the Augustinian “City of God” (Pocock 1975).

Now while in Christian theological terms such “justly” expropriated peoples had been classified as *Enemies of Christ*, and their lands, as such, legitimately classified as expropriable by Christian kings, this as a legitimation that had been used by the expanding European states in the first stage of their global expansion, as the Spanish state sought, in the wake of 1492, and of its invasion and conquest of the New World peoples, to legitimate its expropriation *outside* the theological terms that would have forced it to continue accepting the Papacy's claim to temporal as well as spiritual sovereignty, it set out to transform the ground on which its expropriation of the New World peoples, from Christian to Aristotelian ones, had been legitimated; and it did so on the basis of the premise, adapted from Aristotle's *Politics*, that the New World's peoples, having been intended by nature, because of their extreme irrationality, to be *natural slaves*, in the same way that the Spaniards and other Europeans had been intended by nature to be, because of their ostensible high degrees of rationality, natural masters, had been legitimately expropriated by the latter; given that it was fitting that the more rational should govern the less rational, in effect, that *Man*, the Spaniards, should govern its *Human Others*, the “Indians,” until they had been taught to become *more human*, as the Spanish humanist ideologue, Ginés de Sepúlveda, argued.<sup>15</sup>

It is, therefore, in the context of the rise to hegemony of the modern European state over the Church, allied to the lay intellectuals' correlated civic humanist invention of *Man* as political subject of the state and, as such, as a separate notion from the then-matrix identity *Christian* as the religious subject of the Church, that what Lewis Gordon identifies as the West's quest to embody and incorporate in itself and its peoples the concept of Absolute Being would take its point of departure. With this quest then determining what



would come to be the Janus-face of the West's epochal rupture with the millennial projection of agency onto the supernatural entities that had been defining hitherto, of all human kinds or genres of being human, together with their respective creeds, formulations of a general order of existence or behavior-motivational schemas. For the profound implication here was that while Christianity had seen and, indeed, continues to see itself as the only true religion, and its God as the only true God, it nevertheless has always had to acknowledge the existence of other creeds, accepting therefore its own objective relativity even while subjectively seeing itself as the only true path to salvation. This was not to be so, however, in the case of the humanists' invention of *Man* together with their classical civic humanist formulation of a "general order of existence" in whose terms Christianity's postulate of a "significant ill," as that of all mankind's enslavement to Original Sin, would be transformed into that of mankind's enslavement to the irrational aspects of its human nature. Therefore, with the new plan of redemption or salvation, now no longer based on mankind's quest for redemption from Original Sin, by primarily adhering to the prescriptive behavioral pathways laid down by the Church and its Clergy, as the only means of attaining the *other-worldly* goal of Eternal Salvation in the City of God, but one redefined in new terms. That is, by the political subjects' adhering to the prescriptive behavioral pathways laid down by the State as a function of attaining its *this-worldly* goal of ensuring its order, stability, and territorial expansion as the now-terrestrial embodiment of the "common good," in the re-occupied place of the Church.

Yet *homo politicus*, the Political citizen or subject *Man*—no longer seen at the public level as the "fallen" natural man of the Christian schema but, rather, as a "reasons of state" figure, able, like Prospero in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, to repress the irrational aspects of his own nature—was now Absolute *Man*. The secularizing formulation of a general order of existence now inscribed his identity, while a transformed version of the Judaeo-Christian matrix, unlike the latter, no longer had to contend with any other possible schema, any other possible variant of *Man*, given that the latter was now over-represented, in terms of its formulation, as *the* human itself. As a result, all other human beings who did not look, think, and act as the peoples of Western Europe did were now to

be classified not as *Enemies-of-Christ* but, rather, as the Lack of “true humanness,” allegedly because of their lack of the Western European order of rationality (over-represented as rationality in general); this, as a Lack that determined that they should be discursively and institutionally classified as *Man’s* Human Others—that is, as Caliban to Prospero—and, as such, held to be as justly expropriated of their lands and allocated to their labor roles as serfs and racialized slaves, as the peasants in the medieval order had been held to be justly condemned to their manual labor role, given their imputed wicked indulgence in the carnal lusts of the flesh.

As a result, the empirical differences between *Man’s* population groups and those of its Human Others, rather than being seeable as the differences between ecologically, geopolitically, and geographically adaptive forms of life, together with their institutionalized genres or kinds of being human that they empirically were—since such a perception would have called for the relativization of *Man’s* newly invented self-conception as Absolute Man—had instead to be seen in terms of *Man’s* newly constructed “inner eyes” or order of consciousness as less, not-quite humans, and, as such, logically classifiable, and institutionalized, as “Indians” and “Negroes.” It is here that what I have referred to as the Janus-face of the epochal rupture effected by the West with its invention of *Man* and its initiation of the secularization of human existence based upon its gradual de-supernaturalization of projected agency is to be sited. In that, for the subjects of the late-medieval Christian Europe, and in terms of the “inner eyes” with which they looked with their physical eyes upon reality, the Earth had to be seen as fixed and motionless at the center of the universe as its dregs, because, ostensibly, the degraded abode of fallen mankind, and therefore of its negative “fallen flesh,” its Adamic legacy of enslavement to Original Sin, as contrasted with the perfection and incorruptibility of the allegedly quite different ontological substance of the harmoniously moving heavens, and with the medieval subjects’ everyday experience of this indeed for them, as for all human beings, motionless, reality of the Earth, ostensibly verifying this conception, a scientific astronomy, unlike their Christian Ptolemaic ethno-astronomy, would have been logically unimaginable, and inconceivable. While, as both Kurt Hübner and Fernand Hallyn have pointed out, it was only to be on the basis of the Renaissance humanists’ re-valORIZED conception of the

human as *homo politicus*—in effect, on the basis of their new lay or secularizing redefinition of the human at the public level of existence and, as such, outside the terms of the Spirit/Flesh code of the medieval order, and therefore, outside the terms of that new conception’s “inner eyes”—that the breakthrough of a Copernicus to a scientific astronomy, based on the counter-premise that the earth also moved and was of the same substance of the heavens, was made possible. With this breakthrough, the first stage of what was to become, over the centuries, the new order of non-adaptive cognition known as the natural sciences—whose domains of knowledge are the physical cosmos, together with, after Darwin, that of the cosmos of purely organic forms of life, including the physiological conditions of our genres or sociogenic kinds of being human—was put in place.

The other side of the Janus-face was to return to Gordon’s thesis, that as in the wake of its expansion the West came to conceive of itself and its peoples (especially its ruling groups) in terms of Absolute Being on the model of Shakespeare’s Prospero, thereby coming to see all other population groups and their kinds of being human, not only as the Lack of the only possible mode of being human defined in non-supernatural terms, which it itself incarnated. As such, as peoples whose self-realization could only exist as a function of securing its own (i.e. the West’s) and that of its own people’s self-realization, while it had, indeed, de-supernaturalized the projection of agency, together with the “supreme source of legitimacy,” it had also done so only by re-projecting its own agency and authorship onto entities that, while no longer supernatural, were no less extra-human. In consequence, from the sixteenth century onward, the West had begun to substitute the idea of Nature (still conceived of as the agent of the Christian God on earth), as the agent that had, in its own terms, extra-humanly mandated an alleged “by nature difference” in rationality between Western Europeans, on the one hand, and “Indians” and “Negroes,” on the other; this as an ostensibly greater/lesser difference in degrees of humanity, which had legitimated the European states’ respective expropriations of the New World land from their indigenous owners, the “Indians,” followed by their reduction to neo-serf status, and as well, the commercialization and reduction of the other category of the “Negroes” into outright slave status, with both conjoined processes thereby setting in motion

a large-scale and ongoing transfer of resources from the two latter population groups, to the peoples of Western Europe.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century onward, however, the West would shift the supreme source of legitimacy from the halfway religio-secular entity of Nature to the purely de-supernaturalized entity of Evolution, together with its so-called mechanisms of Natural Selection and dysselection. In the former case, the West had mapped its new *Rational/Irrational* human nature code, primarily upon the empirical system of differences that existed between its own societal form of life and mode of being human, and those of the African and New World peoples, thereby replacing the “space of Otherness” of the celestial/terrestrial or Heaven/Earth line, on which the *Spirit/Flesh* code of the medieval order had been mapped, with the new “space of Otherness” of the ostensible by-nature-difference-in-rationality line drawn between its own group, and the two groups that it had subordinated, on the other, with the emergence of Darwin’s theory of Evolution, and in its wake the rise of the biological sciences, a far-reaching mutation would now take place. In that, in terms of the “half-scientific, half-mythic” Darwinian Origin Narrative and its implied “formulation of a general order of existence,” as put forward in *The Descent of Man*, Gordon’s thesis that with “modern secularism” theodicy does not disappear but is merely replaced by whatever “is advanced as a Supreme Being or Supreme Source of legitimacy” is verified; with the exception only that given that the “Supreme Being and Supreme Source of Legitimacy” is now to be the processes of biological Evolution and its represented agent, Natural Selection/Dysselection, theodicy metamorphosizes into biodicy.

In that, whereas before, in terms of the Judaeo-Christian “formulation of a general order of existence,” evil in the world was attributed to, in St. Augustine’s fateful terms, mankind’s own inherent failing, the result of its negative legacy of Original Sin inherited from Adam and Eve, both of whom had been given the freedom by their loving Divine Creator to sin or not to sin, evil was now to be explained, in terms of the Darwinian-Malthusian formulation of a general order of existence, in terms of a biodicy.<sup>16</sup> Evil in the world was now projected as being due, not to mankind’s inherited negative Adamic legacy, but rather to extra-humanly determined conditions. That is, to the postulated “significant ill” of *Natural Scar-*

*city* correlated with the no-less postulated random bio-evolutionary processes of natural selection and dysselection, in terms of whose overall explanatory and, indeed, behavior-motivating schema, those relatively few selected were now to be seen as being as *naturally scarce* as the resources for which they all had to compete (cf. Gutting 1989: 188-189). With the further, humanly de-valorizing proviso that all human beings had now to consider themselves dysselected until each individual had proven by his/her success in the bourgeois order of things that he/she had been selected. This at the same time as the many, the lower-classes and the non-successful poor, as well as, globally, the lower because “native” races, all pre-categorized as not favored by Evolution, were now represented as only confirming their own original non-selection and, thereby, as having to accept their dysgenicity as the ostensibly unquestionable cause of their poverty.

In this context, the new post-eighteenth-century bourgeois order of things, whose capitalist economic system would put an end to the Agrarian era of mankind, thereby initiating the techno-industrial era, can now be seen as doing so on the only basis that would make it possible. That is, on the basis of the global large-scale accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few, at the cost of the impoverishment of the many, yet as a process being enabled to function within the logic of an order whose new bio-humanist formulation of a general order of existence, and its postulate of a “significant ill,” would reliably serve to legitimate this dialectic of enrichment of the relatively few and the correlated systemic impoverishment of the many. Given that in terms of the new conception of Man as *homo oeconomicus* and, thereby, of its correlated formulation of a general order of existence, the postulate of a “significant ill” was now that of the threat of mankind’s subordination to Natural Scarcity, with its plan of redemption/salvation, thereby calling for the human subject’s imperative mastering, or at the very least, its keeping at bay, of Natural Scarcity by means of an ever-increasing process of economic growth. While the latter as a process is alone made possible by the acceleration of the profit-driven accumulation of capital called for in order to provide the means for the expanding dynamic of both large-scale techno-industrial and agricultural mass production. While because this dynamic was now represented as the only one able to keep at bay mankind’s threatened subordination to

Natural Scarcity, the overall explanatory behavior-motivating schema of which it is the expression, now served to legitimate the ways of functioning of our ostensible extra-humanly mandated, global economic global-order based on free-market capitalism, to its subjects, whatever the grave social injustices and flagrant ills that continue to be generated as the logical costs of its functioning. With this being no less so than it had been in the case of the behavior-motivating schema of the medieval Latin Christian world, whose discourses of the theodicy had in a parallel way served to legitimate the functioning of that vertically hierarchical social order to its subjects, doing so in the same terms in which they had legitimated the ways of God to mankind.

Nevertheless, where in the latter order it had only been the specifically Latin Christian order of being and things, and its ethno-religious theodicy that had justified the ways of the Christian God, and, therefore, the functioning of its Latin Christian medieval order to that order's specifically *Christian* subjects, with the second post-eighteenth-century invention of *Man* in biocentric and *homo oeconomicus* terms, a mutation would be effected. Seeing that the terms of this second invention, ones that fully enabled its projection as Absolute Being because allegedly selected to be so by the bio-evolutionary processes of Evolution and Natural Selection, and which were now to serve as the justification of the processes of functioning of our present order's biodicy, this justification was now one made to all human subjects, all of whom were now imagined to have had their origin in the half-mythic, half-scientific Origin Narrative as formulated in Darwin's *The Descent of Man*; to have their origin as such, in terms of the Western bourgeoisie's *homo oeconomicus* conception of the human, *Man*, over-represented as if it were that of the human itself. While given that the empirical human species' physiological conditions of existence, whose origins were indeed in Evolution, were now conflated with those of the mode of sociogeny instituted by ethno-class *Man*'s self-conception, together with its over-representation of this conception as if it were that of the human, it was at this conjuncture that the "space of Otherness" phenomenon, first identified by W. E. B. Du Bois, as the *Color Line*, was to come centrally into existence. That is, as a line ostensibly mandated by Evolution between the "favored race"<sup>17</sup> or human hereditary variation as expressed in the ecologically and

climatically adaptive albinism (i.e., white skin) and physiognomy of Western European peoples and their descendants, on the one hand, and on all the other darker skinned, or non-white, peoples of the earth, on the other.

As a result, whereas the *celestial/terrestrial, heaven/earth* line of the medieval order of things had been made to function as the clearly extra-humanly mandated “space of Otherness” on which to map and anchor the *Spirit/Flesh* sociogenic code about which the medieval order had self-organized its structuring hierarchies, with, however, the rise of the movement toward a scientific astronomy in the wake of Renaissance humanists’ invention of political *Man* as a conceptually and institutionally separate notion from the religious identity *Christian*, thereby enabling the initiation of what would come to be the emancipation of the physical cosmos from having to be known in adaptive and therefore ethno-religious terms as it had to be known in terms of the medieval order and its theodicy, with the transformation of that order’s foundational narrative and, therefore, of its formulation of a general order of existence into the now purely de-supernaturalized Origin Narrative of Evolution and Natural Selection, together with *its* biologized formulation of a general order of existence, it was to be the *Color Line* that would now function as an allegedly no less extra-humanly mandated “space of Otherness,” in the re-occupied earlier place of the physical cosmos. So that, as the new “space of Otherness” divide that was now to reoccupy the order-legitimizing place that had been taken by the matrix Heaven/Earth divide of medieval Europe, as well as by that of the Rational/Irrational divide of the later statist and *homo politicus* order of being and of things that had remained intact until the end of the eighteenth century, the Color or Evolved/Non-evolved line was now to be mapped upon the skin color and physiognomic differences between white and non-white. While, at its most extreme form, it was now to be mapped on the difference between, on the one hand, the skin color and “Caucasian” physiognomy of the Indo-European population group (projected *not as the climatically adaptive variation that it was* and is but, rather, as the ostensibly naturally selected biological, and therefore eugenic, norm of being human), and on the other, the skin color and physiognomy, most distant from its own, that of the Bantu peoples of Black African descent, represented *not as the climatically adaptive variant that*

*it was and is*, when seen from a natural scientific perspective, but in *Man*-centric terms, which represented it as being the ostensibly most naturally dysselected and, therefore, dysgenic Other, or anti-norm, to the ostensibly eugenic norm of the Caucasian hereditary variation, of its “favored race.”

It was to be as a function of the West’s institutionalization of itself in terms of its then epochally new self-conception or socio-genic code as Absolute Being (whether in its first form as *homo politicus* or, from the nineteenth century onward, in its purely de-supernaturalized form as biocentric *homo oeconomicus*, with both variants over-represented as if they were the human), thereby, that the majority of the darker-skinned peoples of the earth (all of whom were now to be incorporated, willy nilly into the West’s epochally new conception of the human and its correlated formulation of a general order of existence) would come to be seen, known, and classified, as we also came to see, know, and classify ourselves, not as *other* human beings but, instead, as “Native,” “Negro,” “Blackfellas,” and, ultimately, “Nigger” Others to the True Human Self of the West’s Man. This at the same time as the mode of perception or “inner eyes” to which the ethno-class *Man*’s sociogenic code gave rise, functioned to legitimate to the West itself, its conquest and systemic expropriation of the resources as well as of the lives, “labor,” and, thereby, sovereignty and self-conception of the majority of the non-European peoples of the planet.

Consequently, given that it would be only for the sake of, and therefore in terms of, the West’s epochal enacting of its now secular self-conception as Man-as-Absolute Being, entirely new categories of people, racialized as *Indians, Negroes, Natives, Coolies, Chinks, Spics*, and so on, would be brought into existence as *Man*’s Human Others, if, to paraphrase Galileo’s *Il Saggiatore*, we were to take away the West’s modes or genres of being human, Man<sup>1</sup> and Man<sup>2</sup>, and therefore, in Ralph Ellison’s terms from *Invisible Man*, their respective symbolically coded “inner eyes” (as eyes through which, as westernized scholars, we also now look with our physical eyes upon reality), all such qualitatively pre-described categories such as *Indians, Negroes, Natives, Coolies, Chinks, Spics, Kikes*, and so on, would cease to exist. This, in the same way that, as Aimé Césaire discovered on a visit to Africa, it was only for his Christianized and westernized “inner eyes” (his order of consciousness as that of



contemporary *Man's*) that the oxhead mask, as he had seen it in Martinique, had signified negatively as Christianity's "devil" (and, by implication, in correlatedly secular terms, as "savage," "uncivilized"). So that, if we were to take away those "inner eyes" and order of consciousness specific to our present genre or mode of being human and then replace them with the "inner eyes" of the traditional pre-Western, pre-Christian, and thereby once-autocentric traditional Senegalese genre of being human, the same oxhead mask would now come to signify, in canonized valedictory terms, what it meant to be initiated into adulthood, in terms of what would have to be a quite different, and still Agrarian, genre of being human, of humanhood. What it would have meant, also, for the oxhead mask to have been quite another object of knowledge, one whose role had been central to the instituting technologies by means of which the once genre-centric traditional peoples of Senegal had produced and reproduced themselves as human. In the post-Middle Passage Caribbean, however, because, for Césaire as an educated middle-class colonial "native" subject, those "traditional inner eyes" had been taken away, obliterated, the oxhead mask as the canonized valedictory signifier of the initiated adult had ceased to exist as such an object. Only its stigmatized reality as the Western object-signifier of the Christian "devil" or of the "uncivilized" savage had remained.

If Aimé Césaire's encounter in Africa has therefore functioned to relativize the "inner eyes" of the West's Man as Absolute Being, this relativization (one that proves Fanon's thesis both with respect to the hybrid physiognomy/ontogeny *cum* sociogeny nature of our modes of being human and with respect to the fact that black self-alienation is itself systematically produced by our present mode of sociogeny, as a function of *Man's* enactment) was a later form of one that had been made clear and evident, if only for a brief interregnum, by the first encounter that had taken place between Europeans and the Bantu Congolese, in the wake of the state-dispatched Portuguese voyage that arrived at the Congo River in 1482. With this arrival, followed by the putting in place from 1484 onward of the first stage of the slave trade out of Africa, which, limited at first, would become a large-scale one in the wake of Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean, together with the subsequent expropriation of the vast territories of the Caribbean and Americas from their indigenous owners to the ownership and sovereignty of

the Crown of Spain and Portugal. In that first encounter, however, if, as Ralph Ellison noted in *Invisible Man*, the invisibility of the black person as simply another human individual is an invisibility that has nothing to do with the person in question but, rather, with one prescribed by “the inner eyes with which we look with our physical eyes upon reality,” with the further implication here that Du Bois’s (1903) systematic experience of being “a problem” has nothing to do with *himself* but, rather, has to do with the specific construction of an order of consciousness or “inner eyes” in which he must always already be classified as a problem.

Sigbert Axelson, in his book *Culture Confrontation in the Lower Congo, Etc.* (1970), enables us to see the way in which, from the perspective of the “inner eyes” of the Bantu Congolese, it was the white skin—that is, its albinism—as well as the physiognomy of the incoming Europeans that posed a formidable problem.

As Axelson recounts, from their first sight of the Europeans and of the anomaly that their appearance represented, this problem for the Congolese was posed as a question: “Are these creatures really men (humans)? How could they be, normally human, if they were not black? Not physiognomically Bantu?” This problem was partly solved, at first, by the Congolese. When, in coming to terms with the anomaly that the Europeans represented, they had co-classified the latter (given their obvious power, as proved by their arrival on the water, on the one hand, and by their deathly pallor, their skins drained of color, on the other) with the deceased and deified ancestors whose “space of Otherness” abode was projected as existing under the water as well as underground. They had therefore seen them, at first, as messengers sent by the Ancestors—that is, as supernatural entities—and thus as abnormal with respect to being normally human. Nevertheless, in spite of this provisional classification, which would itself be later discarded, another problem remained—the aesthetic problem. For as the Spanish Catholic missionary Antonio de Teruel pointed out, in his seventeenth-century description of the inhabitants of the Congo, for the then (still genre-centric) Congolese, “only those who were of the deepest black in color were held by them to be the most beautiful” (Teruel 1663-1664).

While, because the colors of the Congolese people ranged from chestnut to deepest olive, to black, anxious mothers made use of an ointment, rubbing it on the skin of the lighter-colored infants,

then exposing them to the sun in an attempt to get them to attain to the preferred deep blackness of skin color that was, for the Congolese, the mark of true beauty. Because of this criterion, albinos amongst them were held to be sacred monsters. The white skin of the Europeans, therefore, as the expression of the same, if more thoroughgoing because climatically adaptive, mutation toward albinism had caused them to be seen, by the Congolese, as Father Teruel tells us, as extremely ugly. Indeed, as one European priest's interpreter told him pityingly, his ugliness was due to his non-blackness, to his whiteness of skin. Here Teruel concludes with a trans-cultural, trans-variation comment. In the same way, he notes, as in the areas of the Congo where whites had never been seen, children ran away in horror from them, so in the remote areas of Portugal where blacks had never been seen, the children ran away in horror at the sight of black skin. In effect, because each variation had been adaptive to the climatic conditions of its origin, with its subjects thereby coming to experience themselves, through their symbolically coded "inner eyes" in which their own variation was projected as the norm of being human, a different variation had logically to be seen by the subjects of a specific variation as a "problem." While, because for both variations, the *a priori* of their own physiognomy and skin color as the norm of being human had been coded in symbolic terms by their respective foundational origin narratives and correlated formulations of a general order of existence, the "inner eyes" or orders of consciousness through which the subjects of each variation would have seen those of the other would have reinforced the reflex-instinctual aversion that each variation's subjects would have felt toward the other variation's subject's seeming abnormality.

Nevertheless, while in the wake of the 1480s encounter of Portuguese and Congolese the latter would have been seeing the white-skinned newcomers for the first time, thereby having to struggle to find a way in which they could fit the latter's anomalous appearance in terms of their traditional classificatory logic, this was not the case with respect to the Portuguese. For black-skinned, Bantu-type people had arrived in the Iberian Peninsula for several centuries before the Portuguese expeditions to Black Africa, some as Islamic converts who had come in the train of the Islamic Arab conquest of large areas of the peninsula, or as occasional slaves from pagan

Africa who had been transported across the Sahara for sale by Islamic traders. These latter, classified as *negros* and *negras*, had therefore become a constant and were made to function as the markers of extreme Otherness to the projected normality of the white-skinned Christian. In addition, in terms of the latter's Judaeo-Christian Origin Narrative, its formulation of a general order of existence—postulate of a significant ill and plan of redemption, the sharp difference in appearance of the *negros and negras* added to their slave and/or Islamic infidel status—had led to their being classified as the signifiers of the human so degraded by Original Sin as to have “fallen to the status of the apes” (Fernández-Armesto 1987)—that is, as a signifier that had marked them to be the furthest limit of being human, in terms of the Spaniards and Portuguese indigenous self-conception, as the Portuguese strangers had also marked the furthest limits of being normally human for the Bantu-Congolese, in terms of *their* indigenous self-conception.

Like the degraded fallen Earth placed at the center of the universe as its dregs, as well as like the leper proscribed outside the gates of the medieval town—this given that the cause of leprosy was attributed as God's punishment for the leper's parents having overindulged in the carnal lust of the flesh—the “Negro” had functioned as part of the signifying complex, whose function had been to induce the Christian subjects of the order to accept the reality of their own represented enslavement to Original Sin, and to be thereby strongly motivated to adhere to the behavioral pathways prescribed by the Church, ones put forward as the only possible path of redemption from that sin, of “cure” from that “ill.” In addition, because the *Spirit/Flesh* code had also been mapped, not only upon the astronomy of the heavens, but also upon the “sacred geography” of the earth—that is, on a line drawn, in the case of geography, between the temperate zone with Jerusalem as its center—as a zone that, within the medieval order's Judaeo-Christian behavior-motivational schema, was held to be habitable by human beings because sited within the Christian God's providential Grace, as contrasted with places like the Torrid Zone, which, supposed to exist beyond Cape Bojador on the bulge of West Africa, was classified as being too hot for human habitation, because outside this Grace, when the Portuguese monarchs dispatched several expeditions in the early decades of the fifteenth century to attempt to sail beyond

Cape Bojador in order to reach to the source of Black Africa's gold, which Islamic traders had also brought for sale across the Sahara, the first expeditions had turned back. They had done so because of the sailors' fears not only that they would plunge into boiling waters without any hope of return but also that, in going beyond Cape Bojador, they would be turned black by God as punishment for transgressing the limits of Christian habitation prescribed by Him (Turner 1980: 120).

What therefore encountered each other in the wake of 1482 in the Congo were two quite different genres of being human, together with their respective Origin Narratives, "formulations of a general order of existence," and, thereby, two specific orders of consciousness or "inner eyes," each convinced that theirs were the only possible mode or genre of being human, their respective "regimes of truth" the only truth. Hence when, as Father Teruel also tells us, the Congolese warned the Portuguese, "Do not call us Negros, Negros are slaves, Call us Black (*Prieto*)," their warning referred to a central distinction made by their foundational Origin Narrative between black-skinned people who were free men and women of the lineage and, as such, the socially normal subjects of their order, and black-skinned people who were either Congolese who had fallen out of their lineage status and, as such, legitimately classifiable as *negros*—that is, as slaves—and so justly saleable, or other tribal peoples who had been conquered in war, and were therefore also classified as being justly saleable as *negros*, or slaves. For the Portuguese, however, in terms of their Biblical Origin Narrative (in which all black people as the descendants of Noah's cursed son, Ham, who had been condemned to be a servant to his brothers Shem and Japhet, had inherited the negative legacy of his father's curse), as well as in terms of the Bulls that the Papacy had granted the Portuguese kings in order to legitimate their right to conquer and expropriate the African territories and enslave their peoples as Enemies-of-Christ (i.e., the people who, having heard Christ's word preached to them, had refused to accept it), all black-skinned peoples were potentially classifiable, and therefore treatable, as *negros* and *negras*. In neither of these cases, therefore, could the fundamental Congolese distinction have been *meaningful*. That is, the distinction between the norm of the order, the free-born subjects who were men and women of the lineage, and as such classifiable for the

Congolese as *prietos*, blacks, and their Other, the lineageless men and women, as well as other conquered ethno-tribal groups who were legitimately slaves within the overall terms of the formulation of a general order of existence, structuring of the then still autocentric traditional order of the kingdom of the Congo: and, as such, alone classifiable as *negros*. For the Portuguese, instead, all black-skinned peoples were *negros* and potentially enslavable.

The anguished letters written in the early decades of the sixteenth century by the Christianized Mani-Congo, of the Congo King Affonso, to the Portuguese king, imploring him to help put an end to the slave trade that was breaching the fundamental distinction charting of his traditional societal order—with Portuguese slave traders and their Congolese partners, not only beginning to sell free-born men and women of the lineage (*prietos*) as slaves (*negros*) but going so far as to sell members of his, the Mani-Congo's, own royal family—would have been incomprehensible to the Portuguese king. Since the classificatory logic of the latter, both as a Christian, in terms of whose religion all black-skinned peoples, because classifiable as pagan idolaters, were seen as potential slaves who would even benefit from Christian salvation as the price of their enslavement, as well as a Renaissance European monarch, in terms of whose reasons of state ideology, all black-skinned people, whether as slaves or free men and women, were there to be exploited for the benefit of his own territorial imperial expansion as well as of his country's enrichment, based on the commercial benefits that the expanding trade in slaves, gold, as well as in the spices of the East, was then making possible (Axelson 1970).

I use the term "Ideology" in the above context as a generalized term able to include not only the theodicy of medieval Christianity but also the supernaturally guaranteed order of the Congolese based on the deified figures of the ancestors as well as of the gods, both of which had functioned to justify the functioning of that order to itself. Hence the fact, for example, that the Congolese could *not* have seen the enslavement of the category of Congolese men and women, classified as lineageless men and women, as wrong, any more than the Christians could have normally seen enslaving Ham's descendants and/or Enemies-of-Christ as wrong. This was so in general, even though some missionary priests would, indeed, so see it, while King Affonso of the Congo would attempt, if in vain,

to abolish the slave trade altogether (Hochschild 1998). In addition, the term “Ideology” also enables us to include the then-secularizing, because political, “reasons of state” formulations, in whose terms the king of Portugal, like Shakespeare’s Prospero, would have seen the colonizing vassalization of the kingdom of the Congo, as well as the enslavement of as many Congolese as possible, as being in both the Christian and the natural order of things. This in the same way as during the second wave of European imperialism, when the Belgian king Leopold would have seen his own even more thorough labor exploitation of the Congolese people, together with their brutally ruthless subjugation, as having been mandated by the manifest destiny of Europeans, as the ostensible embodiment of human beings who were highly evolved and civilized, because naturally selected, to subordinate and subjugate those who had been bio-evolutionarily dysselected to be “lesser breeds” without the law (Hochschild 1998).

Paul Ricoeur’s redefinition of Marx’s seminal conception of ideology enables us to understand, in this context, the “why” of the Janus-face of the history of Western expansion over the past 500 years, together with the relation of our “imposed wrongness” of being, or of *désêtre/dysbeing*, to the nature of this history. This as a relation that in turn enables us to grasp the large-scale implications of the initial challenge made to the negative effects of this Janus-face, in the context of the uprisings of the late 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, by the black peoples of the United States (as members of the only race, as Césaire points out, whose humanity has been totally denied), by means of, *inter alia*, the Black Aesthetic, Black Arts, and Black Studies Movements. To understand, also, the logic of the eventual failure of these movements, given that the new truth, the new aesthetic, which they struggled, however contradictorily, to articulate, could not have been audible in terms of our present order of truth and of aesthetics, as the order of truth and aesthetics specific to our present biocy: to its Ideology, in terms of Ricoeur’s redefinition of that term.

In his 1979 essay entitled “Ideology and Utopia as Cultural Imagination,” Paul Ricoeur makes use of Karl Mannheim’s dialectical yoking of the terms *ideology* and *utopia*, doing so, first of all, in order to detach them from the pejorative meanings that have been placed on them. In that, if the term *ideology*, since Marx, has

come to be stigmatized as “false consciousness,” the term “utopia” has been no less negatively stigmatized as meaning escapist, unreal. Ricoeur’s new thesis, instead, links both terms to the central point made by Marx when he proposed that the function of ideology everywhere, and in all contexts, is to over-represent a partial group interest (i.e., a special group interest) as if it were “the common interest of all the members of society” and, by doing so, to give the ideas that are generated from the perspective of this “special or partial group interest” the form of universality, representing them “as the only rational, universally valid ones.” Nevertheless, Ricoeur continues, rather than seeing what is, in effect, a surplus representation as “false” and therefore as an aberration, we should instead place it in the context of the hypothesis put forward by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his essay “Ideology as a Cultural System.” Since such a hypothesis will enable us to propose that all such surplus representations, as well as the cognitive distortions to which they necessarily lead, can be recognized as serving a basic, and indispensable, because normalizing and order-integrating, function. In that if this function, as Geertz argues, is that of “mediating and integrating human action at its public level,” the criterion for the functioning of all ideologies, rather than being defined by their truth or falsity, should instead be defined by the fact as to whether or not they successfully serve to orient human social behaviors in such a way as to enable the “integrating of human action at the public level” and, thereby, to enable the stable reproduction of the specific societal order that is the condition of our existence as humans. The criterion for the functioning of all ideologies cannot therefore be that of their truth or falsity, but rather must be that of the empirical fact as to whether or not they successfully serve to integrate “human action at the public level,” as the indispensable means of enabling the dynamic production and stable reproduction of the specific societal orders that, then reciprocally, make their own articulation as such Ideologies possible.

In this context, to return to Ricoeur’s illuminating use of Geertz’s thesis, the cognitive distortions effected by Ideologies’ acts of surplus representation (as in our case where the Western bourgeois or ethno-class conception of the human, *Man*, together with the “partial interests” of its referent categories, are over-represented as those of the human) can be seen as functioning to “unify and



integrate human orders by transforming sentiment into significance,” thereby making it “socially available.” As such, Ideology should be seen and analyzed “as a kind of figurative language” that serves to “cast personal attitudes into public form.”

Here, if we see “sentiment” and “personal attitudes” cast into public form as being inseparable from Ellison’s “inner eyes” and, therefore, from the always already socialized orders of consciousness through which we “look with our physical eyes upon reality,” then Ideology and its processes of surplus—representation—can be recognized as being everywhere generated from those foundational “formulations of a general order of existence,” which serve as the narratively, and thereby non-biogenetically, ordered programs by means of which human orders are held together; this analogically to the way in which the colony of a beehive is integrated on the basis of its species-specific biogenetic behavioral program.

In this context, Ricoeur makes use of Max Weber’s insights, with respect to the role played by the legitimization of authority in all human orders, to propose that the main function of a system of Ideology is to reinforce belief in the legitimacy of each society’s given system of authority in such a way that it meets the claim to legitimacy. While this claim to legitimacy can be met only “by the acts of surplus representation,” which enables the interest of the beneficiary groups of the order to be seen as the interests of all, even by those who most lose out, Ideology can be seen to provide “the general horizon of understanding and mutual recognition before being unduly diverted for the sake of a ruling group, be it a class or any other dominant group” (Ricoeur 1979). That is, to enable the general order of consciousness and its “horizon of understanding” to induce the subjects of the order, to see and experience the general interests of the order as being inextricably linked to the interests of the ruling group. While, Ricoeur continues, it is precisely the attempt to link the interests of a dominant group with “the general horizon of understanding” that unifies the order, which necessarily leads to cognitive distortions.

This therefore means that the empirically unified existence of any hierarchically structured order, as in the case of our contemporary Western-bourgeois and Westernized global own, must, at the same time, attest to the functioning of a specific Ideology, its modes of surplus representation, and attendant cognitive distortions. Given

that in the absence of a genuine egalitarianism, the hierarchies specific to each order, as in the case of our own, can be sustained and reproduced only by means of such Ideologies, all of which function to provide the template in whose terms such hierarchies can continue to be *experienced* by all, including the most dispossessed, as being legitimate: as the realization of a true order (because ostensibly extra-humanly mandated, rather than the humanly constructed order that it empirically is). From hence, the paradox of Ricoeur's conclusion that "even under the layer of distorting representations and its system of legitimization, the symbolic systems which orient behaviors" function, as Geertz proposes, to "provide a template or blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes, as genetic systems provide such a template or blueprint for the organization of organic processes" (Ricoeur 1979).

This would therefore mean that in the same way as, at the purely organic level, a bee, for example, must in a law-like way know the reality of its environment in the species-specific terms that are adaptively advantageous to the reproduction of the beehive, and cannot, therefore, be expected to know its reality *outside* the terms of that species-specific standpoint (as a standpoint mandated by its genetic system, which provides the template for the beehive's overall organizational processes); so, analogically, at the hybrid organic and meta-organic level of human life, the genre-specific subject of any order, including the intellectuals of that order, whether religious or secular, must also, in a lawlike manner, know their social "reality" of which they/we are always already socialized subjects, in terms that are adaptively advantageous to the production and reproduction of that reality; and cannot, therefore, be expected normally to know its reality outside the terms of that genre-specific standpoint, as a standpoint mandated by the Ideology whose cognitive distortions function to provide a template or blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes, indispensable to the production and reproduction of each societal order.

There is a major difference here, however, since, as shown in the specific case of the history of Western Europe, human beings differ from purely organic species in their ability, without any change in their physiology, to transform their behaviors, their social realities, and their genre-specific Ideologies, doing so by reinventing their genres or kinds of being human and, therefore, their modes of

knowing, feeling, behaving in new modalities. Since, as seen in the case of the West's re-invention of its public identity from its matrix identity *Christian*, first, to that of *Man* as *homo politicus*, then again, in the nineteenth century, from that of political *Man* to that of *Man*, now biocentrically defined as *homo oeconomicus*. In both cases, however, with *Man* coming to be over-represented as if it were the human, and thereby instituted as Absolute Being—with all the rest of humankind thereby logically classified as *Man's* Human Others (i.e., as *Indian, Native, Negroes, coolies, kikes, chinks, spics, niggers, sand-niggers*, etc.). With, in consequence, the “truth in an abstract universal sense” of our present order of knowledge, as challenged by Gerald McWhorter, lawlikely functioning as Ideology in Ricoeur's redefined sense of the term; and therefore as an order of truth indispensable to the continued production and reproduction of our present contemporary Western and Westernized order, doing so by providing its bio-humanist or liberal democratic “general horizon of understanding” incorporating of all its subjects, together with its always already legitimated system of authority.

Here Ricoeur's parallelly redefined concept of “utopia” in terms of its dialectic functioning with “ideology” identifies it as being, in all human orders, the liminal site or perspective that must be systemically excluded from the normal functioning of each specific order, as the condition of that order's stable production and reproduction. As such, therefore, the only perspective that carries within it the possibility of an escape from the prescriptive categories of each order's “general horizon of understanding” as well as of its legitimated system of authority.<sup>18</sup> Hence, Ricoeur continues, each order's mode of public knowledge or Ideology—whose function is to enable the subject of the order to know the order in terms that are adaptively advantageous to its own reproduction, and thereby to behave in ways oriented by that knowledge, and as a function that therefore calls for its intellectuals, religious or secular, to ensure the rigorous production of such knowledge—must, given its order-integrating, indeed order-producing and reproducing function, remain “impervious to philosophical attack”; it is everywhere the “systemic function of utopian modes of thought to challenge these modes of public and order-integrating thought from a place *outside* the order's mode of rationality—from *utopia*, that is nowhere” (Ricoeur 1979). From the perspective, therefore, of those whose exclusion—or systemic

subordination as in the case of the laity and lay intellectuals of late medieval Europe—is the indispensable condition of the order’s truth, and therefore of its existence. Or as in the case of our own “imposed wrongness of being,” or *désêtre*, as experienced through the Fanonian type of black self-alienation, W. E. B. Du Bois’s “double consciousness,” or, in George Lamming’s terms, our systemically induced self-amputation (Lamming 1984), as the ultimate Human Other to *Man* over-represented as if it were the human.

In consequence, if, as Ricoeur concludes, at conjunctural times of change, utopian or alternative modes of thought arise to “shatter a given order” by the proposal of an alternative order, and that therefore it is the role of the bearers of such alternative utopian thought “to give the force of discourse to this possibility,” the original call by the three movements to center and elaborate the black perspective (as *the* perspective of the ultimate Human Other to the West’s *Man*, over-represented as if it were the human and, therefore, as Legesse’s liminal perspective) owe their vital emotional power and force, as well as their psychically emancipatory thrust as noted by Madhu Dubey, precisely to this attempt, however conflictually and inchoately, “to give the force of discourse to the possibility” of a new Human Project after *Man*’s. Hence the logic by which, with the reterritorialization of *Man*’s Ideology and its order-integrating program of truth (Veyne 1988), the Black Aesthetic and Black Arts Movements were to disappear as if they had never been, while Black Studies was to be incorporated into the mainstream only at the cost of the pacification of its original thrust, by means of its redefinition in *Man*’s normative terminology, no longer as a Black utopian alternative mode of thought but, rather, as Ethnic sub-text of the Ideologies of *Man*’s Word—that is, as African-American Studies.

This was to be a high price to pay at several levels. In the case of the post-1960s United States, the price paid for the incorporation of the black middle class into the consumer horizon of expectation of the generic class (the white middle class), even if, admittedly, at a still secondary level, since a middle class now re-defined in ethnic terms as *African-American* ensured that the skill-less, job-less, and therefore now increasingly criminalized underclasses were to be even more rigorously interned in “the hood” (i.e., the jobless inner-city ghettos and their prison-system extension) as the group now sacrificially excluded from the order as the cost of the order’s

reproduction; and made institutionally to reoccupy the role, and *nigger* place, of the formerly, no less institutionally segregated black U.S. population group as a whole. Further, this price was itself, like many similar “local” ones, correlated with a universally applicable, species-specific one. When Einstein warned, in the wake of the splitting of the atom and the dropping of the first atomic bomb, that everything in the world had changed except the way we think about it, and that, as a result, unless mankind could come up with a new mode of thinking we would “drift towards unparalleled catastrophe,” what he put his finger on was what we earlier defined as the Janus-face of the West’s epochal historical rupture effected from the Renaissance onward. The rupture, that is, that had been effected by its de-supernaturalization of the projection of our agency and authorship of ourselves and our orders, onto extra-human entities, as a rupture that had enabled not only the secularization of human existence at the public level but also the correlated de-supernaturalization of the physical cosmos; with this thereby leading to the latter’s processes of functioning to be freed from having to be known in terms of the specific Ideology adaptively advantageous to the instituting of each human order. To be epochally known, instead, in natural-scientific terms, as the autonomously regulated processes of functioning that they empirically are.

However, while both the physical sciences and, after Darwin, the biological sciences, were to place unparalleled power in the hands of human subjects, we would nevertheless continue to know Self, Other, and World, and therefore the hybridly sociohuman, nature-culture or phylogeny/ontogeny/sociogeny hybrid level of reality, specific to our societal orders in the same terms of Ideology that we have always memorially known it. With the result that once we had replaced the projection of our human agency and authorship onto the millennially supernatural, with that of the projection of our own agency and authorship onto the no less extra-human entities, firstly, of “nature” and then secondly, and biocentrically so, of Evolution and Natural Selection/Dysselection, our drift as a species toward unparalleled catastrophe has only continued to increase the dynamic of its momentum.

## Conclusion

Black is beautiful!

—*Black slogan chanted during the '60s*

Sylvia Wynter

Not so very long ago, the earth numbered two thousand million inhabitants: five million men, and one thousand five hundred million natives. The former had the Word; the other had the use of it.... The European elite undertook to manufacture a native elite. They picked out promising adolescents; they branded them, as with a red-hot iron, with the principles of Western culture.... From Paris, from London, from Amsterdam we would utter the words "Parthenon! Brotherhood!" and somewhere in Africa or Asia lips would open "... then on! ... therhood!" It was the golden age. It came to an end; the mouths opened by themselves.

—*Jean-Paul Sartre, Preface to Frantz Fanon, Les Damnés de La Terre/The Wretched of the Earth*

The peculiarity of "our place in the world" which isn't to be confused with anybody else's. The peculiarity of our problems which aren't to be reduced to subordinate forms of any other problem. The peculiarity of our history, laced with terrible misfortunes which belong to no other history.

—*Aimé Césaire, Letter to Maurice Thorez/Lettre à Maurice Thorez*

In this overall context, the major proposal here is that the calls for Black Studies, as well as for a Black Aesthetic and a Black Art, as they originally erupted in the context of the black and many other such ethno-racial social movements of the 1960s—such as those of Native Americans (Indians), Chicanos, and Asian-Americans, as well as the global anti-colonial struggles of "native" colonized peoples, together with other struggles against racial apartheid, as in South Africa and Australia—were all, fundamentally, struggles against their respective subjects' discursively and institutionally classified Human Other status. With our collectively induced experience of an imposed "wrongness of being" or of *désêtre/dysbeing*, therefore, being recognizable as an indispensable function of the instituting and enacting of our present genre of being human *Man*, and of its governing principle or sociogenic code; this at the same time as such a phenomenon cannot be seen to exist as an object of knowledge in terms of our present order of knowledge, its objective "program of Truth," and, therefore, of Ideology, in Ricoeur's redefinition of the term. As one, in other words, that provides the template or blueprint indispensable to the hierarchical integration

and reproduction of our present neo-Liberal order of being and of things, which is represented as one to whose universalism there is no outside, to which there can be no alternative.

It is in this context that both McWhorter's utopian call for a "little something other than truth in an abstract universal sense," like Jones/Baraka's call to exoticize Western thought and Larry Neal's call for a post-Western aesthetic, with these calls allied to the popular slogan "Black Is Beautiful," as well as to the dynamic of black popular music, à la James Brown, of the time, can be recognized as all functioning together to *relativize Man*, together with its ethno-class system of thought, and aesthetics, its over-representation as if it were the human and therefore Absolute Being; as "the Man," in black popular slang. It is therefore in the context of their challenge to this over-representation that not only the texts cited earlier but also the range of essays, poetry, fiction, and creative writing produced by black writers in the 1960s and early 1970s must now be returned to, re-examined, and reclaimed, as the first stage, however then incomplete, of our coming to grips with the *real issue* (the territory rather than its maps) with which we are now urgently confronted. *The issue* of being now compelled—as "black" and "native" intellectuals who have hitherto only been permitted to *use* the Word of *Man*, thereby, willy nilly, serving to willingly further Man's Project, over-represented as if it were that of the Human—to create now our own Word, by separating discursively as well as institutionally, the notion of the *human* from the notion of *Man*. And to do so analogically to the way in which the lay humanist intellectuals of medieval Europe, who had hitherto only been permitted to *use* the word of God—a Word owned by the Clergy/theologians—had, by their discursive and institutional separation of the notion of *Man* from that of *Christian*, created their Word, the Word of *Man*; thereby initiating the bringing in of what is today our contemporary Western and Westernized world system.

With this new Word, however, then serving as the Word implementing of Man's Project, as a project, the range of whose dazzling triumphs and achievements is matched only by the dimensions of the costs of its negative underside—the costs of the *global problematic*, on the one hand, and, on the other, of the profound nature of black and other non-white forms (and also some white forms, as in the case of "white trash," the white lower classes, etc.)

of self-alienation, self-amputation. With all such forms being comprehensively induced by the systemic de-valorization, as Fanon points out, of what it is to be human, in terms of our now biocentric *homo oeconomicus* descriptive statement of the human. Within, therefore, the terms of our Darwinian-Malthusian Origin Narrative, which inscribed and inscribes this descriptive statement or sociogenic code of symbolic life and death, together with its formulation of a “general order of existence” and postulate of “significant ill” as that of mankind’s enslavement to dysgenicity and Natural Scarcity. This as the now purely secular and transmuted variant of Christianity’s *matrix Judaeo-Christian* Origin Narrative and its postulate of a “significant ill” as that of mankind’s enslavement to Original Sin.<sup>19</sup>

Lewis Gordon identifies the specific challenge that we who now necessarily experience ourselves in terms of our ostensibly bio-evolutionarily imposed “wrongness of being,” or of *désêtre/dysbeing*, in terms of the West’s Absolute Man, and of its Project, must necessarily confront. “Rationalizations of Western thought,” he writes,

often led to a theodicy of Western civilization, ... as a system that was complete on all levels of human life, on levels of description (what is) and prescription (what ought to be), of being and value, while its incompleteness, its failure to be so, lived by those constantly being crushed under its heels, remained a constant source of anxiety often in the form of social denial. People of colour, particularly black people, lived the contradictions of this self-deception *continually through attempting to live this theodicy in good faith*. This lived contradiction emerged because a demand often imposed upon people of colour is that they accept the tenets of Western civilization without being *critical* beings.... An explosion [therefore] erupts in the soul of a black person, an explosion that splits the black person into two souls, as W.E.B. Du Bois observed in *The Souls of Black Folk* and the earlier *Conservation of the Races*, with a consciousness of a frozen “outside,” of a being who is able to see *that he or she is seen as a being without a point of view, which amounts to not being seen as a human being*. (Gordon, 2002b: 10–11, emphasis added)<sup>20</sup>

It was precisely the eruption of this “point of view” in the texts of all three movements, in the overall context of the social movements of the 1960s, as a point of view alternative to the “rationalizations of Western thought” as well as to the “monopoly of humanity” of its



aesthetics, that led, as Madhu Dubey notes, to the psychic emancipatory explosion of emotional release triggered by their revalorization of the sign of blackness—in effect, of non-being. While despite the fact that its also powerful cultural nationalist tendencies threatened to draw it back inside the orbit of Western rationalization and therefore of Man and his Project, its also no less powerful popular tendency (popular in the sense of the term applied to those whose stigmatized exclusion from the normalcy of the order is the condition of the order's functioning—in effect, a tendency based on the point of view of its irredeemable Otherness or liminality in terms of the order) would, for a brief hiatus, make visible a utopian point of view, inextricably linked to the emergent Human Project. One for which Man's Project has provided the global conditions of existence, without being able to realize a universality able to go beyond the limits of its own ethno-class, biohumanist, and therefore Liberal modality of universalism. It was, however, therefore also logical that such a point of view could have been no more containable in terms of our present Western bourgeois and, therefore biocentric, order of being, aesthetic, knowledge, and correlated program of truth, than the lay humanist point of view of late medieval Latin Christian Europe could have been containable within the latter's theodicy, its theocentric order of being knowledge, aesthetics, and thereby its theocentric "program of truth."

Nevertheless, in the same way as the lay humanists' then-utopian point of view, and its reinvention of *Man*, laid the basis for the new order that was to displace and replace that of Latin Christian medieval Europe, so the new utopian point of view, which takes the reality of our present "wrongness of being" as the point of departure for the reinvention of the human in new revalorizing Fanonian terms, is the point of view that, erupting in its first phase in the texts of the 1960s, thereby laid the groundwork, however incompletely and conflictually so, for the realization of the Human Project, and, thereby, of the new order that is imperatively to come. As one, necessarily based on the recognition, for the first time in human history, of our collective agency and authorship of our genres of being human, and, therefore, of the production of all our societies, their role allocation's and structuring's hierarchies, together with the modes of material or economic provisioning, as well as of the order of knowledge, of truth, and of the aesthetic, each of which

are as indispensable as the other to the autopoiesis or instituting of each such genre of the human, of their *I*'s and their *We*'s; in effect, of ourselves, by ourselves. The Human Project, therefore, as one inseparable from the recognition of our individual and collective responsibility for the societal effects to which each such process of genre-instituting leads, as in the contemporary case of the *global problematique* identified by Gerald Barney; inseparable, thereby, from the fullest possible realization of our autonomy as humans, beyond the limits of Man's Project and, therefore, of our still ongoing "wrongness of being," of *désêtre*.

## Notes

1. See Jones (Baraka) 1975. See also the following for some of the differing aspects of the Black Arts and Black Aesthetic Movements in terms of their original dynamic: Gerald 1971, Fuller 1971, Gayle 1971, Karenga 1968, de Costa 1977, Neal 1971: 370-378, Martin 1988, Jones (Baraka) 1963, Jones (Baraka) and Neal 1968, Van Deburg 1992, and Taylor 1988.

2. Recently, as China has become integrated into the Western economic system of capitalism and therefore into the absolute single criterion or standard of being and of beauty of ethno-class (Western-bourgeois) *Man*, young Chinese middle-class women, in addition to resorting to plastic surgery to change the shape of their eyes to a Western European model, are also enduring great agony in order to get their legs stretched so that they will become longer, assimilating them into the impossible ideal of thin, long-legged, white Western bourgeois models.

3. Ortnor argued that the functioning of a code specific to human beings—that of symbolic life and death, as a code from our origins as a language-capacitated species—was mapped onto the anatomical differences between the male and female sexes, thereby transforming the *male/female* categories into *linguistic* ones (i.e. *man/woman*, *wife/husband*, *mother/son*, *brother/sister*, etc.). In consequence, if we redefine the Western cultural conception of *nature/culture* into the transculturally applicable conception of the code of symbolic life and death (Fanon's modes of sociogeny), one that enacts a value-differential between, on the one hand, the purely biological life to which women give birth, represented as symbolic death, and, on the other, that of symbolic (or "true") life to which the category of men analogically, and therefore symbolically, "give birth," then Ornter's conception can be seen as a member of the universal class. What, therefore, were and are the central functions of this code? Given the imperative function of each such code in the instituting and reproduction of human societal orders, the connoted value differential between (in traditional orders) the category of women and biological life, on the one hand, and that of men and symbolic life, on the other, would have to be systematically produced and reproduced. This, in parallel to the way in which, in our contemporary order, the code of ethno-class *Man* has been mapped onto the physiognomic and skin-color differences between peoples of Black African descent, on the one hand (as the ostensible embodiment of symbolic *death* defined as that of barely evolved, biological life), and, on the other, the peoples of Indo-European

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descent (as the ostensible embodiment of fully evolved and thereby symbolic life). Hence the way in which the positive/negative value connotations/*cum* differential between “whites” and “non-whites,” and, most totally, between “whites” and “blacks,” must be rigorously maintained in our present order of being and of things, as the condition of the instituting of our ethno-class, or Western-bourgeois conception of the human *Man*, over-represented as if it were the human; as, in Lewis Gordon’s term, *Absolute Being* (Gordon, 2002c).

4. I adapt the category of “symbolic death” from Peter Winch (1964: 307–324), who argued that the only life that human beings live is the life they represent as “symbolic life.”

5. Consider the distinction that the Spanish language makes between European and native women, and that the English language erases with the use of the term “woman.” While Spanish classifies the women of the two subordinated groups as *indias* (Indian women) and *Negras* (*negresses* in the older English usage), thereby making clear that the only category that is classifiable as *Woman* is a member of the dominant European group and, therefore, that it is only for the latter that the issue of gender can be *the* primary, indeed the *only*, issue, the Spanish usage makes it clear that for the descendants of the other two population groups, the issue of gender is itself only *one* aspect of the issue of the *genre of the human of Man*, in whose terms not only were their populations made into the Other to the genre of human but as woman (*indias*, *negras*) they were as necessarily the Other to the generic woman as in our present order of things. That is, in the same way as before the rise of feminism, the category of *Woman* was necessarily the Other to the generic sex—that is, the male sex. For insight into the functioning of generic categories and their lack, see Gallop (1985).

6. Anthony Pagden (1982) gives an excellent overview of the struggle waged by the evangelizing missionary Bartolomé de Las Casas against the arguments of royal official ideologues such as Ginés de Sepúlveda, who based the rights of the Spanish Crown to expropriate the lands of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean and the Americas on their ostensible lack of Natural Reason, proposing, instead, that the New World Peoples, especially the Aztecs, thought and acted in terms of a quite different order of natural reason, one in which, for example, ritual human sacrifice seemed to them a rational, even a pious and virtuous act, since taken for the “good” of their “commonwealth.”

7. The African slave, after being transported across the Middle Passage, was sold in the New World as a *pieza*. A *pieza*-piece was the equivalent, for example, of a “count” bunch of bananas—a stem equivalent to the length nine hands or more, which is the norm. A stem of six hands, for example, would count as a quarter bunch. The length of stems is therefore more important than the amount of bunches. So with the African, the *pieza* was the norm. The norm was a man who represented the largest possible amount of labor power. He had to have good teeth and be above average in height, free of physical defects, and between thirty to thirty-five, the years in which he had the most labor to give. (One authority, however, claims that the vintage years were from twenty-five to thirty-five.) In any case, the *pieza* was the norm. Others who did not attain these qualifications had to be added together to make up a *pieza*. Three boys or girls between eight and fifteen would make up two pieces. Two males or females between four and eight—or between thirty-five and forty, when physical powers were waning—made up one. *Piezas* over forty were sold as “refuse” at cut-rate prices. These were the “unskilled slaves,” the raw labor

power. After they had been trained in the special skills required for sugar making, their skill would increase their value.

8. Lewis Gordon's (2002c) concept of mutation from the millennially supernatural "supreme source of legitimacy" to a now purely de-supernaturalized one is illustrated here by the switch from Heaven's to Evolution's mandate.

9. Both Kurt Hübner (1983) and Fernand Hallyn (1990) make the central point that the Copernican Revolution, which would eventually lead to the development of a scientific astronomy as well as to the new order of cognition that is the natural sciences, cannot be seen, as most historians of science have tended to see it, as a revolution purely internal to the development of the sciences. Rather, it must be seen in the context of the overall revolution of Renaissance humanism, and, therefore, in that of the overall instituting of what I define as the West's Project of Man.

10. Sir Stafford Beer explains Maturana and Varela's main underlying concept of "autopoiesis" as homeostatic—that is, involving "a device for holding a critical system variable within physiological limits"; and in the case of autopoietic homeostasis, the "critical variable *is the system's own organization*." Thus, even if every "measurable property of that organizational structure changes utterly in the system's process of continuing adaptation," *it survives*; that is, *the mode of organization is its identity*. Implicit in this context is the fact that the living's imperative *is its realization* rather than its mere self-preservation.

11. As Krupp points out in the case of China, "the best astronomy in the world" in the "last quarter of the thirteenth century" was "carried on at Guo Shoujing's Beijing observatory and at the 26 other field stations then established from Mongolia to the island of Hainan. Guo Shoujing used engraved metal instruments to measure the lengths of shadows and the positions of the stars and planets. Both he and the Tongtian calendar makers of 1199 a.d. measured the length of the solar year as 365.2425 days, only 26 seconds longer than it actually is."

12. In *The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art* (2002), David Lewis-Williams points out that although the Eurocentric bias in scholarship has placed the origin of human behaviors in Europe at 40,000 to 50,000 years ago, when such behaviors were said to have appeared all at once as a "package deal," recent evidence from Africa challenges this thesis. Arguing that this later evidence shows us that we need to speak of "modern human behaviors" rather than merely of "behavior," Lewis-Williams documents the origin of all such behaviors as having taken place on the continent of Africa, together with what would also have been, in Fanon's terms, the origins of the sociogenic or socializing processes by which we institute ourselves as human, thereby orienting our *eusocial* behaviors by what Ernesto Grassi (1980) defines as a new human code, that of the Sacred Word of religion.

13. The state-dispatched voyages of the Portuguese about Cape Bojador on the bulge of West Africa in search of the source of West African gold, and their landing on the shores of Senegal in the 1440s, were the first challenge to medieval Europe's sacred geography of the earth. In the logic of the latter, the area of the earth beyond Cape Bojador, which was classified as the Torrid Zone, *bad to be* uninhabitable because it was projected as being outside God's providential Grace. On landing in Senegal, however, the Portuguese found it to be populated. Columbus would later use this fact to support his own claim that the Ocean Sea beyond the straits of Gibraltar was indeed navigable, thereby enabling a sea route to the spice trade of the East Indies, to be opened up by sailing West. Yet according to the sacred geography of

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Latin Christian medieval Europe, the Ocean Sea *should not have been navigable*, given that the lands of the Western Hemisphere also had to be in their Aristotelian natural place under water—again because imagined to be also condemned to be uninhabitable, because also outside God's Grace. See, for this, Sylvia Wynter, "Columbus and the Poetics of the *Propter Nos*" (1991: 251–286).

14. Valentin Mudimbe (1988: 45) documents the way in which the first phases of the European states' expansion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were legitimated by the Papacy in religious and evangelizing terms, which made the Church and its missionaries co-actors with the States, their military, and their bureaucrats.

15. Ginés de Sepúlveda was the official historian of the Spanish monarch as well as his official chaplain. A humanist scholar who had translated Aristotle, Sepúlveda became in his writings the ideologue of the expansionist goals of the Spanish state. As such, he was the major antagonist of the Christian evangelizing missionary Bartolomé de Las Casas, for whom the only right that the Spanish state had to be in the Caribbean and the Americas was the right given to it and its functionaries in exchange for their helping to facilitate the Christian evangelization of the New World peoples. Against Las Casas's thesis, Sepúlveda sought to argue the case for the legitimate right of the Spanish monarchical state to the expropriated lands and sovereignty of the indigenous peoples of the New Worlds, doing so on the basis of terms that moved *outside* the religio-theological grounds on which the Papacy had granted these rights to Spain. Sepúlveda would also develop a line of argument that, basing itself on the *natural slaves/natural masters* thesis of Aristotle's *Politics*, had been put forward from the earliest decades of Spain's conquest and expropriation of New World lands, in order to establish the rights of the Spanish Crown to their possession in new juridical terms—terms that would not have had to accept the dual spiritual and temporal claim to sovereignty by the Papacy that had been implicit in the Bulls by means of which the Pope had granted to Spain and Portugal their respective rights of possession. With this being so given, the Spanish Crown now sought to claim temporal sovereignty for itself, restricting the Papacy's sovereignty to the realm of the purely spiritual. It is on the basis of this kind of rhetorical-judicial legitimating discourse put forward by Sepúlveda, primarily from the humanist perspective of *Man* as political subject of the state even where partly couched in Christian theological terms, that what Lewis Gordon (2002b) identified as the process by means of which the West invented itself and its peoples in the terms of Absolute Being can be most clearly recognized. See also the excellent study by Anthony Pagden (1982).

16. See, for this, Hans Blumenberg (1983: 224–225). Blumenberg links the implications of Malthus's alleged "law of population" (i.e., that human populations increase at a faster rate than does their food supply) to Darwin's theory of Natural Selection as applied to the hierarchies of human societies. Thus, social hindrances such as the poor and jobless, who because ostensibly condemned to their situation by the "laws of nature," should not be relieved by the state of their poverty or joblessness.

17. Although Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* mentions the human only in passing, the second part of the book's title—*By Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, through its use of the term "favored races"—reveals a conflation between the term "species" and the term "races" that will enable the hereditary variations of the human species to be responded to as if these variation-differences were of the same order as the differences between species.

18. Anthony Legesse, taking his point of departure from Victor Turner's analysis of "liminal groups, liminal persons, and liminal states," further develops Turner's thesis that the liminal belongs to a "betwixt and between" social category and, as such, is a sociological non-entity. The liminal may also be an individual whose attributes violate the common categories of social classification. An example of such an individual would be a man with feminine characteristics. Another, less obvious example would be a woman who gives birth to twins. Such a mother and her children are feared and respected—indeed, elevated to the realm of the supernatural. Only animals have multiple births. The human female who shares the same attribute falls into that ambiguous category which straddles secular categories and is for that very reason elevated to the domain of the supernatural. That is the reason why, in so many African cultures, twins and their mothers are treated as anomalous sociological phenomena. They are frequently lifted out of the social system and treated symbolically and behaviorally as if they were outside the society. In that strange position they make up an important part of the sacred force that stands in conceptual opposition to the secular community. "The liminal person is not irrelevant to the structured community surrounding him. On the contrary, he is the conceptual antithesis and therefore very relevant to its continued existence. It is by reference to him that the structured community defines and understands itself" (Legesse 1973: 114-115). As such a category, Legesse then argues, the liminal person provides a perspective able to break free from the normative perspective of the community, for whose normalcy its exclusion is indispensable. "Out of this field of interaction," Legesse continues, "emerges the liminal person to remind us that we need not forever remain prisoners of our prescriptions. He generates conscious change by exposing all the injustice inherent in structure, by creating a real contradiction between structure and anti-structure, social order and man-made anarchy. This is a type of dialectic that is very different from the nonconscious phenomena which we are after" (Legesse 1973: 271).

19. Harold Bloom (1982) puts forward the rhetorical figure of transumption as the American answer to the "imported mode of deconstruction." He notes that "transumption or metalepsis" is the legitimate and traditional name in rhetoric for what John Hollander calls the "figure of interpretive allusion." Transumptive changes point toward the "diachronic concept of rhetoric, in which the irony of one age can become the ennobled synecdoche of another." While transumptive chains abound, certain "central linkages ... vital to tradition, and the crossing over in and between traditions keep the continuity going by means of its retroping of earlier tropes."

20. Gordon's thesis with respect to the imperative necessity of a black point of view enables us to see the way in which—while the original struggle for Black Studies and a Black Arts/Aesthetic had glimpsed, however still confusedly so, the imperative need for a *perspective* based on a new order of truth beyond the limits of our present concept of truth in an abstract universal sense (McWhorter 1969), as well as the need for a new aesthetics beyond the limits of our present Western bourgeois, and therefore, necessarily, an ethno- and class-centric mainstream one, because such a perspective can be realizable only by means of the institutional, and intellectual, elaboration of such a perspective based on a new Fanonian-type poetics of the human beyond the limits of contemporary *Man's*—the defeat of any possibility of the instituting of such a counter-perspective spelled the outright defeat both of the Black Arts and Black Aesthetic Movements, as well as the defeat, by incorporation into the mainstream, of Black Studies. In that the latter, whether incorporated into the mainstream order of knowledge on the orthodox basis of the

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*ethnization* of the perspective of Black Studies reclassified as African-American studies, as most comprehensively and creatively effected by Henry Louis Gates, or indeed on the basis of the cultural nationalist, "Kwanza"-type tendency of a Karenga, which unlike the liminalist tendency, would also be incorporated into mainstream academia, was to find its original contestatory and transformative dynamic truncated and defeated.

A consequence of this defeat is that whereas the original call had been a call for, so to speak, affirmative action to enable the institution of a black counter-perspective and point of view, the strategy of containment would instead substitute affirmative action aimed at the incorporation of both black students and faculty into the normative point of view of our present mainstream order of knowledge and aesthetics.

For its contemporary implications, see Gans (1999: 371-390). See also Hacker (1992) and Wills (2003: 74). While written from a right-wing conservative perspective, the latter commentary nevertheless focuses on the way in which, if not precisely in these terms, the attempt of mainstream academia to deflect the original Black Studies call for a new order of truth and of knowledge by means of an affirmative action program based on obtaining "diversity" in the student body and faculty, again *uses* blacks to serve the purposes of the very mainstream and biological absolute order of knowledge, in whose prescriptive logic the black population group is already locked into its subordinated liminal role, much as the subordination of the lay world to the world of the Church and the Clergy in Latin Christian medieval and, therefore, pre-Renaissance Europe had been prescribed by that order's then theologically absolute order of knowledge and correlated conception of the human.

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in Theory and Practice

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