

Lecture I. Suffering and Infrahumanity
Lecture II. Humanities and a New Humanism

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LECTURE I. SUFFERING AND INFRAHUMANITY

The invitation to deliver these lectures coincided with the twentieth birthday of the publication of my book *The Black Atlantic*. That anniversary provided me with a cue to reflect critically upon its reception, reach, and travel as well as to return to and develop a number of its key themes. Of course, the book's intervention resonates differently now that the "grey vault"¹ of the sea is rising and smaller boats sweep fleeing Africans northward toward fortified Europe rather than westward into the colonial nomos of plantation slavery warranted by race. I hope that the arguments in *The Black Atlantic* are still in touch with the evolving relationship between Africa and its diasporas to which the wars around us are adding so conspicuously.

I have argued for some time that, bearing those effects of global counterinsurgency in mind, it is essential to adjust the topography of the black Atlantic so that it can accommodate several key contemporary developments. It should, for example, now be able to include the Caribbean detention facilities maintained by the United States in Cuba's Guantánamo Bay. That conviction has recently been underscored by the news that *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, originally published in 1845, is currently on the list of books that have not been admitted to the camp to be enjoyed by its prisoners.

Douglass's first volume of autobiography is widely read and has been repeatedly identified as an important literary and philosophical statement of the slaves' bleak predicament considered against the possibility of their inalienable rights to citizenship and human dignity. The book's exclusion from the prison suggests that, at least from the point of view of governmental and military authorities, this foundational text in the radical tradition of the black Atlantic is presumed today to remain something of an incendiary object. Perhaps it is still endowed with the capacity to articulate conceptions of freedom, autonomy, and resistance that, though they derive from the struggle against racial slavery, remain not only intelligible but in some undefined ways also risky and relevant, even dangerous.

The establishment of Africom and the identification of new strategic goals, particularly the acquisition and control of African minerals and other scarce resources in the face of competition from China, are also likely to be important in determining the future evolution of the black Atlantic. The War on Terror has occasioned the emergence of new threats

to security in several locations on the continent.² The prominent deployment of African American military personnel during the recent intervention in Mali and in other central African conflicts is a further illustration of Africa's increasing geopolitical importance to the United States.³

If my aging book has no residual resonance in these new circumstances, I hope that it might still be useful as a historical guide to a unique period that is, despite the fact that Black Panther parties have recently been founded in Greece and Sweden, essentially, over.⁴

Those changes provide a backdrop to the central concerns of these lectures that address a raft of problems introduced by the need to assemble a critical and historical approach to the race idea and to its corrosive consequences for understanding of the human. I am convinced that the archives of the black Atlantic can contribute significantly to those tasks that are not undertaken on behalf of racism's victims alone.⁵



Open-ended inquiry into the nature, capacity, and potential of the human has long been judged central to the mission of the academic humanities. If we want to sustain, modify, and perhaps even renew that educational project in the face of its contemporary debasement and undoing, we remain obliged to investigate where the human broke down, how it was qualified, compromised, and disposed of. However unfashionable it has now become, studying racial hierarchy and inequality provides a valuable means to extend those inquiries, to locate the edges of the human: blunt and sharp. And that, in turn, means refusing to run away from the idea of race and the forms of systematic knowledge it has enabled, but rather embracing and exploring them as an opportunity to know ourselves and our precious world better. Our grasp of how racial discourse has corrupted morality, democracy, and rationality suffers when, for example, appreciation of its history as part of scientific practice is prematurely divorced from grasping its currency in the fields of aesthetics, anthropology, and politics. Those multiple articulations and the patterns of scientific error and ethical failure that they generate need to be identified as results of the perlocutionary power of raciology.

Despite the rise of postcolonial scholarship and a slow drip of monographs from a small number of specialist programs, academic analysis of racial hierarchy and racial styles of thought remains embattled. It confronts a quiet consensus that would have us reject the proposition that race—mistakenly conceived as natural difference, generating hierarchy

and inequality—could be significant in the study of modern culture. To pursue the problems introduced by racism, especially in their transition into modern metaphysics, is still to sacrifice a portion of intellectual respectability in favor of what is regularly dismissed as either inappropriately politicized or presentist writing and research. It is likely to be judged anachronistic in an avowedly postracial age.

Whatever the accuracy of those accusations, it has been known for years that colonial administration and the violent ordering of power and space that it required made for commercial, military, and juridical arrangements that obscured and mystified the humanity of the people who had been subordinated, expropriated, and enslaved.

A *comprehensive* mapping of those problems and their extensive entanglement with racial schemes is beyond the scope of this presentation. Instead, given the central theme of these lectures, I want to explore some exemplary instances—fragments—drawn from black Atlantic history as part of a plea that we consider, consistently and energetically, what it might mean to trace the refiguration of the human that has been articulated in opposition to the working of racial systems and to endow our alternative to those vexed formations with a largely forgotten lineage in which the contested relationship between the properly human and the racialized infrahuman loomed large.

I appreciate that this reconstructive plea will not go down well amid today's assertively posthuman moods. It will not appeal to advocates of the very twentieth-century antihumanism on which they continue to depend. Those influential formations absorbed the impact of colonialism, fascism, and imperialism on the field of ideas. However, neither of them has exhibited much interest in the problems posed specifically by racism, racial hierarchy, and inequality. These oversights become more damaging if we are to attempt to address the issues of trauma, recognition, empathy, and, potentially, forgiveness that are pending in responses to the kinds of conflict that have begun to define our present predicament.⁶

The world-weary concept of racism has itself lately come under attack for being either too broad to be useful or too specific to be generalized beyond its twentieth-century source. However, I hope to suggest reasons why I do not think it should be abandoned. It is still needed, not merely to assist with the ongoing work of reckoning with injustice and inequality, but also to help grasp the developmental course of modern knowledge and, above all, to make sense of the recurrent failure evident in the

distribution and application of human rights which have not always been understood as offering much support to struggles that arose in response to the violent effects of racial hierarchy.

My premise is that the mechanisms of Atlantic modernity saw the novel, abstract figure of the universal human gradually acquire a stubborn, racial outline. In that guise, it could animate a history of systematic cruelty which would characterize the limitations of enlightenment, revealing many of its inconsistencies, dead spots, and irrational rationalities.⁷ In the teeth of racial capitalism, this persistent problem provided several generations of critical black Atlantic intellectuals—slave and free, religious and profane, abolitionist and feminist—with powerful stimuli. In response to them, they developed not just arguments for an expanded, less ethnocentric conception of human rights aimed specifically at repairing the destructive effects of racial hierarchy, but what appears to be a broader politics of the human, centered upon remedying problems that derived from the consolidation of racial sensibilities into a political ontology.

Approaching races and racisms negatively, that is, as defects to be resolved politically and philosophically, specified distinctive approaches to the modern relationship between democracy and nature. The extensive critique that was required demanded attention to the life of the non-human beings with which Africans and other racialized or infrahuman peoples were regularly associated. Characteristically, their dissenting responses to that fate did not accept the idea that national states should be accorded priority as locations of political culture. They sought to identify a range of alternative possibilities for political engagement, collectivity, and solidarity. Slaves, who were the primary victims and symbols of coerced tropical modernization, occupied the center of a radical enterprise that was far larger and longer than the sketch of it that I will provide here. David Walker's celebrated 1830 *Appeal* was not its first articulation, but that landmark text nonetheless provides a valuable point of entry into the self-conscious development of this resilient, oppositional formation that should not be situated blandly amid the catchall operations of an amorphous "biopolitics." Even when conceived heuristically, that over-inflated synonym for racism indicates little more than the location of a variety of problems that it cannot solve.

As part of Walker's argument that the Africans enslaved as Negroes in the United States endured greater suffering and brutality than other groups of bonded humans (Spartan Helots and biblical Israelites), he

asked an important question. It was designed to force disclosure of the parameters of infrahuman beings to which blacks were confined and to identify the bitter quality of their systematic expulsion from what he calls “the human family.” “Have they [the whites] not, after having reduced us to the deplorable condition of slaves under their feet, held us up as descending originally from the tribes of *Monkeys* or *Orang-Outangs*?” We will see in a moment that later abolitionist writers turned to the challenging figure of the brute in order to refine what it is best to call the antiracist commitment that underpins this appeal for recognition as human.

Flaneur novelist William Wells Brown pursued these arguments in a complementary direction in *Clotel*, where the African slave trade is described as “being pronounced by every civilised community as the greatest crime ever perpetrated,” not against Africans or slaves “but against humanity.” His damning verdict was preceded by the familiar arguments to the effect that the humanity of the slaves was accessible and demonstrable through their capacity to love and, in particular, through their conspicuous attachment to the institution of marriage, “the first and most important institution of human existence—the foundation of all civilisation and culture—the root of church and state.” However, Brown was not captive to sentimental abolitionism. He understood fully the subversive force that the idea of the common humanity had acquired in both its religious and its political variants. He and those who followed would seek to extend its reach explicitly toward the difficulties that they witnessed being organized within the terms of emergent racial discourse.

As that formation took shape, the tactical emphasis of antiracism shifted between working out what had to be done in order to secure recognition as properly human and the different tasks that followed from the need to account for the persistent patterns of systematic misrecognition that operated along racial lines. It was rapidly appreciated that the unmaking of those systems, though possible, might take considerable time and could not be achieved—if that goal was indeed desired—by fiat. Local historical difficulties aside, even theorizing those positive changes did not prove to be straightforward. Nietzsche was probably the first to point out the tactical, imaginative, and ethical difficulties that arose in the dense interplay between social actors, objects, and the lived cultures of their naming.⁸ His insight should be taken as encouragement to develop a historical analysis of race politics premised upon what Ian Hacking has called a “dynamic nominalism.”⁹ Such a strategy would have strong associations with African American struggles to force recognition

as human outside of the restrictive terms set by the racial order and creatively to assemble a liberatory rhetoric or poetics of racial agency—from nigger to Negro, to colored, to black, to Afro-American, to African American, to Nigga, and hopefully beyond.

As the twentieth century dawned and Africa entered fully into the geopolitical calculations of European empires, many writers and advocates found new opportunities to extend earlier criticism of the orthodox tale of how human civilization had unfolded. Pauline Hopkins's fiction answered the claims of social Darwinism with occultism and psychology, while others attempted to turn away completely from what they took to be the tainted resources borrowed from the epistemological storehouses of the West. Marxian traditions were useful to many, but their methodological tools and conceptual abstractions left little room for a dedicated and principled focus on the problems inherent in racial systems of thought and modes of exploitation.

After the shock involved in comprehending the industrialized battlefields of World War I and the imaginative proximity to revolution introduced into modernist sensibilities by the triumph of Russian radicals, we discover Alain Locke advancing the view that the Negro in the mind of America had so far proved to be an object, "more a formula than a human being," and being answered by W. E. B. Du Bois in the pages of the *Crisis* with the notion that art could, if properly rendered, "compel recognition" as human.¹⁰ A few years later still, Richard Wright's notorious "Blueprint for Negro Writing" was aimed at superseding the conventional mission pursued by Negro writers, namely, "begging the question" of Negro humanity.¹¹

It is an understatement to say that the racial horrors of World War II posed these old questions again with an even greater intensity. That much is evident in the writing of Czech jazz musician Eric Vogel, whose story helps us to identify how exterminist racism moved populations across the line between human and inhuman as well as how to map the place of African American culture on its twentieth-century travels. Vogel had endured the terrors of the Third Reich in the Theresienstadt concentration camp, where he performed as a musician. Having escaped from a train bound for Dachau and certain death, he narrated his experience to a postwar readership in the pages of the jazz magazine *Downbeat*. He followed the broad contours of interpretation that were becoming familiar after the publication of Primo Levi's influential *Is This a Man?* However, his intimate relationship with the jazz music he had performed before

and during the war as part of the imprisoned Ghetto Swingers band invested his experience with a different historical significance. At the end of April 1945, Vogel found himself in the village of Petzenhausen, shortly before the arrival of US troops. He was surprised to see that the jeep in which his rescuers arrived had the words *Boogie Woogie* emblazoned on it. He continues:

I ran to a GI, a 6-footer, knelt in front of him and began to kiss his feet. He gave me chocolate and cigarets [*sic*]. I asked him about the inscription on his jeep and about a dozen or so American piano players, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Meade Lux Lewis, Teddy Wilson . . .

I think I was the biggest surprise of his life.

I looked more dead than alive, my weight was 70 pounds. I had lost about 140 pounds. The next thing—I was surrounded by GIs and brought in triumph to the officers club in a nearby German town, Landsberg.

Here I underwent a record blindfold test, and despite the fact that I had been cut off from American Jazz for more than four years, I recognised most recordings of bands and soloists that were played for me. I was the sensation of the club.

I was fed and clothed. The reign of terror was over. I again became a human being. I truly and literally had made my living with Jazz.¹²

Today, religion and race are once again being fused together. New conflicts and a resurgent civilizationism are breathing life back into the oldest of racial imagery and invoking ethnicity once again in absolutist forms. Understanding this recurrence requires these habits to be traced historically and seen to be implicated in conquest and colonial government. Their bloody lineage includes contests over indigeneity, slavery, and humanity that disrupt the standard accounts of where enlightened racism arose and how it developed, suggesting, among other things, that it was fueled by key ambiguities in more ancient styles of thought.

The rationalization of racial hierarchy compounded the problems introduced by the emergence of a political anthropology that guided the practice of colonial government. These connections were explored by Ivan Hannaford in his unfinished work on the links between modern racial conceits and ancient views of alterity and by sociologist Margaret Hodgen, whose classic writing on early anthropologies remains inspiring.¹³ The genealogical problems these writers identified are likely to

prove important in any revised history of the human in the humanities. More pressing still is the overriding ethical and political task that can be said to distinguish the black Atlantic tradition, namely, the fashioning of a humanism made, as Aimé Césaire put it in the final sentences of his *Discourse on Colonialism*, “to the measure of the world.”¹⁴ This is the task that I have described elsewhere as the elaboration of a planetary humanism. Humanism’s reenchantment, investing it with seductive powers that render it affectively compelling, is now essential to the future of our species. We will need all its appeal as the sea levels rise and the fortifications placed around the citadels of overdevelopment crack open, releasing the pressure for new collectivities and solidarities as well as new modes of accountability to one other.

Initially, this urgent obligation can be oriented by the work already accomplished by the generation of the “century of camps,”¹⁵ particularly Frantz Fanon, Jean Améry, and Levi. It was revisited in the later work of Edward Said, whose advocacy of a democratic humanism combined with what he calls a secular criticism is now very much out of step with scholastic fashion. The various appeals made by those thinkers respectively to new, radical, global, and democratic humanisms all involved reckoning with the epiphany of the racial body and the limitations placed upon humanity by the emergence of race.

The processes of salvage and reparation to which those writers were all committed present different challenges to Europe than they do to the Americas. The former will have to consider deeply uncomfortable material about its own formation that has become easier to overlook. For example, George Makdisi’s detailed demonstration that Italian Renaissance humanism had deep debts to Islam and the Idab humanism of the Arab world has lately been charged with new significance. The latter has to confront observations that have been made insistently by commentators such as Argentinian philosopher Enrique Dussel and the movement toward decoloniality that his prolific output has helped to galvanize. Theirs are disturbing arguments because they insist that the phenomenology of the “I conquer” not only preceded but actively conditioned the emergence of the cogito in Europe. Dussel had been early and acute in concluding that the reduction of modernity to the fatally simple sequence Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment needed to be firmly resisted. Not only expansion and conquest but also the institution of racial slavery confounded those tidy categories and compromised the yearning for a clean history of capitalism with which they have long been associated.

Different histories of state making as well as a different periodization of sovereign power take shape as a result of detours through the torrid space of the colonial nomos—a place so bleak and bloody that the archive of cruelty incubated there can strip the narrative of European progress of its halo.

In 1969 Trinidadian Communist C. L. R. James intervened in the debates over the development of black studies initiatives in the United States. He sought to redefine their curriculum as “the history of Western Civilization . . . the history that black people and white people and all serious students of modern history and the history of the world have to know.”¹⁶ Rebuilding the academic humanities now means persisting with the difficult task James identified, altering the scales upon which history is conceptualized, and challenging nationalism not just in its political moments but also in its favored methods. His firmly humanistic perspective needs to be expanded so that it can support a planetary rather than a hemispheric enterprise.

Only limited resources for bringing about that change can be gleaned from the Marxian humanism that James himself practiced—a formation that, through its emphasis on overcoming the effects of alienation and reification, overlapped repeatedly into struggles against slavery and colonialism.¹⁷ James’s enthusiasm for Marx was tempered by his abiding love of Thackeray and Melville, a passion that suggests the tools for transformation must also be sought elsewhere. There are other universalist aspirations that have proved influential in shaping that creative project inside and beyond the academy.

I SIT WITH SHAKESPEARE AND HE WINCES NOT

The freckled figure of poor hagborn Caliban, “a salvage and deformed slave,”¹⁸ honoured Sycorax’s island with a human *shape*. He has furnished many black Atlantic thinkers with a suitable beginning for their investigations into the history of racial thought. Even if we query the comforting suggestion that mere exposure to Shakespeare’s art introduces us to the possibility of being human in new ways, it might be useful to return to the moment when *The Tempest*’s low characters first stumble upon the disgruntled islander. On the way to initiating their doomed conspiracy against Prospero’s command, Trinculo and Stephano effect uncertainty as to exactly *what* Caliban might be. Their comic hesitancy suggests that—even as it struggled imaginatively to free itself from its Mediterranean antecedents—the distinctive ecology of the emergent Atlantic

provided a unique location from which distinctively modern problems of political ontology and political anatomy would be considered. There may have been more to being human than simply having a human *shape*.

However those motley conspirators may have corresponded to their author's historical circumstances and the wealth of colonial examples familiar to his audience,¹⁹ their confused assessment of Caliban prefigures later critical disputes. Is he to be judged a man, a monster, or, in the newly coined colonial idiom, a hybrid to be placed between the human and the animal under the sign of savagery? How might his intermittent manliness—his flickering humanity—have been modified by the bountiful, tropical circumstances in which it grew? Can the kind of thing he is possibly be connected to other menacing natural phenomena, like the strange, monstrous fish found in Caribbean waters? These speculations make that island adventure an especially good point from which to start exploring the issues that arise with the entanglement of the human and the infrahuman in the modern mesh of racial thought.

It would be an understatement to say that Caliban became an important figure for many later commentators on colonialism and decolonization. The character provided a means not only to explore the mentalities generated by the colonial project but to open up the issue of its morality and to interrogate its claims to be legitimate. George Lamming insisted that Caliban was “at once a landscape and a human situation.”²⁰ Building upon his insight, I will suggest that race would provide those novel elements—environment and organism—with a potent articulating principle. However we classify Caliban's own motives, like Othello's, whose peri-African geography he shares, it is the idea of racial difference that makes both his alterity and his rage intelligible.

We know that Shakespeare was well acquainted with Floro, the translator into English of Montaigne's *Essays*, which had been published in 1603.²¹ Gonzalo, the bard's token representative of Renaissance humanism, can be read not only as glossing passages from the essay on cannibals but also as contributing to the gradual overwriting and repudiation of its insights in favor of the bitter binary we will eventually come to know as “Manichaeism delirium.”²² Charles Taylor points out that “the figure of Caliban has been held to epitomize [a] crushing portrait of contempt of New World Aborigines.”²³ We should add the amalgamated offspring of Atlantic racial slavery to that nascent inventory.

A second motif that will be important as we trace this problem arises from the chastisement of the plotters at the end of act 4. They are victims

of an assault by dogs that stands out not only as disproportionate to the threat the conspirators embody but also as a colonial motif connecting this mythic location to the practical deployment of cynegetic power that had rewritten the practice of warfare.²⁴ Prospero's dominion encompasses that option alongside the pastoral power that underpinned his restoration. Dogs provide not just another violent means by which the plotters are made to suffer but the favored technology for hunting them and reducing them to what they ought already to have been: servile, compliant, and ready to labor.

Just a few years later, the same issues would be clarified further in events transpiring in another, adjacent, colonial topos: the Lockean utopia provided by Robinson Crusoe's island kingdom. The assembling of anthropological categories and hierarchies would be resumed in that tamer landscape where sorcerer colonialism had been modified by the application of a severe governmental rationality that combined readily with an awe-inducing deployment of firepower.²⁵

After the central questions of sovereignty and just war have been revisited and settled, temporarily at least, the relationship of these emergent systems of knowledge and the colonial fantasies they support to recognizably racial schemata would be determined in a historic colonial setting shaped by the twin practical tasks of improvement and security.

An older understanding of alterity based primarily upon categories of faith and religious practice as indexes of cultural distance was being left behind. It gave way to the new habits required by belligerent expansion. They would orbit around the polarized opposition of black to white, an arrangement that was compatible with the writings of John Locke, "the last major philosopher to seek a justification for absolute and perpetual slavery,"²⁶ and his successors—all more or less comfortable with the fateful association of infrahuman blackness with stupidity.²⁷

AN ENGLISH WAY OF THINKING

Regrettably, the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt remains our best guide to many of the most important issues that link this literature and period to our own. For reasons that are difficult to separate from his own political outlook, he identified theories of the colonial nomos as involving a "typically English" way of thinking.²⁸ Initially, they had been articulated by Locke, who drew upon the archive of natural law theory (mainly Roman in origin) with which the European appropriation of American land was being justified in the earliest phases of expansion.

Slavery was intrinsic to the process whereby national statecraft entered into the practice of colonial administration. This was evident in Locke's work not only in the texts that have attracted the attention of historians of raciology but in others as well, such as *Two Treatises on Government*, which is more conventionally associated with the history of liberalism than the machinations of colonial rule—an oversight that is gradually being corrected by voices from several disciplines with differing investments in the possibility of postcolonial critique.

In *Two Treatises*, we can discover the arguments that, according to Schmitt, instantiated a constitutively modern spatial ordering of the earth. The drawing of global lines was, of course, earlier, and the seeds of European planetary consciousness had grown from a series of quarrels with ancient wisdom. The New World provided a stimulus for labor theories of value, and it would become firmly and formally divided off from the proper domain of European public law. It also provided a place where something like the true state of nature could be observed. Anthropological speculations concerning the transition from natural to social and historical life were thereby entangled with the difficult, brutal work of colonial domination.

This new nomos can be distinguished by the enduring double standard to which it gave rise: a device that was exemplified in the absolutely different implications of Locke's revolutionary thinking for the colonies and the metropolises. That double standard began to enframe and even to define the unfolding of European empires. Peace and law would dwell inside their borders—which would increasingly be drawn on a planetary scale—while the chaos and conflict that Marx would later name “wild justice” reigned, catastrophically, outside. Indeed, as Europe's planetary consciousness developed, the former would become conditional upon the latter.

Many aboriginals had been disinclined to consider land as private property or to pursue English specifications for the obligation to improve it.²⁹ All of them fell victim to what Grégoire Chamayou usefully identifies as cynegetic authority. The novel arrangements wrought by the order of racial difference and the imperatives of accumulation alike would also be implicated in the process of enclosing common land inside the British Isles. The infrahuman composite of Caliban becomes useful again because he helps to anchor these developments in the expropriation of colonial peoples that began with the Irish.

Anthropology started to surpass and qualify the dynamics of faith that had produced otherness under the manifestos of evil rather than the

natural history of primitivity. The dangers represented by the savage were shifted out of the realm of nature and assembled instead as a new variety of risk. Even in an emphatically Christian geography, they were no longer intelligible as a wholly religious phenomenon but started to become what we should now risk the accusation of “political correctness” to identify as a racial one.

We should note the intersection of empiricism and rationalism with regard to the idea of race, particularly after it had meshed with the sovereign power of the national state.³⁰ That confluence can be clarified further by considering a pivotal moment in *Robinson Crusoe*, the text that more than any other dramatized and affirmed industry, rationality, and improvement as the core elements of the revolutionary, self-emancipating agency of the European bourgeoisie at home and abroad.

Defoe’s novel of realism and individualism was published in 1719, and, like many of its author’s other works, it contributes greatly to our understanding of the economic, juridical, and military transformation that was under way in the aftermath of the Treaty of Utrecht. Crusoe hesitates to intervene violently in the life of the odious natives and is moved to deploy his superior weaponry only after he responds to the variety of kinship introduced by the prospect of an urgent operation to rescue a hostage.

By that critical point, Crusoe, who, we should also remember, has himself suffered the indignity of being a slave as well as undergone the unsettling modern experience of selling one in dubious circumstances, is perplexed by having to calculate precisely what might count as a just war against the “naked and unarmed wretches” whom his Protestant God must surely have ordained in their stupidity and savagery. He has denounced the Catholic Spanish as cruel and evil. Later, as part of pained reflections that communicate the end of the earlier pattern of responses to alterity, he will make it clear that he would rather fall into the hands of the Caribbean’s cannibal savages and be devoured alive than captured by the “merciless claws of the priests and be carry’d into the Inquisition.” However, as the racializing power of the colonial *nomos* comes more fully into play, he is at first horrified and then moved to ruthless action by the realization that the unruly natives’ next feast will comprise a “white bearded man. . . . I saw plainly by my glass a white man who lay upon the beach of the sea, with his hands and feet tyd, with flags, or things like rushes; and that he was European, and had cloaths on.”³¹ The problems of racial hierarchy introduced in this tableau cannot be contained in any narrow genealogy of barbarism. They should be presented in ways that

make them constitutive of a revised modernity considered on its proper geopolitical compass. As the divine warrants for inequality decayed into the need to represent and account for injustice in rational terms, a new emphasis was placed upon the possibility that the human species was not, after all, unified.

Defoe had read the work of William Petty long before he wrote the book.³² His familiarity with it provides encouragement to approach Robinson's parrot companion as a residue of preanthropological thinking in the novel. We can speculate that the brightly feathered icon of the tropics functions as a sly acknowledgment of Petty's famous speculations about human origins. Petty is remembered today as a polymath and early advocate of political arithmetic who had served as Oliver Cromwell's surveyor during the subordination of Ireland and initiated ethnographic and demographic inquiries into "the nature of the Indians of Pennsylvania" in 1686.

It is disappointing that those who write about Petty's place in the development of economics and statistics are not usually interested in his significance as an early theorist of racial difference, while those who address his innovative contribution to the history of racial thought tend not to be engaged by his submission to the seventeenth-century transformation of the arts of government.

Petty's discourse on what he called the scale of creatures featured the parrot species as a notable contender for the important position closest to man. It was immediately followed by the first English statement of what would become the fundamental principle of racialized rule. He uproots the Christian theology of mankind's unity and connects natural difference—phenotypical variation—to a color-coded hierarchy specified with precision in the open space between the notions of race and species.

That of man it selfe there seems to be severall species, To say nothing of Gyants and Pigmies or of that sort of small men who have little speech and feed chiefly upon fish . . . for of these sorts of men, I venture to say nothing, but that 'tis very possible there may be Races and generations of such since we know that there are men of 7 foot high and others but 4 foot. . . . I say there may be races and Generations of such men whereof we know the Individualls . . . there be others (differences) more considerable, that is, between the Guiny Negroes & the Middle Europeans; & of Negroes between those of Guiny and those who live about the Cape of Good Hope, which last are the Most beastlike of all the Souls (?Sorts) of Men which whom our Travellers

arre well acquainted. I say that the Europeans do not only differ from the aforementioned Africans in Collour . . . but also . . . in Naturall Manners, & in the internall Qualities of their Minds.³³

It is unsurprising that Petty's commentary on the division and stratification of humankind was shot through with elaborate observations on every different variety of living creature. The novel relationship he proposed between observable differences, cognitive capacity, and the natural constitution of humans was part of the gradual shift from race as static taxonomy to race as a matter of historical lineage.

To cut that very long story short, a secularized dualism arose to manage the distinction between the mental and the physical over the wreckage of the split between soul and body. The Negro gradually became a primary object of anatomo-political inquiry and was judged to have been rendered by nature both intellectually inferior and physically distinctive. At that point in the eighteenth century, the black body did not yet disclose its fundamental difference through the fixed idiom of a new racial semiosis. How the body would communicate those aesthetic and scientific truths had not yet been settled.

The inferiority of Negroes was conveyed above all by the skin, which no less of an authority than Kant informed his readers could resist the normal tools and techniques of chastisement. But the body affords many possible points of entry into what was also a heavily gendered discourse.³⁴ It concerned not just the skulls we know so well, but a whole crop of unlikely bodily markers: beards and pelvises as well as breasts would supply alternative indexes of a difference that articulated science and aesthetics. Amid all of them, the Negro's relatively impenetrable hide should concern us for what it reveals—or conceals—about the uneven distribution of humanity in a world where race and slavery have been tightly associated. Their mutual connection underpinned the transformation of human beings into brutes—objects differentiated by the fact that their suffering was of no consequence either for the calculus of capital accumulation or for the ethics of mercy, sympathy, and pity.

The word *brute* can refer both to animals and to humans, but it is important that we do not place these infrahuman figures too neatly between those poles, as if they occupied a settled intermediate place in a rigid scale where "Caucasian" man appears at the top and animal life is ranged below. The geometry involved in locating infrahumanity has always been more complex, as Petty's employment of two distinct but

intersecting lists of creatures had shown. That arrangement manifests not the ultimate unity of all varieties of life but a complex gradation of the human configured so that some kinds of people are closer to nature than others whose more highly valued lives are endowed with a variety of historicity that guarantees their dominance and superiority.

Today, what styles itself as posthumanism has created some standard responses to this unsavory history. Opposition to racism is generally and wrongly taken for granted by almost all of them. That silence is a well-intentioned but deeply problematic gesture that allows or requires consideration of the specific attributes of antiracist politics to be set aside. For reasons that are not altogether clear, interspecies conflict then recedes in the face of increased concern with intraspecies relations.

The influential work of Donna Haraway is paradigmatic of the plea to employ interaction with our companion species as a mechanism to learn the transferable skills involved in “living intersectionally.” Certainly, not all feminist commentary on these matters follows her into contempt for past humanism or lapses into a simplistic presentation of it *only* as a source of racism rather than a complex response to the pathologies that racism creates: “The discursive tie between the colonized, the enslaved, the noncitizen, and the animal—all reduced to type, all Others to rational man, and all essential to his bright constitution—is at the heart of racism and flourishes, lethally, in the entrails of humanism.”³⁵

Human exceptionalism has underpinned the impending disaster that can be gauged in the looming catastrophe of the Anthropocene or, more accurately, the Capitalocene. Apparently, there is liberation in the prospect of human beings recognizing themselves as just one more “critter” among many. Though we may share a commitment to radical relationality and a political ecology that refuses the conceits of approaching nature as an exploitable, limitless resource, those who speak in the modern tradition defined by struggles against racialized confinement within the natural order can be expected to have less enthusiasm for this way of proceeding. We agree that the human-animal intersection that has been explored so extensively is significant for the life of biopolitical categories in general and racial nominalism in particular. However, that commitment should not encourage us to submerge the origins of racism in a generic problem that can too conveniently be labeled humanism.

The slave, the Negro, and the indigene experience enforced association with the animal. For them, the liberatory and solidary possibilities released by the process of “becoming animal” are less appealing precisely

because they are almost entirely animal already. Perhaps that is why, in the tradition of critical analysis and interpretation that has been shaped by the wounds of slavery and colonial conquest, the refiguration of the human and the critique of humanism have often been responses made to the issues of racial alienation and racial hierarchy.

Some of the most interesting responses to these historic problems reside in discussions of the work of Franz Kafka, who, more than any other writer, placed the human, the infrahuman, and the animal in disturbing relation in order to establish a variety of modernism “far away from the continent of Man.”³⁶ Similar debate has also arisen around the writing of those whom Kafka inspired, particularly J. M. Coetzee, who, writing from South Africa, the one place in the whole world where the immediate salience of racial categories to political life could not be forsworn, offered a number of insights into developing an ethics of alterity capable of connecting the suffering of animals to the suffering visited on human beings in the name of racial hygiene and hierarchy. Often, those who engage Coetzee’s work for its ethical stimulation pass swiftly over the fundamental question of the damage to humanity and democracy that has derived from South Africa’s unexpectedly resilient racial order.³⁷

These racial problems of human, infrahuman, and animal life have surfaced repeatedly in the black Atlantic archive and merit extensive investigation. Petrified by what he called the “inhuman detail” involved in devising spectacular and exotic torments for the slaves of Surinam, John Gabriel Stedman vividly reported the case of Cadetty, a slave punished by being lodged in a dog’s kennel from which he was required to bark at each boat passing on the nearby river.³⁸ The slave-catching capacities of the *fila brasileiro* are, of course, legendary, and Frederick Douglass is the best known of many slave writers to have placed slave and animal lives in relation, in particular chronicling the role of dogs in tracking runaways.³⁹ William Wells Brown, who delighted his readers with the tale of a slave-hunting parson who imported his vicious hounds from specialist Cuban breeders, devotes almost a whole chapter of *Clotel* to the role of dogs in “The Negro Chase.” Henry Bibb was hunted by dogs, and Solomon Northup repeated what would become the standard script on the abilities of the hounds that had been bred to catch runaways: “The dogs used on Bayou Boeuf for hunting slaves are a kind of blood-hound but a far more savage breed than is found in the Northern States. They will attack a negro at their master’s bidding and cling to him as the common bulldog will cling to a four footed animal.”⁴⁰

The lengthy chronicle of bloodhounds and hellhounds arrives eventually at the Chicago animal laboratory where Richard Wright was employed to assist in cutting the vocal cords of dogs in order to prevent them from disturbing patients elsewhere in the hospital. That disturbing tale was worth repeating in two different publications, one autobiographical, one fictional: "The hospital kept us four Negroes as though we were close kin to the animals we tended, huddled together down in the underworld corridors of the hospital, separated by a vast psychological distance . . . just as America had kept us locked in the dark underworld of American life for three hundred years."⁴¹

HUMANISM AND RACISM

Rather than simply holding humanism responsible for the development of racism, Fanon, who was hostile to what he saw as the fraud that followed from the reification of racial identity, approached racism instead as a major factor in the corruption of humanism. That much was evident from the history of colonial rule, but he presented humanism agonistically, not only as conflictual but as a potential asset in the undoing of what Haraway described as a "discursive tie." In other words, Fanon looked to *postcolonial* government as a means "to create a prospect that is human because conscious and sovereign men dwell therein."⁴² Even now, his arguments can renew our incentive to imagine a new humanism that has been contoured specifically by the denaturing of race and the repudiation of racial orders. That option is in harmony with Said's suggestion that a democratic and secular criticism might benefit from a rigorous focus upon the abuses of humanism rather than its mechanistic dismissal.⁴³

The recurrent difficulty in determining where the Negro, the slave, and other racial others should belong in relation to other kinds of life can now be used to turn our discussion toward the concept of recognition that has been debated at length by contemporary philosophers. All have been keen to build in various ways upon the problems of interdependency that Hegel drew from his reading of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and adapted into his phenomenology.

The politics of recognition has been contrasted with arguments about the different orders of conflict associated with the ideas of justice, equality, and redistribution. However, those discussions have also been impoverished by their failure to reckon with the systematic misrecognition involved in the workings of racial styles of thought.

It is not only important to see where the question of individual authenticity—the entitlement to be seen and recognized as oneself—enters the conversation about racial classification and identity but also important to connect individual recognition with the different questions that arise in calculating the manner in which groups might expect to benefit from similar acknowledgments transposed onto social and cultural scales.

The proposition that racial orders promote and require systematic misrecognition complicates this discussion. By denying any possibility of individual selfhood at the expense of enforced racial collectivity, the machinery of subordination blocks access to the first kind of recognition for those it subordinates. Access to any shared humanity is simultaneously obstructed. Various modes or degrees of recognition come into conflict once the principle of racial difference is established.

I have already argued that asserting and demonstrating the humanity of enslaved Africans in response to the dehumanization consequent upon plantation slavery became major themes in the vindicationist writing of former slaves and abolitionists who followed the directions established by Wheatley and Equiano and developed by Walker, Bibb, Northup, Douglass, Wells Brown, Brent, Crafts, and others, focusing attention on the character of the peculiar institution and its persistent dissolving of African human beings into the fictive, brutish figure of the Negro.

The abolitionist advocates of African humanity were quick to appreciate that if the Negro was subjected to slavery as social death, the wholesale perversion of humankind on which the slave system relied, then the slaveholding class was also corrupted, alienated, and stupefied by the effects of its mastery—this is an important, if minor, theme to which I will return.

The imaginative, interpretative, and literary work of former slaves has often been dismissed as sentimental. The seam of critical reflection constituted around it suggests that it can still yield useful insights even though the age of European universalism has ended. That structure of feeling can be distinguished by a cultivated interiority that drew sympathy toward the suffering self. Demands for solidarity based on a corrective recognition as human were often articulated within the melodramatic codes associated with the abolitionist writing they had supposedly feminized. *The Black Atlantic* gestured toward a methodological cosmopolitanism through which one might begin to interpret the resulting archive. However, the demand to be seen as human rather than as a brute and the

related view of writing and cultural creativity as mechanisms through which thwarted African humanity would be vindicated were much more complex matters than they might have initially appeared to be.

Some well-known passages in Frederick Douglass's early autobiographical writing can be used to highlight an additional interpretative demand. It qualifies the slaves' desire to be seen to be human with a number of subsidiary obligations to simultaneously recognize their difference. The result is that they are human, but their humanity is to be apprehended in a somewhat different register. For a start, the resulting trial of their being human engages the sensorium differently. It switches away from sight and gives a new priority to the phenomenology of hearing and sound. More than that, the enchanting musical noise they make introduces an irreducible interpretative conundrum. This governs not only the issue of what counts as music and what should be dismissed as "the most horrible noise"⁴⁴ but also the question of what those fleeting sounds might mean and communicate with regard to the humanity of their enslaved creators. This is not a simple relativism in which the art and culture of barbarous peoples, while appropriate to them, is rightly rebarbative to others. The music of the slaves floats out of the place of their suffering to envelop the plantation and its surroundings. It can be heard by everybody, and its wild complexity cannot be dismissed. The music involved has the power to alter the functioning of the words that have been paired with it. There is a humanizing tactic here: rapturous tones can be associated disturbingly with pathetic sentiments and vice versa. The meaning that the resulting art has for its makers and celebrants is not all clear to remote listeners, who, Douglass explains, can mistake it "as evidence of [the slaves'] contentment and happiness." Douglass's brief exposition of the ineffable sadness that underpins this formation includes a plea for greater attentiveness and deeper, more serious listening. It also encompasses a demand that the listener actually hears life being lived relationally.

In past work, I employed those sentences from Douglass to introduce a discussion of the power of music and its special significance to slave-descended populations as habitus, ethic, and metaculture. They have drawn the repeated attention of people seeking the bloodlines of a black aesthetic and been poured over by others seeking the circulatory system of what they call the Black Radical tradition. Today, they are more likely to be reduced to a neoliberal parable of individual resilience and fortitude in the face of adversity and stress rather than read as an exploration of the

profound problems of aesthetic value and cultural interpretation that arise from analysis of slave singing: musical art made from suffering.

The key formulations initially appeared early in the first version of Douglass's autobiographical narrative. They occur in the section where he ponders the special significance of slave music and song for analysis of slavery as a system. This was not simply a matter of African cultural life reasserting and renewing itself. For him, the music and the social relations it created supplied the favored means to assert and examine the humanity of the slave population that was being dehumanized by the government of the plantation.

As in many other extreme situations where cruelty has been intensified by racialization, captors deny their prisoners any means to win or enforce recognition as human as a way of compelling them to become exactly what the doxa of raciology requires them to be. The necessary difference and distance are seldom spontaneously evident. They must be assembled, projected, and, as the recurrent spectacle of hunting human beings with dogs in this archive demonstrates, if possible, marked out in warm blood.

The same passages were rewritten more than once with different emphases in Douglass's subsequent volumes of autobiography. The changes evident in successive versions are interesting. They show how his thought developed and grew, how it was altered by acquiring legal freedom, by his experiences of transatlantic travel, and by the prospect of violent action to bring slavery to an end. In the final version, Douglass said that the only other place where he encountered music with anything like the same disturbing qualities was on a visit to Ireland during the famine of 1845–46.⁴⁵

Here, we must set aside the full range of his concerns and focus only upon his consideration of what slave song and music might communicate specifically about the singers' humanity and happiness. What, he asks, does the special place of music and song in the slaves' lowly lives mean for anyone obliged to interpret the culture that they make or assess the human suffering from which it springs? How does their culture of sound compare with the effects of literary forms and the absorption of information about their exploitation and woe that was being conveyed and circulated in textual form?

There are several parts to this. First is the comparison of music and organized sound to the alternative represented by reading and writing. Second is the question of where the music stands in the spiritual life of its

makers and users. And third is the responses of the various listeners who encounter slave song from a range of possible locations: inside and outside the historical and social circle in which its primary shared meanings are determined and its secondary double-voiced-ness—which, at this early stage, had no commercial value—was assembled and reproduced.

The remote reader, who might find only jargon in the way that wailed lyrics are translated from the page, is divided by Douglass from the singers who deepen the meaningful qualities of the words they sing through extended processes of repetition and improvisation. We should add melisma and antiphony to his list.⁴⁶

Together, music and song establish the place and time where the group's particularity and a sense of its own ontological depth are registered and embraced. For Douglass, they combine to constitute a phenomenon that, more than any other, transmitted the humanity of the slaves to the class of owners and exploiters who were guiltily obliged to deny it as a condition of making their cruelty legitimate and their position of mastery psychologically bearable.

In all the different versions of that sonic encounter Douglass gives us, the boundary between human and infrahuman is marked out by the difference this enchanting music makes. His own grasp of the meaning of this musical culture evolves slowly, and it increased only after he was no longer "within the circle" of the music's ritual use. The activist and antislavery advocate discovered an important pedagogic effect in these songs. He tells his readers, "To those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery," and the listeners' exposure to them is contrasted with the possible results of reading several volumes of philosophy.

This vivid contrast appears immediately after Douglass has described his distinctive predicament as a writer occupying the cultural space created by the music in its radical difference from any ordinary text: "While I am writing these lines, an expression of feeling has already found its way down my cheek." This tableau of cultural production refers his readers to an embodied ethics that directly opposes a merely racial response to a fully human one. It summons what, in the context of this music and song, we can call a grounded aesthetics.⁴⁷

Slowly and self-consciously, a distinctive—antiracist—perspective on the problem of how these infrahuman beings might acquire human rights has begun to take shape. I have argued elsewhere that the rhetoric of human rights was commonplace among abolitionists. However, it has

not—so far—been taken up in the story that human rights education tells about its own developmental course.

Douglass had a great deal more to say on these questions and would return to them explicitly some years later in a text that is mostly remembered for its stern critique of Thomas Carlyle and its defense of immigrants from Pacific Asia: “There are such things in the world as human rights. They rest upon no conventional foundation, but are external, universal, and indestructible. Among these, is the right of locomotion; the right of migration; the right which belongs to no particular race, but belongs alike to all and to all alike. . . . I know of no rights of race superior to the rights of humanity, and when there is a supposed conflict between human and national rights, it is safe to go to the side of humanity.”⁴⁸ The escaped slave sees “the side of humanity” bounded on one axis by the rights of race that were associated with national rights, the acquisition of citizenship, and so on. On its other boundary, the linked questions of humanity and systematic dehumanization grate against the reduction of slave life to brute forms, against the slaughter of indigenous populations and the exclusion of immigrants and refugees—all of which were legitimated on raciological grounds. Slavery is presented as “whole system of fraud and inhumanity,”⁴⁹ and Douglass returns repeatedly to the idea that the slave’s humanity was systematically reduced to that of a brute, while the class of masters and mistresses finds its own humanity imperiled only by what it is required to repress and the omnipresent temptation to indulge its base instincts.

It bears repetition that it would be mistaken to imagine brutishness as a simple synonym for animal life. The history of racial hierarchy is deeply entangled with the relationship between the human and the animal, but it has taught us that the condition of dumb animals is often better than that of people who are reduced—in full guilty knowledge of their humanity—to a bestial or brutish state. Du Bois, who lamented the way that slavery classed the black man and the ox together, would later describe that abject figure—again awarded the proper name “Negro”—as a “tertium quid.”⁵⁰ His shift into Latin marked the altered perception required to make sense of the Negro as an achronic object devoid of historicity and historicality.

Douglass described the transition from one mode of being to the other in the equally well-known passages that provided the preamble to his violent, liberatory resistance against slave breaker Covey, who had overseen his reduction to brute life. “I was broken in body, soul, and

spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute!”

Negroes were not animals, but they were positioned sufficiently close to beasts for a line of separation from the animal world to be drawn and enforced. Their humanity was claimed and proclaimed through the idea that they are not only better Christians than their owners but better men and women, better husbands and wives as well. Sentiment and sympathy opened the prospect of solidarity, but the demand to restore and repair the slaves’ confiscated humanity was defaced by telling ambiguities with regard to the significance of gender and natural hierarchy evident within the household.

We must therefore be prepared to disentangle desire for the acquisition of manhood and a position above women and children—at least with regard to the franchise—from the different agenda established by the goals of negating and liberating brute life as well as being seen to be human in opposition to the wild force of racial governmentality that ruled the closed, belated world of the plantation. These themes were linked in Douglass, whose enactment of manliness helped in transcending the animalization and infantilization of slaves. They desired an escape from the condition of being, raciologically speaking, childlike creatures whose immature and impetuous being in the world established their primitivity. From *Crusoe* on, this was contrasted with the lives of masters and mistresses who reserve the condition of adulthood for themselves, often in accordance with supposedly more paternalistic versions of race thinking.

We can employ Richard Ansdell’s 1861 abolitionist painting *The Hunted Slaves* in order to appreciate this pattern taking shape. It was painted in Lancashire at the moment that the American Civil War exploded. Garlanded with a quotation from Longfellow, it depicts two run-aways, a man and a woman, in the dismal swamp. They are beset by a vicious pack of slave-catching hounds, one of which has been slain by the ax-wielding man of the fugitive pair.⁵¹ We do not know whether he will succeed in dispatching the rest of the pack.

The image could justify a lengthy lecture of its own. The slave couple’s configuration of patriarchal power, manly strength, and defensive violence deployed to protect the paler wifely companion is not only a matter of their kinship and marital reciprocity. It also defines their human



Richard Ansdell, *The Hunted Slaves*, 1861. Oil on canvas, 184 x 308cm.

agency against the ferocity of the dogs unleashed to retrieve or abuse them. Like Eastman Johnson's *A Ride for Liberty: The Fugitive Slaves* from the following year, which shows a noble equine brute literally supporting the speedy flight of a slave family, we see how the humanity of the slaves is presented in ideal familial form that also highlights their distance from the animal world they should, once they are accorded humanity, properly dominate.

From these sources, the power of gender, evident in the contrast between being human and being a man or woman, is identified as the remedy for other kinds of suffering and exploitation. By no means all feminist commentary on these matters follows Donna Haraway's influential reduction of Sojourner Truth's question "Ar'n't I a women?" to the status of curtain raiser for the pursuit of a "nongeneric humanity" and just another instance of general problems in gaining access to the category of the universal.

Being recognized as a man was imagined to provide compensation for being wounded by racial subordination, and that notion persisted into later conflicts inside the movements for civil and political as well as human rights. How these tensions entered into Martin Luther King Jr.'s handling of the Memphis sanitation workers' strike conducted through the famous slogan "I Am a Man" or reappeared in the overidentification of the black community with the task of mourning the prematurely extinguished manhoods of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. (both,

incidentally, advocates of radical humanism) is not a simple matter. The historians of those events offer detailed and challenging accounts that conform neither to the expectations of anachronistic Manichaeism nor to those of contemporary identity politics.

A decade after Louis Jordan assembled the urban black community as a ghettoized flock of chickens under surveillance in their Jim Crow coop, the epoch-making combination of Willie Dixon's "Hoochie Coochie Man," Bo Diddley's "I'm a Man," and Muddy Waters's "Mannish Boy" secularized the demand for recognition as manly, in daring violation of the racial order. Those popular songs used relationships with women as a measure of the masculinity they affirmed, but, even as they announced the power of hoodoo equipment like Muddy's notorious John the Conqueror Root, they turned away from the traditional measures of masculine sexual prowess to solicit the attention of young whites. The commodification of black masculinity was part of what was involved in the furtive cultivation of commercial relationships with rhythm and blues' new groups of white listeners. That unanticipated link provides an important key to the process of how race music, respecified as rock and roll, could be taken up far beyond the habitus of the black public sphere. In contrast, the tender transposition of romantic and political language in Nina Simone's "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" from 1964 revealed it to be one of very few songs that appeal directly and explicitly for recognition of the black singer's humanity. That gesture did not interrupt the trajectory toward profanation opened by the insouciance of recordings such as James Brown's "It's a Man's, Man's, Man's World" in 1967 and Donny Hathaway's deliberate and delicate invocation of manly pride and self-respect in 1973's "Someday We'll All Be Free."

I gesture at this history not just because the demands for recognition voiced in popular music have been relatively neglected when compared to jazz but in order to help situate more recent efforts such as those of the rapper Lil' Wayne. His masculinity is not in doubt, and his insistent declaration "I am not a human being" is not an ironic protest against the disabling weight of an evolving racial nomos, but rather a comic act of resignation to it. From the perspective of this argument, that hyperbolic renunciation of the human brings the insurgent spirit of black Atlantic freedom culture to a depressing terminal point in the neoliberal inscription of racial difference as nothing but commodified masculinist lifestyle.

NOTES

1. Derek Walcott, "The Sea Is History," in *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (London: Cape, 1980).
2. See the interview with Erik Prince in the *Wall Street Journal*, January 24, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303465004579324650302912522?mg=reno64-wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB10001424052702303465004579324650302912522.html>.
3. <http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/173>.
4. <http://newsonline.com/2505539/greece-black-panthers-golden-dawn/>; <http://pantrarna.wordpress.com/2011/09/18/150-personer-deltog-pa-panter-cup/>.
5. "It is a question of the Third World starting a new history of Man, a history which will have regard to the sometimes prodigious theses which Europe has put forward, but which will also not forget Europe's crimes, of which the most horrible was committed in the heart of man, and consisted of the pathological tearing away of his functions *and the crumbling away of his unity*. . . . For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man." Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 315 (emphasis added).
6. "The question is no longer *whether* victims can forgive 'evildoers' but whether we—our symbols, language, and politics, our legal, media, and academic institutions—are creating the conditions that encourage alternatives to revenge." Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died Last Night* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 118.
7. Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
8. "What things are called is unspeakably more important than what they are. The reputation, the name and appearance, the importance, the usual measure and weight of things each being originally almost always an error and arbitrary, thrown over the things like a garment and quite alien to their essence and even to their exterior—have gradually, by the belief therein and the continuous growth from generation to generation, grown as it were on—and into—things and become their very body. What was appearance at the very beginning becomes almost always the essence in the end and operates as the essence!" Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, bk. 2, aphorism 58 (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).
9. Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
10. Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro* (1925; reprint, New York: Atheneum, 1968), 3; *Crisis* 32 (October 1926): 290–97. "The point today is that until the art of the black folk compels [*sic*] recognition they will not be rated as human. And when through art they compel [*sic*] recognition then let the world discover if it will that their art is as new as it is old and as old as new."

11. Richard Wright, "Blueprint for Negro Writing," *New Challenge* (Fall 1937), reprinted in *Race Class* 21, no. 4 (1980): 403–12.
12. Eric Vogel, "Jazz in a Nazi Concentration Camp," pt. 3, *Downbeat* 29, no. 1 (1962): 21.
13. Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964); Elizabeth Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).
14. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, translated by Joan Pinkham (1955; reprint, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 56.
15. This is Zygmunt Bauman's phrase. *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 192–205.
16. "Now to talk to me about black studies as if it's something that [only] concerned black people is an utter denial. This is the history of Western Civilization. I can't see it otherwise. This is the history that black people and white people and all serious students of modern history and the history of the world have to know. To say it's some kind of ethnic problem is a lot of nonsense." C. L. R. James, "Black Studies and the Contemporary Student" (1969), reprinted in *At the Rendezvous of Victory* (London: Allison and Busby, 1984), 186–201.
17. "Melville is not the only representative writer of industrial civilization. He is the only one there is. In his great book the division and antagonisms and madnests of an outworn civilization are mercilessly dissected and cast aside. Nature, technology, the community of men, science and knowledge, literature and ideas are fused into a *new humanism*, opening a vast expansion of human capacity and human achievement. *Moby Dick* will either be universally burnt or be universally known in every language as the first comprehensive statement in literature of the conditions and perspectives for the survival of Western Civilization." C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways* (1953; reprint, Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001), 89.
18. *The Tempest*, 1.2.281–84.
19. Ronald Takaki, "The Tempest in the Wilderness: The Racialization of Savagery," *Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (1992): 892–912; Rob Nixon, "Caribbean and African Appropriations of *The Tempest*," *Critical Inquiry* 13, no. 3 (1987): 557–78.
20. George Lamming, *Pleasures of Exile* (1960; reprint, London: Allison and Busby, 1984), 118.
21. Roberto Fernández Retamar et al., "Caliban: Notes towards a Discussion of Culture in Our America," *Massachusetts Review* 15, nos. 1–2 (1974): 7–72.
22. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 141.
23. Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 26.

24. Grégoire Chamayou, *Manhunts: A Philosophical History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), chap. 1; Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), chap. 3.
25. Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), chap. 5.
26. David B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 45.
27. See Ronald A. T. Judy, *Disforming the American Canon: African Arabic Slave Narratives and the Vernacular* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), chap. 4.
28. Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth: In the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, translated by G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2003), 98.
29. Peter Hulme, “The Hidden Hand of Nature,” in *Enlightenment and Its Shadows*, edited by Peter Hulme and Ludmilla Jordanova (London: Routledge, 1990).
30. David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).
31. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), 233.
32. William Petty is mentioned in chapter 8 of Defoe’s *An Essay upon Projects* (1697).
33. Rhodri Lewis, ed., *William Petty on the Order of Nature: An Unpublished Manuscript Treatise* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012), 122.
34. Londa Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).
35. Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 18.
36. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn, edited by Hannah Arendt (London: Fontana, 1973), 122.
37. An important exception to this is Cynthia Willett’s essay “Ground Zero for a Post-moral Ethics in J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and Julia Kristeva’s *Melancholic*,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 45, no. 1 (2012): 1–22.
38. John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative, of a Five Years’ Expedition, against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (London: J. Johnson and Th. Payne, 1813), 1:350.
39. “They are hunted with dogs, kept for the purpose, and regularly trained. Enmity is instilled into the blood-hounds by these means: A master causes a slave to tie up the dog and beat it unmercifully. He then sends the slave away and bids him climb a tree; after which he unties the dog, puts him upon the track of the man and encourages him to pursue it until he discovers the slave. Sometimes, in hunting the negroes, if the owners are not present to call off the dogs, the slaves are torn in pieces—(sensation); this has often occurred.” Frederick Douglass, “The Horrors of Slavery and England’s Duty to Free the Bondsman: An Address Delivered in Taunton, England, on September 1, 1846,” *Somerset County Gazette*, September 5, 1846; John Blassingame et al., eds., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, ser. 1, *Speeches, Debates, and Interviews* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 1:371.

40. Gilbert Osofsky, ed., *Puttin' on Ole Massa* (New York: Harpers, 1969), 305.
41. Richard Wright, *American Hunger* (London: Gollancz, 1978), 59.
42. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), 205.
43. Edward Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 13.
44. G. W. F. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, translated by Bernard Bosanquet (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 50.
45. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Chicago: Johnson, 1970), 75.
46. Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1962), 54.
47. Paul Willis, "Notes on Common Culture: Towards a Grounded Aesthetics," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 1, no. 2 (1998): 163–76.
48. Frederick Douglass, "Composite Nation" (Boston, 1869), held in the Douglass Papers, Library of Congress, microfilm reel 14.
49. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 107.
50. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Of the Training of Black Men," in *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 63. See also "Of the Dawn of Freedom" (25). "[The slave] had emerged from slavery—not the worst slavery in the world, not a slavery that made all life unbearable, rather a slavery that had here and there something of kindness, fidelity, and happiness—but withal slavery, which, so far as human aspiration and desert were concerned, classed the black man and the ox together."
51. http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/collections/legacies/hunted_slaves.aspx.

LECTURE II. HUMANITIES AND A NEW HUMANISM

The desire to see oneself being seen as human and the related will to rewrite the history of humanism from an antiracist standpoint so as to accommodate that desire acquired a distinctive place in twentieth-century black Atlantic history. I want to resume my argument by using the extraordinary work of poet and critic June Jordan to summon just a small fraction of that archive. Jordan explored those forbidding tasks in some of the vibrant essays collected in her book *Civil Wars*, reflecting on them not didactically, but in a satirical mood.

In one piece, “Beyond Apocalypse Now,” Jordan describes a subzero visit to the city of Minneapolis. She turns her scorn in the direction of what she takes to be a particularly toxic component in the complacent literary culture of the high colonial period. Her object is the tendency to seek ontological veracity and psychological verification through the slaughter of infrahuman natives or to be complicit with the widespread fantasy of doing so. Jordan ponders the ubiquity and silliness of that response to the challenges of otherness as much as its reckless brutality. She mocks Joseph Conrad, *Apocalypse Now*, and a range of related psychosocial phenomena that she sees mirrored in the privatized culture of the frozen US heartland. The great novelist’s Congo diaries supply her with evidence not only of Conrad’s inability to accord Africans humanity but of the colonialists’ characteristic disinclination to conceive the value of native life as equivalent to that of Europeans. *Heart of Darkness*’s telling double negative, addressed to the fact of the Africans “not being inhuman,” was freighted with all the pressures of a shameless imperial history. Conrad conveyed the same failure again in a striking portrayal of the African stoker employed on the steamboat that chugs his narrator upriver, deeper into the torrid zone: “[He] could fire up a vertical boiler . . . [but] to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind-legs.”

Marooned in the icy interior of the United States, Jordan refused to turn her own discomfort into yet another rationale for the slaughter of the local population. Instead, she announces her discovery of a better response to that ontological and moral test. She suggests it can be found in the slow, thankless labor of rewriting the humanist traditions that were compromised and corroded as a result of their persistent attachment to racial hierarchy in general and white supremacy in particular. By taking

that fateful step, Jordan joined Du Bois and a significant number of other twentieth-century activists in the cause of undoing racial orders. She relays their demands for a reinvention and reinscription of the human and, tacitly, a corresponding transformation of the humanistic pursuit of knowledge that would become capable of interrupting the imploded narcissistic way of life found behind the fortified walls of overdevelopment's empire. We are returned, without the telltale violence and anxiety of colonial administration, to a different understanding of "the social animals we have been rumored to be."¹

This intervention is strongest when it is mindful of the rebel history that runs through the abolitionist movement from its moral wellsprings in Pauline Christianity and chiliastic radicalism—a heritage that Jordan acknowledged in a luminous commentary on the recognition-demanding poetry of Phillis Wheatley.² The reconstructive operation she proposes must proceed in the tempo established by global struggles for decolonization. It also depends upon a militant feminist politics that is *defined* by its cosmopolitan solidarities, its refusal to reify any variety of identity, and its transcendence of the political processes theorized through the opposition of friends to enemies: "I am saying that the ultimate connection cannot be the enemy. The ultimate connection must be the need that we find between us. It is not only who you are, in other words, but what we can do for each other that will determine the connection."³

For Jordan, the necessary speculation in that bold undertaking can be justified only by being embedded in battles to make the world anew *outside* of raciological specifications. One can accept that people are always going to be ingenious enough to find ways to go on doing frightful, immoral, and unjust things to one another, but there is also a reasonable expectation that the world will be better off without the particular difference that racisms make. In other words, the color line is not an eternal phenomenon. Even more important, we are forced to acknowledge the fact that we can escape the grip of racism only by creating richer alternatives addressed to the common human hunger for groupness. For that campaign to succeed, more complex and compelling ecologies of belonging will be required. There are further echoes of Fanon's exhortation to establish a new humanism here.

Ever the cosmopolitan, Jordan in her poetry, whether it is on the theme of love or of quantum physics, makes clear that battles against colonial rule, racism, male domination, and white supremacy must be understood as worldly matters that should not be folded neatly back into

the governmental and juridical structures of national states or corporations in general and of US exceptionalism in particular. Like Frederick Douglass and the chain of muted dissident voices that can be arranged so as to link them, Jordan takes “the side of humanity” against colonialism, nationalism, ethnic absolutism, and male domination. Her ironic commentary on Conrad and his heirs shows that a humanism that has been remodeled by being articulated within the critique of racial inhumanity will have to repudiate imperial modernism. It will also have to answer the scholastic antihumanism that augmented and perhaps subsumed that modernism in the second half of the twentieth century.

The savages have tired of colonial ravagings through their woods and waterways. The two white men, Marlow and Kurtz, take up jogging—separately, of course—and one of them stops smoking and the other becomes a vegetarian and both of them, separately, pursue continuing adult education courses and one of them joins a creative writing workshop and both of them meditate, separately, and each of them sees a therapist twice a week, and meanwhile the hungry and the illiterate and the despised peoples of the world gather themselves into a functional, a collective identity that means an irreversible destruction of the privileges of violence.⁴

The work of a second Caribbean settler in the United States, Jamaican critic and philosopher Sylvia Wynter, underscores that Jordan was far from alone in reaching these bold conclusions. Wynter, some eight years older, is equally clear about what is at stake in this position. Her work is in open dialogue with Dussel’s decolonial thought and follows deliberately in the footsteps of Césaire and Fanon. She sets out to supplement the latter’s analysis of the alienating racial-corporeal schema and develop his account of the sociogenesis of racial hierarchy. Wynter also shadows the contours of what Richard Wright had once provocatively identified as a negative loyalty to Atlantic modernity, and, not content with the acts of daring involved in merely imagining a new humanism, she wants to place the goal of reenchanting that formation on a systematic footing as well as to establish an expanded role for reworked and rescaled critical theory in these untimely tasks. Wynter’s creative, critical project is focused on epistemological questions, but it can also be associated not only with the work of Du Bois but also with the distinctive Marxist-humanist brew that helped C. L. R. James and his coworkers keep economism and

mechanistic reductionism at bay during the gloomiest days of the Cold War. Again like Du Bois, with whom his efforts converged and overlapped, James had developed an approach in which the humanity of slave-descended populations was connected to their world-historic expression of what it was to be a free people. He tied their insurgent human spirit to a distinctive understanding of the relationship between race and class as well as to a historical account of the revolutionary forces of the Atlantic that overflowed the containers provided for them by European and colonial national states.⁵

In seeking a suitably global scale upon which to articulate these arguments, James drew upon the pelagic writings of Herman Melville. His engagement with that body of abyssal fiction is not always taken seriously by scholastic guardians of the novelist's legacy, but it provided him with a valuable vehicle. It is easy to appreciate how the Trinidadian Marxist drew energy and insight from *Moby Dick* and, in particular, from *Benito Cereno*, Melville's antebellum reflection on the unfinished rebellion on a becalmed slave ship, which identifies the interpretative and imaginative costs involved in not being able to see or comprehend the disenchanting humanity of Africans who have been reduced to the Negrohood that racial slavery required of them. That important text invited its readers to pursue the symptomatology and existential costs of systematic misrecognition. It suggests that in following that difficult course, it is helpful to step away from the bounded territory of the plantation and embark on a sea voyage, mindful of the liquid character of the maritime environment and the radical contingency and vulnerability of thalassic existence.

Melville's principal theme had been the toll that the institutionalized disability to recognize the Negro as human exacted from among the dominant caste. Ralph Ellison, a much more conservative voice in the Cold War public sphere of the black Atlantic than James, took his epigraph for *Invisible Man* from Melville's novella and is one of several others to have drawn upon his efforts as an opening into consideration of the unprecedented alienation found among the dominated as a result of the misrecognition practiced in the racial nomos that declined to accommodate either their agency or their suffering.

For Ellison and Richard Wright, who had involved him in a scheme to provide psychiatric services to the beleaguered citizenry of Harlem, the new humanism at stake in this history had to be able to address the psychological wounds borne by human subjects formed in violently segregated environments. It was not, then, simply a question of whether, in

line with the imperatives of contemporary racial Americana, race and racism should become visible or significant as an issue, but rather a matter of how a range of objects and social processes might be thought of as productive of racial identifications and attachments that become intelligible in new ways once they are seen to be the results of assembling the political ontology of race. Thus constituted, racial subjects are drawn into distinctive ways of seeing and acting. Fanon described this change of perspective as an engagement with the sociology of racism.

Accounting for the mechanisms whereby racisms produce races is a laborious and, these days, counterintuitive enterprise. For Wynter, it yields not an essentially benign order of natural difference that exists outside of history and needs only to be uncoupled from negative associations, but a sharply historical understanding of the machinery that produces nature. Once race has congealed into the matter of political ontology, it can be mobilized as a framework for solidarity.⁶

Equivalent de-ontologizing operations have been commonplace in feminist thought. They are, for example, associated with the insights into the making of women that Simone de Beauvoir developed during her conversations with Wright. However, their recurrence does not prompt a common repertoire of political responses. The same radicals who applaud or celebrate the plasticity of gender often decry the possibility of racial mutability as a kind of treachery. For them, while iterated gender differences submit to the theory of performativity, racial nature(s) remain incorrigible, and playing with their power attracts only harsh criticism. On the other hand, moving across the ramparts of gender is often felt to be a subversive act that registers something of the displacement of the human by the posthuman and culminates in either the multiplication or the refusal of binary schemes. As a result, being gender neutral has been pronounced a worthier goal than being raceless, to say nothing of being postracial. Wynter's thinking presses us to expand our political options beyond the parochial alternatives involved in either seeing race and remaining resigned to its local habits or adopting race blindness—both of which refuse to consider the difference that racisms continue to make. Her approach also helps to account for the fact that Du Bois, Wright, and James had all turned toward Marxism, seeking resources with which to restore the black humanity that had been crushed, obscured, or alienated by racial rule in the Americas and beyond.⁷ All of them emerged from that encounter rubbing their eyes and with different degrees of hostility to the forms of capitalism, socialism, and communism then found

in the colonized and colonizing countries. Fanon spoke for this tendency with his view that Marxist models needed to be stretched in order to be adequate to the complexities of conflict beyond the shores of Europe and the North Atlantic. Concepts of class war derived from European cases had to be supplemented so that they could grasp the dynamics of capital's planetary history. While useful, the traditional emphasis on inevitable conflict had to be disembedded from teleological schemes that privileged certain populations and locations as the favored deliverers of all mankind. Most important of all, peace and reconciliation were not considered as essential underpinnings for the utopia of classlessness. Indeed, for many Marxists, the very idea of utopia was an unwelcome intrusion contaminating the slick apparatuses of properly scientific rationality. To find resources with which to build the commitment to peace that is now an important element in the reenchantment of humanism, we must look elsewhere.

PEACE AND ANTIRACISM

An antiracist humanism quite different from the anthropology provided by historical materialism can be located in the work of Alain Locke, who developed a radical approach to the absolute humanity of the Negro, not, like many of his peers, through a critique of German idealism but via a long involvement with the Baha'i faith that he adopted in 1918, the same year he received his PhD. Locke's links with the faith were profound and long lasting. It is not always appreciated that he held this connection in common with Du Bois, who, along with his first wife, Nina Gomer, had enjoyed a shorter dalliance with the Baha'i perspective on "the mighty human rainbow of the world."⁸ Enthusiasm for the faith was also evident among a number of former Garveyites in the United States and the Caribbean.

Extensive involvement with the Baha'i helps to account for Locke's anti-imperialism, his Zionism, and his conception of African American culture's relationship to the potential for new values. His commitment to Baha'i universalism and advocacy of peace were not reflections of the post-1945 mood, more sympathetic in the wake of the Third Reich and the atomic bombing of Japan to the prospect of a new world organized according to new principles. Nor is the humanism affirmed in his writings simply a by-product of the redemption or vindication of slave-descended populations. It bears the stigmata of their suffering but is not limited by that origin. Like the turning of prominent African American

figures such as Charles Johnson, bell hooks, Herbie Hancock, and others away from Christianity and toward Buddhism or St. Clair Drake's little-researched relationship to Quakerism, Locke's favored faith indicates other possibilities. It seems to have been part of generating an opportunity for any and all to gain something worthwhile, something morally, ontologically, democratically, and humanly enriching, from an oppositional confrontation with every alienating racial order. This gesture was grounded in a universalistic refusal of racial hierarchy and segregation.

The foregrounding of peace in the Baha'i faith is especially important. It amplified Locke's strong antipathy toward the nationalism he saw as a provincializing force that placed disabling limits upon the imagination and entrenched what he felt were frustratingly narrow ideas of what being human might mean. For him, the fruits of this commitment lay in the possibility of a higher and a better humanity rather than a deeper citizenship than Jim Crow would allow. This is the context in which we can consider some features of his principled advocacy of nonviolence.

It is striking that, so long after Locke's death, the idea of the black intellectual, and in particular the prospect of a black philosopher, remains disturbing. That unlikely figure, which he so stylishly and eccentrically embodied, still lies beyond the imagination of many people. Some specific reasons for the durability of that impossible presence were noted by Du Bois in his eulogy for Locke. Of course, additional factors both technological and normative have arisen since then, but his words remain apposite:

Alain Locke stood singular in a stupid land as a rare soul who pursued for nearly half a century, steadily and unemotionally, the only end of man which justifies his living and differentiates him from the beast and bird; and that is the inquiry as to what the universe is and why; how it exists and how it may change. The paths pointed out by Socrates and Aristotle, Bacon and Descartes, Kant and Hegel, Marx and Darwin, were the ones Locke followed and which inevitably made him unknown and unknowable to a time steeped in the lore of Micky Spillane. And yet in Locke's life lay a certain fine triumph.⁹

Du Bois's sense of that perverse triumph is unlikely to coincide with our own. Today, in seeking to specify it as the continuing task of employing a critique of racism to reimagine and therefore to humanize the humanities, we should be less concerned with Locke's formative elite

experiences in Cambridge, Oxford, Berlin, and Paris than with opening up a neglected conversation about his broad philosophical concerns: cultural, cosmopolitan, aesthetic, democratic, and pragmatist. Despite the best efforts of Leonard Harris and Charles Molesworth, those matters are still underexplored. Great work has already been done to address Locke's distinctive achievements and to make them useful not only in the history of black life, thought, and political movements but also in contemporary debates over race and culture, freedom, art, and recognition.

Locke has been overshadowed by the titanic figure of Du Bois in many ways. The cosmopolitan perspective common to both men and to their peers, a muted worldly layer of African American artists, thinkers, and writers, can be defined, preliminarily at least, through Locke's provocative notion that "culture has no colour."¹⁰ He pointed out on more than one occasion that culture was not amenable to being held as though it was a form of property by the races, nations, or peoples who falsely appropriate or invoke it in their own narrow and sectarian interests. That observation also retains a contemporary resonance.

There is insufficient space here either for a detailed reconstruction of Locke's evolving preoccupations with "social culture," problems of axiology, and what he called a systematic relativism or to reconstruct the distinctive constellation into which these key ideas were organized. Reading him now, one is struck by the familiarity of many of the questions to which his responses were addressed. How, for example, can we dispose of race as a matter of political ontology while retaining the lived social potency that distinguishes his category of "social race"? How are we to hold on to the solidarizing power of race without being overwhelmed by its provincializing momentum? How can one theorize and act upon culture as an inessential, fluid, and "composite" phenomenon, as both obligation and opportunity?

Locke's biographers say he found writing difficult, and a pile of monographs sufficient to hedge obscurity may be lacking—replaced by a storehouse of fragmentary pronouncements, lectures, book reviews, and commentaries aimed at different publics and delivered from a variety of altitudes. The breadth of Locke's interests and activities is forbidding. Though he had an institutional perch at Howard University, Locke, like C. L. R. James, may even be thought to point to a new rather than a vestigial variety of underemployed, marginal intellectuals whose most significant engagements can be found outside the academy.

In spite of the lucid, welcoming character of his essays, they remain too densely learned for the scholastic habits that thrive within the tidy disciplinary carapaces of contemporary academic training. Right from the start, he presents a challenge to the narrower modes of education that are being institutionalized in the wholesale transformation of the university. The shock of what now appears to be his anachronistic attachment to the vestiges of a traditional humanist education registers far beyond the cloisters of African American studies—even if it has been felt there too in the twin suggestions of that initiative’s fulfillment and its redundancy.

Today’s scholastic philosophers read Locke one way—that is, if they read him at all—while literary critics read him another. Historians of music and culture cannot agree about what his work should mean or what his legacies should be. He is judged by turns to be an aesthete, a cultural nationalist (either reluctant or enthusiastic), a romantic, a cosmopolitan, and a mystic. Time and again, the fundamental significance of his Baha’i faith for his approach to universalism and to diversity’s relationship with a reconfigured understanding of human unity is passed over.

Bewildered if not confounded by this fundamental aspect of his outlook, discussion of Locke’s various contributions reaches its peak in a highly polarized interpretative scheme. He has either been lauded as the dean, literary catalyst, or midwife to the Harlem Renaissance and the philosophical progenitor of a cultural pluralism—which it would be very wrong to overidentify with contemporary “multiculturalism”—or been written off as an obscurantist and mystifier whose regularly articulated distaste for provincial thinking did not extend into criticism of his own cultural myopia. His angle of vision gets described as either Eurocentric and bourgeois or brown Brahmin American according to taste.

This dispute goes back into Locke’s own time, when his work was easier to dismiss amid an era of intense conflict between economic and culturalist approaches that were, for obvious reasons, becoming harder to reconcile. We should acknowledge, if only to set aside, the problems that arise with what appears to be his firm distance from the organizational and institutional elements of politics. That reaction may have been shaped by his life in the vote-free environment of Washington, DC, but it can be easily misunderstood and thus contribute to a peremptory dismissal of him on the grounds of aestheticism.

We can begin to build a more sophisticated understanding of Locke's position from his response to Du Bois's celebrated 1926 intervention "Criteria of Negro Art." That text initiated a debate about the relationship between Art and Propaganda in the pursuit of black autonomy—another topic that remains relevant today, even though the term *propaganda* has been comprehensively modified by its synonym *public relations*. This episode has sometimes been rendered crudely so that the younger man appears as the proponent of a naive and romantic view of art as a pathway to freedom irrespective of any merely political conditions. That view can also be projected on to some of Locke's other literary-critical judgments—his defense of Jean Toomer's *Cane* or his discomfort at the transfusions of communist ideology found in Wright's *Native Son*. The result is often a view of Locke as an early advocate of thin, respectable, and polite cultural nationalism. No doubt, many would like to see his legacy comfortably contained under that heading. However, his own words demand something more ambitious.

Locke's perspective on the alienation and reification that characterized black life was, as he explained, a long way from art for art's sake. It offered a complex, untimely defense of art's necessary distance from the strategic calculations of official politics. However, his approach was premised upon political and economic concerns and accepted the integrity of both kinds of agency in vindicating Negro humanity. He speculated about the energy that could be released by the possibility of their mutual articulation—as long as the relationship was properly configured. Indeed, his work contains a whole theory of how this difficult rearrangement should be accomplished. There is also the practical example of how that guidance might have applied to the "little" Harlem Renaissance. The standard view is that Locke's decidedly Paterian sensibilities set out to guide the developmental refinement of Negro folk "ore" into a finished civilizational product.¹¹ The conspicuous elitism of that view of how culture and civilization might diverge, of their need for reciprocity and the value of "systematic relativism," might be easy to dismiss, but it conforms to a communitarian but nonsocialist view of human universal humanity that is anchored in, if not explicitly or openly derived from, his Baha'i faith. These commitments assume a new significance when that distinctive spiritual and ethical grounding is acknowledged. It shines through even in his important essay on Keats and romanticism that has often been read obliquely as a comment on the parameters of the Harlem Renaissance. His words are worth quoting at length:

First and last, it was a reawakening to the purposes of literature as an interpretative art; a new birth into the “Heritage of the Past;” a fresh conception of literary art as the expression of the individual; a near approach to the elemental sources of Art—man as Man, and not as Society; Nature, “not veiled under names or formulas, but naked, beautiful, awful unspeakable—Nature, as to the thinker and prophet it ever is, preternatural.” Romanticism in this sense is another attempt to resolve that paradox which Goethe calls “the open Secret.” Walter Pater came very near the truth of the romantic movement when he called it the “Renaissance of wonder,” the grafting of curiosity upon the love of Beauty;” for there is much significance in the statement of Carlyle that “Worship is transcendent wonder.”

Thus the Romanticism was, indeed, revolt against the formal traditions of Eighteenth-Century Classicism, it was a return to Nature, it was a renewal of the past as material for fresh symbols—of mediaeval romance as well as of Greek idealism, it was, as Hegel said, “the period of mastery of spirit over form,” it was also a triumph of individualism, but to say it was a spiritual Renaissance of literature is to say all this and more.

A Renaissance is of itself a return to the sources of Art, to Nature, to elemental Man, to all the accumulated material of the Past that is available for new symbols.¹²

Locke spelled out the consequences of this developmental scheme later on in the Cold War phase of his life: “Give us Negro life and experience in all the arts but with a third dimension of universalized common-denominator humanity.”¹³ This approach rested on his long-held assumption that it was fallacious to regard the predicament of the Negro in the United States through the analogy of a nation subordinated within a second “racially compartmentalized” nation that could be distinguished by its “cultural bulkheads.” Consequently, he presented Negro art as following “no peculiar path of its own but with slight differences of emphasis or pace” and saw it moving “in step with the general aesthetic and social trends of contemporary American art and literature.”¹⁴ Success in the difficult mission of managing Negro art’s transition toward the appropriate classical and then universal conditions of artistic creativity would be fostered by patient, progressive disassembling of the Jim Crow nomos and the cultivation of an internal discipline that was essential to liberation. Refining the capacity of Negro artists to become self-critical

was therefore an essential task with which the philosopher was uniquely equipped to assist, and it proved to be a dynamic and critical factor. The point came across powerfully in his essay on self-criticism. "For many generations Negro creative expression was inevitably imitative and marked with a double provincialism of cultural immaturity and a racial sense of subordination. It ran a one-dimensional gamut from self-pity through sentimental appeal to hortatory moralizing and rhetorical threat—a child's gamut of tears, sobs, sulks and passionate protest. All of us probably expected too much of the Negro Renaissance, but its new vitality of independence, pride and self-respect, its scoff and defiance of prejudice and limitations were so welcome and heartening."¹⁵ From this angle, culture appears in complex forms outside of any diffusionist and civilizationist patterns. It is, above all, a challenging "composite" that does not retain any of the anterior purities that might have preceded its hybrid local manifestations. However, elaborate rules were enumerated for how its proper development should proceed if the results were to be socially, aesthetically, and humanly worthwhile.

The function of the cultural renaissance was therefore political in various ways, not least as a device to promote recognition of the Negro as human by means of seduction rather than propaganda. The production of great works of art, literature, and music by blacks would supply the means to create the conditions in which a wholesale reevaluation of the Negro "by white and black alike" would become possible. The same reevaluation would also facilitate and validate Negro demands for equality to be measured against the formal bestowal of civil and political rights. By then, however, the motor of progress had been stalled by the stock-market crash that had hit the white patrons upon whom the "little Renaissance" was dependent.

For now, the emphasis must fall upon the fact that Locke deserves (as do we) better than any polarized interpretative approach. Nor should the distinctive abbreviated meaning of the word *political* in US English be allowed to obscure our interpretation of Locke's "strenuous" anti-imperialism, Zionism, and heavily qualified Garveyism as well as his carefully hedged advocacy "of cultural racialism as a defensive counter-move for the American Negro."¹⁶

These political dispositions start to unearth the substructure for his subtle sense of where the development of art might correspond to social conflict and historical change inside the United States and beyond its borders. Internally, a critique of the narrowness and self-restriction

involved in what he called Jim Crow aesthetics was complemented by an especially sharp grasp of the shortcomings of color-coded democracy.

Again, in line with the Baha'i faith, democracy was reconceived in radically historical terms as a transnational, planetary project. The various struggles composed during the pursuit of it could, he suggests, be properly appreciated only on a geopolitical scale. In all things, his stubborn "world-mindedness" confronted the comforting yet disabling provincialism that could not be excused by its social and experiential roots in racial terror and suffering.

Locke did at times find race to be "a centre of meaning" that demanded a rethinking of received principles. Yet he also warned that "in dethroning our absolutes, we must take care not to exile our imperatives, for after all, we live by them."¹⁷ This is a combination of arguments that can offer further support to Nancy Fraser's reading of his pragmatism, but I wish to place the emphasis elsewhere.¹⁸ His opinions fluctuated, but his preoccupations were governed by a great consistency. Most uncomfortably of all to the contemporary ear, we must reckon with his embarrassing preparedness to speak in humanity's name: for the planet as a whole—a trait that had also emerged after 1919 but one that seems to have intensified during the Cold War and was closely articulated with acute geopolitical observations honed by his commitment to a culture of peace that could be completed only on the same planetary scale: through what, ever mindful of the parallel evolution of mutually engaged and respectful civilizations, Locke called a systematic relativism. That kind of fusion of horizons represents our inevitable exposure to alterity as something apart from risk. It betrays the impact of Baha'i thinking upon his philosophical project. He summed up the consequences of this orientation in these bold words:

Will acting on the basis of our country, right or wrong, or even our country first and last, ever develop a true and vital internationalism? Can the idea of our form of civilization and our particular pet institutions, not as just best for us, but as arbitrarily best for everyone, everywhere ever lead us to the proper appreciation of other cultures and nations or to smooth-working collaboration with them? Will any one-way relations, rather than give-and-take ones, ever develop the confidence and respect of nations and peoples different from us in their ways and traditions? To me, it seems the answer to all three of these questions is—No.

Locke saw the cultural outlooks rooted in “inflated cultural bias and partisanship, or overweening national and racial chauvinism [being] outflanked and outmoded by the developments of the present age.” It was clear to him that the philosophical retreat of those old obstructions did not prevent their beleaguered inhabitants from clinging “all the more tenaciously to . . . the mind-set of fundamentalism and orthodoxy.”¹⁹

He presents no clear, programmatic sense of how the pursuit of peace and reciprocal development might respond to this impasse. However, it may help to remember that the US bombing of Hiroshima was, for him, an event that had initiated a new era in world history that would be distinguished by the unprecedented evils involved in the nuclear destruction. This prescience underscored a distinctive cosmopolitan trajectory, and its arc should be analyzed with care. Its momentum derived from his eloquent insistence that the culture of the US Negro was wholly, if sometimes inconveniently, an American phenomenon. The same position had been elaborated at greater length in the little “Bronze Series” book *The Negro and His Music* that he published in 1936.

Locke’s intellectual direction had been affected not only by his own experiences of travel—the scale upon which his own translocal life was lived—but by the idea that the Negro, like the Jew, had been made international by historical experiences of persecution. The communist revolution in Russia and the rising tide of militant anticolonial resistance had resulted, he said, in “the thinking Negro [being] shifted a little toward the left with the world-trend.”

After World War I, the rise of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and further stirrings of anticolonial resistance, many blacks in the United States had undergone an important change of perspective. An authentic citizenship had not, as Du Bois had hoped, been brought closer by the preparedness to kill and die for their Jim Crow fatherland. Locke saw that their “race consciousness” had been “widened” by the globe’s “rising tide of color” in “an era of critical change” that could be apprehended only on the world-historic scale, but he did not conceptualize this telos in a Hegelian or Marxist manner and seek its dialectical sublation. The historicity of African Americans and their progressive redemption would have to be secured by a broader range of practices, executed by a wider cast of agents than those schemes could accommodate.

Here are signs that Locke, more like the Du Bois of *Dark Princess* than the author of *The Souls* who had influenced his early thinking so much, saw the strivings of his racial fellows as part of a world-historical

struggle for which their suffering had equipped them by endowing their art with a unique potential.²⁰ But whereas Du Bois, in the interwar years at least, drew upon that idea and folded it into his enhanced sense of what American democracy might be and what the national or class interests of African Americans might become, for Locke, the romantic and antinationalist, a more difficult pathway toward universality opened up.

It was not limited either by any affiliation to the cosmopolitan body both men had discovered through their participation in the London Universal Races Congress of 1911 or to the tempo of the international communist movement. It was tied to one particular aspect of the Baha'i faith that had been clear since Bahullah's son Abdul Baha addressed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1912, namely, a figuration of the human that could be conceptualized only through the overcoming of racial orders by means of the historic view of racism as "a curable disease."

In pursuing that option, Locke produced not only a distinctive understanding of art and creativity but also a wealth of insights into the universal feelings that could be accessed via the elaboration of a novel, ecumenical humanism for which the Baha'i faith seems to have provided him with both inspiration and endorsement. Here, we should repeat that in both the United States and the Caribbean similar choices were pursued by former members of the UNIA for the same reason: this new humanism was shaped by the overcoming of racial hierarchy and the racial systems of thought—the racial rationality—that produced it.

The resulting universality involved an "antiracist" planetary humanism that was egalitarian and communitarian but neither straightforwardly socialist nor simply bourgeois. It may not have had a recognizable class accent, but like the bourgeois option, it departed from the consciousness of radically isolated, disciplined figures imagined to be capable of exercising moral agency. That individuation can be recognized as a symptom of another factor that had conditioned its developmental logic: the racial hierarchy that facilitated the creation of the cultural and biological bulkheads that Locke had found dividing nations and empires.

This new humanism was licensed, and can be defined, by its antipathy toward racial thinking. It arose in difficult conditions marked by the pernicious effects of systems of racial government that denied blacks, natives, and other colonial objects access to the kinds of individuality so beloved by liberal political theory. By contrast with the color-coded, property-owning, masculine adulthood of their rulers, the subaltern subjectivity of

those vital *infrahumans* was constituted outside of the mechanisms of social recognition. Their embattled ontology was therefore premised upon a disjunction between thinking and being that would have to wait until the efforts of Frantz Fanon to be philosophically mapped.

This approach chimed loudly with Locke's interest in pragmatism as well as his sense of the radical aloneness of the artist and the individual person of faith. It can be further distinguished by his anti-Arnoldian view of culture and its development, which he characterized as proceeding "from personality to personality." Locke saw these patterns compounded by "the cultural isolation that result[ed] from racial preoccupations" as well as the morally and artistically corrosive "operations of Jim-Crow esthetics." The effects of institutionalized racial hierarchy were deeply felt on that subjective level, but their overcoming could only follow a complicated sequence involving creativity, criticism, and collective enterprise—cultural and political.

I want to emphasize that the best way to continue unpacking the relevance of Locke's choices and priorities for today's readers is to place his life's work on a broader intellectual map than the one that has become customary. It is easy to overlook the fact that he belonged exactly to the generation of Schmitt and Heidegger. His testing life experience involved responses to the very same historical and political challenges that inclined those very clever men toward fascism, ultranationalism, and war.

Locke resolved those historical stresses differently: in a consistent commitment to peace, a distrust of nationalism, and a nonimmanent critique of the racial orders of the imperial and colonial world. That advocacy occupied a variety of political and moral vehicles and his deep engagement with democracy should be situated in the setting it provides.

Though he saw the threat of bolshevism and the possibility of revolution as relevant to the cultural options facing black Americans during the 1920s, Locke gradually turned away from those problems and moved toward a reengagement with the ontological boundaries of Negro life that could be revealed and negotiated in culture and creativity. That focus was linked to a particular anthropological understanding of culture and its relationship to the uniqueness of groups as well as to a distinctive view of the contending forces of nationalism and universalism.

Today, Locke's legacy bears in particular upon three interlinked topics that are worth identifying and isolating for our consideration of the fate of the humanities. The first is the concept of culture and the philosophical, interpretative, and political effects of its pluralization and

anthropologization in a field of race politics. Second is the development of cosmopolitan perspectives in relation to concern with the liberation of and from racial orders and, last, the manner in which nonimmanent criticism of racial thinking might be made to yield a democratic humanism different from other versions of that style of thought more easily compromised by the destructive effects of what Immanuel Wallerstein has identified as the age of European universalism.

The recurrent question of peace connected with Locke's open ethics and his commitment to the assembling of new universals in opposition to the siren calls of race and nation. It is that humanism and his creative, principled pursuit of other ways of thinking and working that make him our contemporary.

TOWARD REPARATIVE HUMANISM

Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* appeared, like Ellison's *Invisible Man*, in 1952 and, through a parallel excursion into surrealism and vernacular existentialism, engaged the prospect of a new humanism outside of race. The Martiniquean psychiatrist put the emphasis not only where Ellison's blues aesthetic had placed it, on alienation, but also on the novel variety of freedom to be gained by what he termed *disalienation*.

Fanon's treatment of racialized being in the world shares a lot with Ellison's general interest in sight and in particular with racilogically induced blindness and the shock involved in seeing oneself being seen—or not seen—not as a human being but as an inhuman: a nègre, Negro, or nigger.

Departing from the existentialist path, Fanon's advocacy of revolutionary change can be distinguished by his preparedness to speak in humanity's name against the colonial world's racial-corporeal schema. However, his pursuit of a new humanism remains a tricky subject for contemporary commentators. With the exception of Edward Said, who approached it, in part, through the precedent provided by Vico, Fanon's humanism still gets passed over as an embarrassment.

He made a series of arguments that move toward what, following the recent contributions of South African psychologist and former official of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, which I will address in a moment, we should call a "reparative" humanism.²¹ That tantalizing prospect provides a way to clarify and address a number of problems that taint the embittered workings of our postcolonial world with regard to racial figuration of the human.

The reparation involved is neither straightforwardly financial nor moral. Gobodo-Madikizela follows Fanon in having a variety of ontological reparation in mind. As in his approach, its conditions of existence are furnished and framed by a revolutionary overcoming of the racial *nomos* created by colonial conquest that had endorsed the deadly binary opposition of settler to native. It bears repetition that the pressing need for this new humanism originally emerged in tandem with the active pursuit of national liberation. Fanon qualified that immediate goal by introducing an equally novel and emphatically postcolonial world consciousness that exceeded the abstract formalities of previous kinds of internationalism. His universal hopes had been formed by his military service in World War II and his involvement in the wars of decolonization that followed as well as by his conviction that an authentic existence, celebrated in human desire, could remain uncorrupted by the intrusions of raciality.

This viewpoint acquired further cosmopolitan grounding in his insistence that Europe's colonial crimes and errors should not be repeated by newly independent postcolonial states—a historic determination that resonated loudly with the choice of a cosmic rhetoric that it would be wrong to dismiss as juvenalia. His approach to alienation is also relevant. Like Ellison's, it differed substantially from Hegelian and Marxist understanding of that concept. Fanon's emphasis fell not, as is usual, upon the interrelated dynamics of domination, mystification, and recognition but on two associated problems: first, the issue of systematic misrecognition and, second, the need for a sharpened sense of mutual relation that may, we are told, pave the way to "the reciprocal relativism of different cultures, once the colonial status is irreversibly excluded."²² The latter thread gets taken up in the work of Edward Glissant.

Fanon's presentation of a profound racialized variety of alienation was of a piece with the disturbing work undertaken on the same topic by his African American influences. He acknowledged that debt—which recalls Leopold Sedar Senghor's awareness of being beholden to the work of Du Bois—in a note that he wrote²³ to Richard Wright, who had steered similar paths through the problems presented by interwar Marxism and the relationship between racism and fascism as well as by their psychological appeal.²⁴ Both thinkers acknowledged the metaphysics of racial subordination that was inscribed in a sequence composed of several stages. Initially, the racial subject saw itself being misrecognized. Then, with its humanity amputated, it experienced the effect of being coerced into an unwanted reconciliation with the dismal *infrahuman* object with

which it has become confused: the Negro, nigger, or nègre. Last, the habitual social character of the whole destructive process became apparent through appreciation of its ubiquity.

Through these arguments, we discover that, whether they were immediately colonial or not, all racial orders revealed how the damage to humanity could accumulate. Wherever they were located, eventually, those formations initiated something like a culture of their own. For Fanon, their undoing could only commence once the liberating refusal to “accept the present as definitive” became shared and the door of every consciousness was opened by “the real leap” that introduces “invention into existence.”²⁵ This transformation involved decisionistic acts of freedom seeking that confidently refuse the diminished or “mutilated” humanity offered by alienated Europe’s “constant denial of man” and its symptomatic accompaniment: an “avalanche of murders.”²⁶

Gobodo-Madikizela has augmented and refined this unfashionable commitment to a new humanism. Transmitting from the wreckage of another arrested revolutionary transformation, she compounds Fanon’s infelicities by connecting them with an unlikely argument about the transformative power of human empathy. Perhaps taking her cue from the concluding pages of *The Wretched of the Earth*, where Africa’s newly independent nations are cautioned not to repeat Europe’s mistakes, she challenges the limitations of the Nuremberg model and, in particular, articulates a philosophical alternative to Hannah Arendt’s view of radical evil as both unpunishable and unforgiveable. This important adjustment is based firmly on her experience as a member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which, by introducing her to a whole archive of racial terror, conveyed the idea that there could be “no adequate reparation for the horrors that we witnessed on the public stage of the TRC.”²⁷ That grim realization did not, however, derail or disenchant the truth and reconciliation process. It was coupled with a sense that, if it could be sufficiently grounded in a novel sense of human community, a precious degree of reconciliation and repair would be within the grasp of South Africa. This dual response grew from Gobodo-Madikizela’s psychological commitment to the transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory as part of the move from testimony to ethics. It is allied with a political commitment to the public staging of that process as a healing supplement to the pursuit of justice in the context of counterinsurgency warfare mandated, according to the principles of Apartheid, by the idea of racial hierarchy. It is very important to emphasize that the repair at

stake here is not conceived as a final state in which everything is magically healed or made all right by the spectacle of “remorseful reflection.”²⁸ Again linking her arguments to those of Arendt and Derrida, Gobodo-Madikizela presents the variety of formal public dialogue catalyzed by truth telling as a means to feed the fragile democracy of her postcolonial, postconflict society. She appeals explicitly to a psychoanalytically informed notion of human empathy that can guide not only the delicate intersubjective processes on which the possibility of forgiveness depends but also the intrapsychic dynamics involved in the self-transcending, empathic movement toward the humanity of the other.²⁹

The cautious positivity of Gobodo-Madikizela’s suggestions is extremely unsettling to the closed system of contemporary scholastic theory. They disrupt racial schemas in which the colony and the native stand for the past, while the metropole and the colonizer exemplify the future. She insists that both parties share the same present that is effectively composed by their common commitment to engage in this most difficult of dialogues. Even more recklessly, she advances the restoration of humanity as the principal goal of a postcolonial process that differs sharply from the patterns evident in Europe after the trauma of the Nazi period. The “grey zone”³⁰ in which the right to exercise judgment has retreated, while the thwarted desire for justice eats away at the broken victims of injustice and cruelty, is acknowledged, but it is also to be kept at bay. Through the acts of forgiveness that they do not withhold, these victims of Apartheid’s brutality—and, by extension, of colonial terror more broadly—can acquire and mobilize the human dignity that racism and colonial rule denied them. That humanity provides a means with which they may be able to begin to heal their own wounds, to forgive others, and to build democratic institutions. Simultaneously, and even more controversially, the criminal perpetrators of white supremacist brutality may also gain the humanity that they have neglected or destroyed through their cruelty and violence.

These difficult acts are not specified by Christian ethics or its formally secularized equivalents. In her discussion of the reconciliation process, poet and philosopher Antjie Krog usefully emphasizes that in Africa, Christianity “became embedded within” a preexisting “communitarian spirituality.”³¹ The grounding of these later responses seems to reside elsewhere, in the deep-time cosmology of some of South Africa’s earliest inhabitants. They become an example, a worldly gift from the global South to the neoimperial fortresses of overdevelopment where vengeance has

acquired a new premium in sacralized struggles against extremism and terror. In a recent piece that formed part of a feminist dialogue about the contemporary value of peace, Gobodo-Madikizela developed her arguments about human empathy, forgiveness, and reconciliation a great deal further through a consideration of empathy's inscription in the maternal body. This contribution derived not only from practical political work but also from professional psychological observation of and interaction with traumatized mothers as they attempted to build healing dialogues with the state-sponsored murderers of their children. These dialogic exchanges and encounters can, she says, broaden familiar models of justice, opening them outward from the perpetrator-victim dyad and promoting opportunities to heal the fractures in a divided and embittered nation. Approached formally as dialogue, this contact enables the victims and survivors to revisit the sites of their trauma. Where racial hierarchy reduced victims to an inhuman condition, they can be effectively humanized, while the perpetrators of inhuman brutality are required to face their cruel conduct. If the process is successful, both the immediate victims and the public at large may be able to discover that these perpetrators are not evil monsters, "human beings who failed morally, whether through coercion, the perverted convictions of a warped mind, or fear. Far from relieving the pressure on perpetrators, recognizing the most serious criminals as human intensifies the pressure, because society can then hold them to greater moral accountability."³²

When asked to articulate the feelings of maternal empathy that they experienced during their interaction with the killers and their associates, Gobodo-Madikizela's interviewees used the Xhosa term *inimba*, which can be translated as "umbilical cord." They explained that the source of these feelings resided in their wombs. Gobodo-Madikizela explains their complex and surprising responses like this: "To feel *inimba* is to feel like a mother does for a child when her child is in pain. *Inimba* may be triggered even when one's child is thousands of miles away—for example, a mother feeling her child's desperation and longing for home, or feeling that her child is in some trouble. Thus, for those mothers who felt *inimba* in response to the former police informant begging for forgiveness, they were responding to him as if he were their own son."³³

Like Fanon and Cabral, her approach commences from the belief that psychological and cultural dynamics were, like violence, fundamental in maintaining colonial power and domination. *Inimba* and *ubuntu* (radical interconnectedness toward wholeness) or, in the Rwandan context,

the *agaciro* (dignity) cultivated by the postgenocide Gacaca court system do more than nobly suggest how to avoid some of Europe's catastrophic mistakes.³⁴ These concepts articulate and moralize foundational commitments to interconnectedness and wholeness that have been associated with linked attempts at rehumanization and forgiveness. These dispositions may appear perverse to the antihumanist tribunes of contemporary theory, but they culminate in the refusal of victims to return the evils perpetrated upon them. The cruel deeds are not going to be forgotten. They are to be put to use in respecifying what is involved in being human.

Gobodo-Madikizela's collaborative work with literary critic Chris Van der Merwe suggests that these issues are not for academic psychology and political activism alone but can have a broader importance in the development of the humanities, particularly in literary studies, where issues of narration and narrativity can contribute powerfully to the difficulties of working through trauma. These activities were bolstered by the refusal to approach the totemic figure of Nelson Mandela as a messiah, seeing him instead as an ordinary human being. I see them as a welcome contribution to the hard labor of reenchanting and resituating humanism.

Gobodo-Madikizela describes this culture of empathy and forgiveness as rehumanization though humanization, or Fanon's key term *disalienation* might supply better a name for it. It bears repetition that the requisite double change can be accomplished only if the postcolonizer group is prepared to open itself to the painful, healing potency of telling the truth. The significance of that evasive possibility increased in the South African case when it was undertaken in the shadow of paligenetic nonracial justice and conducted within hearing distance of public discussions about the possible release of Eugene de Kock, alias "Prime Evil," the figure who in Gobodo-Madikizela's writing assumes a position equivalent to that of Eichmann in Arendt's investigative scheme.

The "reparative" humanism proposed by Gobodo-Madikizela has another significance.³⁵ It identifies what appears to be Africa's surpassing of Europe and can therefore help to clarify a number of problems that characterize the embittered workings of our postcolonial world.

The situation in southern Africa is overflowing with unresolved conflict, but it is not primitive because it is African. It is, like the struggle against Apartheid in which it was rooted, part of the moral history of our species and represents a confrontation with the future of our planet, not just the colonial past. Though she expressed what George Kateb has

called an “interpretative generosity” toward the European racists who recoiled from African savagery, Hannah Arendt had implicated European racism in the destruction and corruption that brought about the demise of man:

Racism may indeed carry out the doom of the western world and, for that matter, of the whole of human civilization. When Russians have become Slavs, when Frenchmen have assumed the role of commanders of a force noire, when Englishmen have become “white men”, as already for a disastrous spell all Germans became aryan, then this change will itself signify the end of western man. No matter what the learned scientists may say, race is, politically speaking, not the beginning of humanity but its end, not the origin of peoples but their decay, not the natural birth of man but his unnatural death.³⁶

Reparative humanism, articulated from South Africa and manifested in forgiveness as well as the example provided by Mandela, who wrote an interesting foreword to the second edition of Gobodo-Madikizela’s book, offers kindly and unremittingly generous repudiation of Arendt’s bleak pronouncements. If we are to build upon these extraordinary developments, we must be able to extend the challenging propositions ventured in earlier critiques of systematic anti-Semitism and the place of racial hierarchy and racial hygiene in the enlightenment. The recent history of empathy and forgiveness in South Africa can contribute hopeful responses to those who see the perennial cruelty of misoxeny as the essential disposition of our species.³⁷ That optimistic turn not only would involve moving beyond the Jewish question (racism) that, Adorno and Horkheimer had hoped, would provide a turning point of modern history, but might also encourage a broader enumeration of the pathologies of raciology and raciality that could in turn assist humanity in developing “from a set of opposing races to the species which, even as nature, is more than mere nature.”³⁸ That acquisition of species being would fulfill the incomplete project articulated in the twentieth century by antiracist thinkers who strove to comprehend and explain the inscription of genocidal rationality within the animating principles of civilization itself. The deadly results of that fatal arrangement are still being visited upon “all persecuted beings, be they animals or men.”³⁹

Taken together, these utopian aspirations can contribute to a distinctive figure of the human upon which the overdeveloped world might now

draw productively. Their confluence illuminates difficult issues pending far away from the half-reformed precincts of Apartheid, in the crisis of Europe's postcolonial multicultures and the ongoing battle against the racial ordering of the world evident on Mediterranean shores, where small boats piled high with African and lately Syrian and Palestinian humanity flounder not just on the rocky walls of fortress Europe but on the rising tides of misrecognition and denial that still infer the idea of racial hierarchy. They too might now be identifiable as components of the black Atlantic.

Campus antihumanism has nothing to offer those legions of the drowned and the saved, and as the Mediterranean becomes a grave just like the Atlantic before it, their suffering, rendered invisible or justified by racial attributes, presents any would-be custodians of the new humanism with an opportunity. Of course, it is absurd to imagine that, tugged hither and thither by warring Afropolitans and Afropessimists, the transnational formation of black Atlantic culture could be permanently sanctified by its historical roots in the suffering of slaves. It has a half-life, and its political energy is gradually diminishing under the pressures of globalization and neoliberalization, but as I hope I have suggested, its humanist residues can still be channeled and perhaps even revitalized by important developments emerging from the global South.

Fanon's example suggested that those critiques of race and racism can be combined productively with innovations drawn from post- and neocolonial places—particularly from South Africa, a polity where racial absolutes were never denied—as well as from other subnational locations where theoretical insight and *creative* reenchantments of the human were counterpointed by convivial interaction in everyday life, in real time. The humanities can no longer be content with complacent antihumanist reflexes born from old conflicts. As the ice melts, the waters rise, and the death-dealing drones move silently overhead, it is time for us to be far bolder than that.

NOTES

1. June Jordan, "Beyond Apocalypse Now," in *Civil Wars* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), 177.
2. June Jordan, "The Difficult Miracle of Phillis Wheatley," in *On Call* (Boston: South End Press, 1985).
3. June Jordan, "Report from the Bahamas," in *ibid.*, 47.
4. Jordan, *Civil Wars*, 177.

5. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 283.
6. Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—an Argument," *New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–37, <http://carmenkynard.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/No-Humans-Involved-An-Open-Letter-to-My-Colleagues-by-SYLVIA-WYNTER.pdf>; Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalistic Ideas in Europe* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974), pt. 2, 131–304.
7. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism* (London: Zed Press, 1983).
8. This phrase is drawn from W. E. B. Du Bois's poem "A Hymn to the Peoples," which he delivered at the opening of the First Universal Races Congress in London on July 26, 1911. See also Christopher Buck, "The Interracial 'Baha'i Movement' and the Black Intelligentsia: The Case of W. E. B. Du Bois," *Journal of Religious History* 36, no. 4 (2012).
9. Ralph J. Bunche et al., "The Passing of Alain Leroy Locke," *Phylon* 15, no. 3 (1954): 252.
10. Alain Locke, "Frontiers of Culture," in *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, edited by Leonard Harris (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 233.
11. Alain Locke, "Our Little Renaissance" (1927), in *The Works of Alain Locke*, edited by Charles Molesworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 211–13.
12. Alain Locke, "The Romantic Movement as Expressed by John Keats," in *ibid.*, 24.
13. Alain Locke, "Self-Criticism: The Third Dimension in Culture," in *ibid.*, 487–90. Originally published in *Phylon* 11, no. 4 (1950).
14. Alain Locke, "The Present and Future Position of the Negro in the American Social Order," *Journal of Negro Education* 8, no. 3 (1939): 521–29.
15. Locke, "Self-Criticism," 487–90.
16. Alain Locke, "Values and Imperatives" (1934), in *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, edited by Harris.
17. *Ibid.*, 34.
18. Nancy Fraser, "Another Pragmatism: Alain Locke, Critical 'Race' Theory, and the Politics of Culture," in *The Revival of Pragmatism: New Essays on Social Thought, Law, and Culture*, edited by Morris Dickstein (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 157–75.
19. Alain Locke, "Four Talks Redefining Democracy, Education, and World Citizenship," edited by Christopher Buck and Betty Fisher, *World Order* 38, no. 3 (2008): 36.
20. This is revealed by the lectures collected in Jeffrey C. Stewart, ed., *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations* (1915; reprint, Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1992).
21. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, "Alternatives to Revenge: Building a Vocabulary of Reconciliation through Political Pardon," in *The Provocations of Amnesty: Memory, Justice and Impunity*, edited by Charles Villa-Vicencio and Eric Dox-tader (Trenton, NJ: New World Press, 2003), 51–60.

22. Frantz Fanon, "Racism and Culture," in *Towards the African Revolution*, translated by Haakon Chevalier (London: Readers and Writers, 1980), 50.
23. The note from Fanon can be found in David Ray and Robert M. Farnsworth, *Richard Wright: Impressions and Perspectives* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973).
24. "Exploitation, tortures, raids, racism, collective liquidations. Rational oppression take turns at different levels in order literally to make of the native an object in the hands of the occupying nation.
 "This object man, without means of existing, without a *raison d'être*, is broken in the very depth of his substance. The desire to live, to continue, becomes more and more indecisive, more and more phantom-like. It is at this stage that the well-known guilt complex appears. In his first novels, Wright gives a very detailed description of it." Fanon, "Racism and Culture," 41.
25. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann (1952; reprint, London: Pluto Press, 1967), 218.
26. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Richard Philcox (1963; reprint, New York: Grove Books, 2004), 236.
27. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, "Radical Forgiveness: Transforming Traumatic Memory," in *Justice and Reconciliation in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, edited by François Du Bois and Antje Du Bois-Pedain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 38.
28. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, "Remorse, Forgiveness and Rehumanization: Stories from South Africa," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (2001): 7, 25, 42.
29. "I consider forgiveness on the public stage of the TRC—if and when it happens—to be a model of cultural memory which gestures citizens towards responsible engagement with former adversaries or enemies." Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, "Empathetic Repair after Mass Trauma: When Vengeance Is Arrested," *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, no. 3 (2008): 331.
30. This is Primo Levi's term.
31. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *Conditional Tense: Memory and Vocabulary after the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (London: Seagull Books, 2013), 209.
32. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, "Intersubjectivity and Embodiment: Exploring the Role of the Maternal in the Language of Forgiveness and Reconciliation," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 36, no. 3 (2011): 543.
33. Gobodo-Madikizela, "Intersubjectivity and Embodiment," 547.
34. Thaddeus Metz, "Ubuntu as a Moral Theory and Human Rights in South Africa," *African Human Rights Journal* 11, no. 2 (2011); Phil Clark, *The Gacaca Courts, Post-genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice without Lawyers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
35. Gobodo-Madikizela, "Alternatives to Revenge," 51–60.
36. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967), 157.
37. Cornelius Castoriadis, "On Racism," *Thesis* 11 32 (1992): 1–12. See also T. W. Adorno, "Education after Auschwitz," in *Critical Models: Interventions and*

Catchwords, translated by Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 191.

38. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated by John Cumming (London: Verso, 1979), 200.
39. *Ibid.*

