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## Anarcha’s Science of the Flesh: Towards an Afropessimist Theory of Science

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### Abstract

This essay re-examines the life of the three enslaved Black “women” Anarcha, Lucy and Betsy at the hands of the acclaimed “Father of Modern Gynecology” J. Marion Sims through the lens of Afropessimism as a means of developing a new analytics of seeing modern scientific development. Through a critical Black studies engagement with the work of Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, the paper sets out to explain and expand the concept of ‘primitive accreditation’ as it relates to the foundational narratives and performances of violence constitutive of the modern scientific conceptual economy. Through paradigmatic analysis, the essay aims to antagonize the ease in which anti-Blackness coheres bio-centric notions of gender, sexuality, and humanity as well as suggest that science studies as field has not yet wrestled with the gender/genre question of Blackness as a problem for the axioms of thought and being.

### Keywords

Afropessimism, science studies, gender, Blackness, anti-Blackness, Sylvia Wynter, Bruno Latour

### The ~~Life~~ of Anarcha: An Analytics of Seeing

We need to develop a different analytics of seeing—an alternative hermeneutic method for studying the political economy of spectacularized Black death.

—Tyrone Palmer, “Devouring the Flesh: Notes of Analytics of Seeing”

It was 1845 in Montgomery, Alabama. Three Black “women” were sent by their slave masters to see Dr. J Marion Sims to be treated for vesicovaginal fistulas. Their names were Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy. They are named property. Their stories come to the foreground of the historical record in contradistinction to the nine other objects-of-study that J. Marion Sims experimented on. Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy were all young enslaved Black “women” who suffered from vesicovaginal fistulas as a result of an attempted childbirth. Vesicovaginal fistulas comes about as a result of the infant’s head pressing against the pelvic floor, cutting off all circulation to the vaginal tissue. Vesicovaginal fistulas was a condition that women of all races and classes could suffer from. A condition that the logic of white feminism could attend to. Deborah McGregor writes, “Vesicovaginal fistulas joined with childbearing to create an image of ‘suffering womanhood.’ As a specifically defined condition, ‘vesicovaginal fistula’ gained meaning through the relations between male physicians and their women patients. These broad strokes create an image of a universal femininity, but in actuality the historical experience varied” (1998, 33). Black “women,” however, were excluded from “the image of universal femininity” (McGregor 1998, 33). The image of universal femininity, and the image of the universal itself has always refused and antagonized the gender of Blackness. It is for this reason that the life of Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy cannot be narrated into the context of this universal femininity without a structural adjustment to the abject condition of Blackness. For, as C. Riley Snorton states, “Though Sims would recursively euphemize the condition as an ‘accident,’ vesicovaginal fistula functioned as a sign of slavery, as signifier and signified in a chain of meaning, to give expression to what Saidiya Hartman (1997, 101) described as the ‘erasure or disavowal of sexual violence [that] engendered black femaleness as a condition of unredressed injury’” (2017, 19). Placing Blackness within the discourse of universal femininity is violent because it erases the fact of the Black captive whose “metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, their customs and the sources on which they were based” (Fanon 2008, 90) has been submerged under an ontological violence that separated the Black from the Human. Or put differently, Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy cannot be universally feminine nor universally humanized without denying the fact that their being, as a result of the paradigm shifting violence of the formation of the Transatlantic slave trade, is what Hortense Spillers calls a “being-for-the-captor” (1987, 67). For the condition of Blackness, as a result of that metaphysical holocaust where “Africans [went] into the ships and [came] out as Blacks” (Wilderson III 2010, 38) lends itself to fungibility, abjection, and objectification. As Frantz Fanon puts it, being, for the Black, is a being as “an object among other objects” (2008, 89).

The slave masters of Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy were cognizant of the role that their Black flesh played in entrenching a system of slavery, and this cognizance disposes any appeal to white moralism in the context of Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy’s appointment with J. Marion Sims. Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy were suffering from a condition that had implications on the entire system of slavery. For the biomedical condition of vesicovaginal fistulas was a nuisance for the condition of Blackness as property, and the law that structures that condition—*partus sequitur ventrem*—thus creating a white dilemma. For the Black “woman’s” body was more than the site of ontological incapacity, as Frank B. Wilderson III has described it, for it was also the site where ontological incapacity was supposed to be reproduced. Black feminist historianDorothy Roberts writes, “Female slaves were commercially valuable to their masters not only for their labor, but also for their ability to produce more slaves” (1999, 24). Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy’s vesicovaginal fistulas limited their masters’ power and dominion, and their surrogate bodies became less valuable to their masters insofar as their wombs were made to reproduce fungibility. Anarcha, for example, labored for three days without delivering her child. And after enduring the pain and suffering of labor pains for three days, Dr. Sims was finally called by her master to attempt to utilize forceps to allow the child to be born. It was not until five days after the child’s birth and death that Anarcha started to experience the symptoms of vesicovaginal fistulas. It was not until extensive tissue damage was done that Anarcha’s master decided to bring her to see Sims again. With the help of the development of a speculum that allowed him to, in his own words, see “everything, as no man had seen before” (McGregor 1998, 49), Marion Sims turned the bodies of Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy into objects of experimentation.

Sims opened the experiments to the purview of his medical colleagues. In the first few months of the experiments, Montgomery, Alabama physicians attended the operations. And although, this practice of public medical operations was common, the fact that Sims’s public operations were being practiced on “women” would had typically suggested procedures of privacy. In other words, the Victorian sexual ethics would not have permitted the “medical gaze” (Foucault 1973, 29) to access public experimentation on white women’s bodies; however, Sims was not experimenting on white women. As multiple medical experiments led to failure, and the shrieks of his patients continued, the physicians’ attendance decreased, eventually leaving Sims alone with his protégé, Dr. Nathan Bozeman, and his objects-of-experimentation. Sims’s autobiography includes him saying, “I thought she (Lucy) was going to die,” in reference to a near-death experience, descriptions of difficult surgeries due to patient suffering, and even voluntary resistance of the patient, all giving one reason to believe that the technicity of his experimentation was one of scientific horror (Ojanuga 1993, 29). For this reason, Harriet Washington’s account seems to speak closer to the indecipherable grammar of the Slave: “The surgeries themselves were terribly painful. Not only had Sims to close the unnatural openings in the ravaged vaginal tissues; he had to make the edges of these openings knit together. He opted to abrade, or ‘scarify’ the edges of the vaginal tears every time he attempted to repair an opening. He then closed them with sutures and saw them become infected and reopen, painfully, every time” (2006, 65). Eventually, Sims forced his objects to take turns restraining each other while the experiment continued for four anesthesia-less years. And whereas though Sims professed that the nature of the experimentation for vesicovaginal fistulas was “not painful enough to justify the trouble [of anesthetic] and risk attending the administration” (McGregor 1998, 50), an interrogation of the positionality that structures this discursive and material maneuver leads one to conclude that this notion was constructed through white fantasies of Black “women’s” resilience towards pain and an indifference to Black grammars of suffering. For whenever Sims attempted to assist white women who had vesicovaginal fistulas after the surgical “success” of his experiments on Black “women,” Sims utilized anesthetics. However, he never felt the need to utilize the same anesthetics for his Black patients. Instead, Sims would experiment on them while sober and awake, and then, once the failed experiment was over, he would give them opium. And, “as a consequence Lucy, Anarcha, and Betsy were undoubtedly habituated to opium, at least to some degree” (McGregor, 1998, 51). After four years and thirty surgeries, Sims eventually closed Anarcha’s fistula. In 1852 Sims wrote a paper about the vesicovaginal fistulas repair published in the *American Journal of the Medical Science*. This closing and this publication made Sims “The Father of Modern Gynecology” (Ojanuga 1993; McGregor 1998, 1990; Sartin 2004; Washington 2006).

The anti-story of Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy presents the project of modern science with a theodicy of its own. Using Afropessimist metatheory, as a paradigmatic analysis, I argue that the anti-story of Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy illustrates the ways in which scientific development requires a *primitive accreditation*—where the fungibility of the Black was/is used to produce and accumulate scientific knowledge credit. Blackness as the antithesis to the Human in modern onto-ethico-epistemology1 does not get access to a modern nor a postmodern position in reference to the world writ-large. The Black can only be anti-modern or nonmodern since Black being in modernity is (non)being, thingification, or, in the words of Anthony Paul Farley (2004), Blackness is “the apogee of the commodity.” Here, I place quotations around “women” when referring to the gender-specificity of the Black in order to leave open the possibility that the category itself might be questionable for reasons that will hopefully become clearer as the essay moves forward.

For now, it is important to note that the incredulity begins with Spiller’s pivotal essay, “Mama’s Baby, Papa Maybe: An American Grammar Book” and is extended by Snorton’s crucial work on Anarcha, Lucy, Betsy, and J. Marion Sims in *Black on Both Sides*. The concept of ungendering-as-Black-gendering is crucial to my exploration. I take as axiomatic what Snorton states about Black positionality—namely, that, “From this vantage point, one could consider the various ways ‘gender’ functions as an effect of plantation visuality, wherein captive flesh expressed an ungendered position that defines race as the sine qua non of sex” (Snorton 2017, 33). Such a formulation centers Black gender as ungendered while simultaneously destabilizing the distinctions between race, gender, and sexuality. That Blackness, and the study of Blackness, renders disciplinary boundaries unsustainable becomes unavoidably clear, if only one is willing to take seriously these claims from radical Black feminist and trans studies. In this essay, I hope to extend the suspicion that Black feminist and trans studies generates in disciplinary divisions in the study of Blackness to the field of science studies itself—not in hopes of inclusion, but in hopes of dissolving metaphysical illusions around the figure of the Black. I cross out ~~life~~ in reference to Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy for the same reasons that I use the terms “anti-story” to characterize the narrative shared here. I gather this phrase “anti-story” from a reading of Wilderson’s critique of the structure of narrative and the implications of this critique on the possibility of Black redress and redemption. Wilderson’s argument, simplifying to the extreme, situates Black narrative capacity within a kind of *in media res* that begins antagonistically against the normative structure of narrative which presupposes redress, redemption, coherence, and progress. The narratological precepts that ground the axioms of progress presuppose a previous moment of equilibrium for the class of subjects subjected to what Wilderson would classify as contingent violence. Wilderson writes in his “Social Death and Narrative Aporia in *12 Years a Slave*” (2015) about how humanist narratology flowing from equilibrium to disequilibrium to equilibrium restored functions as the hegemonic model of narration. This is a mode of narration that undergirds the narrative logics of humanist “scientific progress and development.” The scientific production of the scientific human—*homo scientificus* (Ferreira da Silva 2007)*—*then not only produced “Blackness [as] coterminous with Slaveness” (Wilderson III 2015, 139), it continues to unfold its narratological precepts of progress only by virtue of the foreclosure of Black narration, or the anti-story of Black life—“a flat line that moves from disequilibrium to a moment in the narrative of faux-equilibrium, to disequilibrium restored and/or rearticulated” (139).

Science to the Slave/the Black, who is the object-used-for-investigation, is an apparatus that exploits and expropriates. Scientific knowledge accumulates via the expropriation and exploitation of Black flesh. This is not a historical analysis, but a paradigmatic analysis in that—even if it is the case that Black flesh is not still being experimented on (which it is not)—Black death and mutilation kick-started the narrative of modern scientific progress, and as far as it continues to “progress” it continues upon the ground of dead and dying Black flesh. Wilderson, writing in what is his most significant work *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* states, “No Slave, no World” (2010, 11). This paper will extend that powerful aphorism to the domain of science itself. In other words, *no Slave, no Science*. Science studies has left this issue unattended to as the grammar of this suffering is left in fleshly hieroglyphics.2 Only a new analytics of seeing, a new way of looking, could allow one to see the primitive accreditation at the heart of Western scientific development. This notion of “primitive accreditation” is the scientific and conceptual translation to the Marxist notion of primitive accumulation. Whereas primitive accumulation in Marxist political economy seeks to provide explanatory power for the originating violence responsible for the circulation of capital under capitalism, what primitive accreditation seeks to describe is the paradigm-shaping violence that inaugurates the scientific conceptual economy as it gets laid out and described by Steve Woolgar and Bruno Latour in their classic text of science, technology, and society studies, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts.*

In what follows, I read Latour and Woolgar’s contribution to science, technology and society studies in and through the work of Hortense Spillers, Sylvia Wynter, Saidiya Hartman, Frank Wilderson, and Calvin Warren to argue that anti-Black violence is not a peripheral component to the accumulation of gynecological knowledge; rather, it is central to the primitive accreditation of scientific knowledge in general, with gynecological knowledge providing a paradigmatic account to the indispensable fact of anti-Blackness to the conceptual economy of modern science. Gynecological development requires primitive accreditation or, the originary site for the cycle of scientific credit—where the fungibility of the Black was used to produce and accumulate knowledge credit, a possibility made possible only via the prospect and specter of Black death and anti-Black violence. Thus if the Western medico-scientific community is a departmental fixture of institutionalized anti-Blackness, an institution solidified and concocted through the birth of modernity and the onto-ethico-epistemic curation of humanism, then, like Fanon, we thinkers of a radical Black studies, must “not remain silent about certain things which…produce consequences that extend into the domains of other sciences” (Fanon 2008, 31). Here, we look to retell the story of gynecological science on the foundations of the anti-narrative of Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy in order to offer an Afropessimist reading of scientific development and knowledge accumulation at the heart of one of the most controversial medico-scientific knowledge developments. Anti-Black violence produces the consequence that conditions the possibility of modern gynecology. And if, “every experience, especially if it turns out to be sterile, has to become a component of reality and thus play a part in the restructuring of reality” (Fanon 2008, 31), then the anti-story of Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy has to be retold. For, “we need a new language of abstraction to explain this horror” (Wilderson III 2010, 55), a scientific, philosophical, and ontological horror that renders the grammars of Black suffering unspeakable.

### A Theodicy of Science: Science of the Flesh and Primitive Accreditation

Latour and Woolgar write in *Laboratory Life*, an anthropological account of scientific activity, that “for our laboratory scientist, credit had a much wider sense than simple reference to reward. In particular, their use of credit suggest an integrated economic model of the production of facts” (2013, 194). For Latour and Woolgar, the notion of credit permeates the scientific field of study as means of determining one’s place within the scientific community and the nature of fact creation itself. The importance of Latour and Woolgar’s investigation into credit is the distinction they draw between credit as reward and credit as credibility. Whereas the former “refers to the sharing of rewards and awards which symbolize peers’ of a past scientific achievement,” the latter, “concerns scientists’ abilities to actually do science” (198). This is important because “the notion of credibility can thus apply both to the very substance of scientific production (facts) and to the influence of external factors, such as money and institutions. The notion of credibility allows the sociologist to relate external factors to internal factors and vice versa. The same notion of credibility can be applied to scientists’ investment strategies, to epistemological theories, to the scientific reward system, and to scientific education” (198). In other words, Latour and Woolgar’s notion of credibility encompasses the entire scientific field itself in order to organize the ways in which facts are produced and credit is obtained according to a model similar to a market-based economy.

Latour and Woolgar’s account is convincing and important, yet there is a major absence, if one attempts to rely solely on this account. The individualized application of the scientific cycles of credibility allows the question of credible origins to go unasked. Individualized discussions of cycles of credit either lead us away from conceptions of anti-Black violence completely, by figuring the link between paradigm, credit, and credibility as unimportant elements of the discussion, or they lead us towards Western progress narratives emerging in accordance to a presupposed linearity. If Latour and Woolgar’s model of credibility is situated into an unflinching paradigmatic analysis, then one must ask, How did the scientist get locked into this cycle of credibility, this market-based model of supply and demand, of information and fact production? Where did the meta-epistemology for investment strategies, epistemological theories, scientific reward systems, and a specific form of scientific education come from? Put differently, what are the conditions of possibility for the scientist and scientific-practice as such?

Sylvia Wynter, in her essay “On the Coloniality of Being,” provides a dynamic account of the creation of the anti-Black world. Utilizing both a Foucauldian method of genealogical analysis alongside the Fanonian conception of the Manichean epistemology that has haunted the West, Wynter describes the way the Western world came into being. Starting from what she calls the “Spirit/Flesh” dichotomy that split the World into two irreconcilable zones of the pure and the impure during the medieval Scholastic worldview, she builds upon Jacques LeGoff’s analysis of the Scholastic paradigm to discuss how this theocentric “regime of truth” (Wynter 2003, 330) fostered by the Judeo-Christian Man came to be overrepresented as synonymous with the Human itself. In other words, Wynter describes the way that in medieval times the Human *proper* became equal to the spiritual Man, the theocentric Man, or the True Christian Self personified in exemplar fashion through the persons in the celibate Catholic clergy in contradistinction to those who did not accept or see themselves as a part of the True Christian Self (like the lay Intelligentsia). The regime of truth fostered by the medieval Scholastic clergy did not simply create socially determined epistemologies in regards to simply what one is supposed to know and what it means to know, but it also created socially determined ontologies in regards to who is Human and where the Human is located. All of which required an ethics of knowing (an understanding of the right way to be a knower) and a knowing of being (an understanding that the knower knows the Real). In other words, this epistemology was inextricably linked to both an ethics and an ontology. The space of Spirit was also the space of ontology, of being; the space of Flesh was also the space of non-ontology, of non-being. The consequent mapping of the world into inhabitable versus uninhabitable as a means of expanding the epistemic narrativization of Man as the True Christian Self constitutes the epistemology of theocentricity as a priori an onto-ethico-epistemology.

Wynter goes on to explain how the medieval “regime of truth” came to a Janus-faced end through three major events that marked a paradigmatic rupture and a resulting epistemic shift away from the theocentric Man towards what she calls Man1, or the ratiocentric Man. These events were the voyages of the Portuguese and Christopher Columbus, the creation of the modern state, and the Copernican Revolution. For Wynter, these events opened the possibility for new ways of knowing the World itself through inaugurating a rupture in the epistemology of the theocentric framework that said, (1) the oceans were not navigable; (2) the king had divine right to govern; (3) the Earth stood perfectly still. Wynter illustrates how these ruptures allowed for the rise of European rationalism/Enlightenment, which fostered the Western shift away from an overrepresentation of Man as theocentric to an overrepresentation of Man as ratiocentric. The West’s inability to see its own rationalism as a form of ethno-knowledge codified a new onto-ethico-epistemic account that denied the existence, or the ontology of Natives and Blacks due to their inability to reproduce Western ethno-rationalism, and their existence on regions of Earth without Western ways of being/knowing. Wynter explains then how the epistemic shift—the Enlightenment, the rise of rationalism, or the rise of Man1—opened a world of possibility for the West when she writes, “It is, therefore, the very humanist strategy of returning to the pagan thought of Greece and Rome for arguments to legitimate the state’s rise to hegemony, outside the limits of the temporal sovereignty claimed by the papacy, that now provides a model for the invention of a by-nature difference between ‘natural masters’ and ‘natural slaves,’ one able to replace the Christian/Enemies-of-Christ legitimating difference” (2003, 297). Indeed, it was Man1, the Rational Man, that socially instituted as natural the Negro as an irrational body void of being, or as systematically placed at the bottommost regions of the new onto-ethico-epistemic hierarchy of Being. It is this framework that provides the legitimating apparatus for the gratuitous exploitation of Black flesh exemplified exorbitantly in the 1662 statute of Virginia, which stated, “Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman shall be slave or free, Be it therefore enacted and declared by this present grand assembly, that all children borne in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother—*Partus Sequitur Ventrem*. And that if any Christian shall commit fornication with a negro man or woman, hee or shee soe offending shall pay double the fines imposed by the former act.” (Hening 1827) Western Enlightenment’s philosophical rationalism does not emerge without the ontological implication of exclusion from the rational that offered the Slave’s body up to the altar of the rational (the Law) as sacrifice for Western expansion and imperialism when the theological altar was no longer viable. This ontological exclusion annexes Black sexuality to natal alienation and the law to an anti-Black sexual logic of enslaveability. Jennifer Morgan describes it thusly: “Conversations about interracial sex and the visibility of racial inheritance in children became an entry point for the articulation of those particularities. This served to situate black women and men’s most intimate bodily practices as unprotected by domestic space and already occurring in public—the leap from there to the slave market was thus relatively short” (2018, 13).

This shift will set the foundation for the World as we know it. It is at this point that the optics of Western empiricism began to reproduce itself as the universal lens of objectivity. It is at this point that the problem of the color line begins to crystallize. It is at this point that Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy’s destiny could be said to be one which was determined from the outset. As Morgan puts it, “By tethering reproduction to enslavement, and thus enslaveability, the partus act fore-closed the possibility that kinship might displace capital...The law locked enslaved women into a productive relationship whereby every-thing that a body could do was harnessed to the capital accumulation of another” (17). In the case of Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy, their wombs were not harnessed for simply the capital accumulation of another; rather, they were harnessed for the scientific accumulation of scientific accreditation. The fungibility of Blackness and the malleability of anti-Blackness permutates the relation of *partus sequitur ventrem* betwixt the rationalist economics of racial capitalist accumulation and the libidinal economics of sexualized anti-Blackness through the patriarchal conceptual economy of Western scientific humanism. It is only in thinking the three together that we began to see how the rationalist structure of Man1 gave way to a biocentric structure of Man2 with Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy coming to be structurally positioned at the inside-outside of civil society.

Following in the direction of Wynter then, what we are seeking to expand on here is not only what Alys Weinbaum called the “slave episteme” in her work *The Afterlife of Reproductive Slavery* (2019, 2)*,* but additionally, the ethics and ontology of humanness necessary to reproducing the onto-ethico-epistemology of humanism as well as the anti-Black biocentric discourses of sex/gender that ground them. In this regard, I differ from the centricity placed on *bios* in Weinbaum’s account of Blackness, gender, and (re)production in order to explicitly interrogate the sexuating violence of a biocentric semiotics of the body. In the present issue, Weinbaum refers to her articulation of the *slave episteme* as, “the thought system, brewed up and distilled over the course of four centuries, that initially enabled and continues to enable the racialization of (re)production” (Weinbaum 2022, 4). My own essay is far more interested in the slave episteme’s (re)production of Black sexuation as a response to metaphysical (sexual) violence. Weinbaum states that her use of “(re)production thus is certainly not to minimize the sexual violence experienced by the enslaved, both women and men, but rather to specify the manner in which (re)productive extraction and dispossession in slavery included sexual extraction and dispossession even as the encompassing term—(re)production—does not expressly underscore the specific role of procreative sex in the maintenance of the slave economy” (2022, 13). Yet it is precisely this specification of biological (re)production and procreative sex—without a will to hone in on the consequences of the metaphysical violence within the procedural production of the slave episteme —that elides the possibility of a meta-critique of the biocentric logic, which, from the vantage point of enslavers, *sublates* the absence of Black being, actively obscuring this absence, in order to preserve a bio-centric definition of “womanhood” without ever needing to account for the death sentence of Blackness, and the initiatory and ongoing absence of Black being from the onto-ethico-epistemology of Human *being*. Weinbaum thus follows in a bio-humanist tradition of Black feminist thought that cojoins the vagina, birth, (re)production, and womanhood together in a semiotic chain in order to oppose phallocentricity—not biocentricity. From the vantage point of the enslaved—under, with, and against a slave episteme —this offers the violent modalities of biocentrism as the only discourse of “women” possible.3 In this case, a woman is defined in accordance to a bios-logic that states, “woman is the one who gives birth and (re)production.” Wynter critiques this form of biocentric thinking as a biological idealism stemming from “a new order of discourse based on an ontologized ‘natural law,’ and its related secularizing variants/models of human being” (1987, 211). Put differently, bio-humanist Black feminist accounts of the slave episteme often accept the implicit morphology of the very episteme in question without interrogating the violence that produces Black non-being as a sexual deviation from Human *being* in general. The question of Black sexuation goes unthought as if the Black had always already been determined in and through a biosemiotics of the body. Wynter opens a new way of thinking Blackness as a problem of and for the ontology of sexual difference itself. An unwillingness to repudiate the universalization of the genre of the Human is linked to a regurgitation of the biocentric categories of gender and sexuality which not only hurt our analysis of gender (by rendering the conceptual models of sex/gender birthed under the overdetermined Western physiognomic models of the Human *universal*) but also through decoupling the violent connections between bio-humanist sexuation, anti-Black slavery and metaphysical violence. Thus, if we assert that there is no universal instantiation of gender, it is precisely because Wynter (and Spillers) both are at pains to critique the ways in which the onto-ethico-epistemological discourse of Human sexuality—as given from the Western regime of truth— is inconceivable as currently conceived without the monstrous intimacies of sexual violence, anti-Black slavery, and the event of miscegenation that not only classified the Black as a non-Human sexual object (providing the limits of Humanity itself) but also gifted the Black with gender—when and if—it was culturally and politically relevant to be Humanly legible. That the Human becomes a double-bind for the Black never appears in these accounts that might seek to diminish the radicality of Wynter’s call for a trans\*valuation of the evaluation of sex and gender as we know it. Yet to understand the call for a critique of gender from the demonic ground of Black women’s absence in the critical discourse of Humanity, is to understand both the absence of gender and the absence of Humanity as a matter of Black non-being in an anti-Black world ( Wynter 1990, 1994; Spillers et al. 2007; Sexton 2008; Bey 2017; Wilderson III 2017; Parker 2018).

Charles Darwin’s nineteenth-century redescription of the Human in purely secular and bioevolutionary terms redirected the adaptive truth-for terms of the ratiocentric Man1 into the adaptive truth-for terms of the biocentric Man2. Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* reconstituted Man in terms of a bio-ontological hierarchy based on a “Chain of Being” that read the Black as “the missing link position” (Wynter 2003, 266). This transition took the seen-as-rational external differences of early modern science and internalized them into laws of nature. The seen-as-rational external differences under the onto-ethico-epistemology of Man1 provided the foundation for “rational” racial schematization and categorization, but the seen-as-natural onto-ethico-epistemology of Man2 internalized those differences as racially coded into a classified logic of a bio-centric make-up of the Human. The effect of the production of the racial distinction for Man1 as for Man2 was and continues to be the same. As Wynter puts it, “’Race’ was therefore to be, in effect, the nonsupernatural but no less extrahuman ground (in the reoccupied place of the traditional ancestors/gods, God, ground) of the answer that the secularizing West would now give to the Heideggerian question as to the who, and the what we are” (2003, 264). Race *determined* who was Human and who was not. Race *determines* who is Human and who is not. The sociogenic production of Man2 provided the basis for a biocentric descriptive statement of the Human and a metaphysical basis for a political ontology of Life and Death. The Manichean distinction of Rational/Irrational and Selected/Dysselected solidifies the sociogenic constitution of anti-Blackness into a legitimation apparatus. Each radical demarcation is structured by ontological zones of difference that structure and name those worthy of Life, and those born for Death. In ratiocentricism, the Black is the unbridgeable gap between reason and unreason; in biocentricism, the Black is the unbridgeable gap between Humans selected for life and non-Humans selected for extinction. Put differently, what the history of political ontology reveals is that the Man/Negro Manichaeism is a metaphysical injunction that will continue as long as the Human does for “if I were not here, I would have to be invented” (Spillers 1987, 65) perhaps with a different narrative regime, but always as an ontological problem for the meaning of being Human. Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy, then, are not quite simply implements through which Sims produces invention; they are equally inventions through which Humanity produces itself.

Wynter’s argument is that this recent invention of Man1 and Man2 are materially discursive productions that have produced themselves atop of and in contradistinction to the Black, a materially discursive production that was forged in conjunction with gratuitous material violence. The World as we know it is the World of Man2—the biocentric Man, and the result of previous ruptures in the Western overrepresentation of Man as the Human itself. The theoretical output of Man2’s world (the fact of Blackness and anti-Blackness) is marked onto our corporeal topographies (the Black flesh as signifying not-as-Human, as marked for death), our epistemic matters (the over-representation of the White Body as the body from which theory is produced and constructed) and our flesh-marked geographies (the ghettos of the Black, the reservations of the Indigenous, and the theoretical shaping of the Third/Fourth World). And as Wynter succinctly puts it, “We are, as intellectuals, the agents of its formal elaboration” (2003, 307). Put differently, *there is no outside of anti-Blackness*, insofar as Man2 and the world that Man2 offers and generates is a socially instituted mode of being and knowing that is *ipso facto* anti-Black; and we, who speak within that discourse, will always speak in a rhetorical register conditioned by that anti-Blackness. Wynter’s genealogy of the anti-Black World and its onto-ethico-epistemic dimensions showcases a Western science that never succeeded in imposing the “Two Cultures” (Latour 2012) but only succeeded in narrating itself as having two juxtaposed cultures—that of the natural and that of the narrative. Western science has always required an anti-Black narrative. Therefore, cycles of credibility—looked at paradigmatically—remind us that science, like the world writ-large, is playing itself out in accordance to a temporal stillness. Where things change, but things stay the same. Where things differ, but things remain substantively no different. Where paradigms shift, yet the ripples of paradigms of the past remain etched into the framework of future paradigms—never to be forgotten. Theorizing paradigmatically then allows us to reposition Latour and Woolgar’s thought within the context of these considerations. The cycle of credit starts paradigmatically with the onto-ethico-epistemic curation of Man1 and Man2; however, within the context of science, we can look at the ~~life~~ of Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy as an illustration of the way in which this cycle required a kick-start. If modern science operates within an economy of credit, then that economy of credit could be said to have been “kick-started by the rape of the African continent” (Wilderson III 2003, 229).

Taken as a paradigmatic analysis rather than a historiographic critique, what Wynter details is a repetition principle of anti-Blackness from one conception of being Human as Man to another. But what makes Wynter’s analysis so central for our Afropessimist reading is that her paradigmatic analysis of the anti-Black world attends to the differences that mark the onto-ethico-epistemic regime of truth while simultaneously locating its anti-Black core. For though *times have changed*, what has remained the same is that the world still auto-institutes itself, its reproductive logics, its “gestational language” (Hartman 2016, 166) in accordance to a logic that “‘in effect,’ results in those who come to claim ‘normal’ human status doing so ‘by distancing themselves from the group that is still made to occupy the nadir, ‘nigger’ rung of being human within the terms of our present ethnoclass” (Wynter 2003, 261). This anti/ante-original event, this replayed and reverbed occasion of natal alienation, this born-reborn-generated-regenerated science, is the onto-ethico-epistemic scene of what we shall call “primitive accreditation.” As Marx writes,

This primitive accumulation plays in Political Economy about the same part as original sin in theology. Adam bit the apple, and thereupon sin fell on the human race. Its origin is supposed to be explained when it is told as an anecdote of the past. In times long gone by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living. The legend of theological original sin tells us certainly how man came to be condemned to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow; but the history of economic original sin reveals to us that there are people to whom this is by no means essential….Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. (2013, 501)

Primitive accreditation functions similarly for gynecology. The original sin of gynecology is that Black bodies as objects of experimentation, as cadavers for dissection, as ontologically dead beings are the originary site for the cycle of scientific credit. The history of scientific original sin is the stealing, expropriating, opening, speculating-upon and through, theorizing-upon and through, experimenting on-and-through the bio(necro)politically controlled Black flesh. J. Marion Sims accumulates knowledge capital, knowledge “credit” through the violence he places upon the Black “woman” in his experiments, and the structural project of modern gynecology begins after the fact. Thus it came to pass that Man —embodied structurally in the life of Marion Sims —accumulated knowledge, and the Black—embodied structurally in the ~~life~~ of Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy—was subjected to the objectification of the flesh. The theodicy of science lies in what occurs to the Black body dominated into flesh. The violence of Western science in theory and performance churned the Black body into fungible flesh, and the economy of science that emerged afterward has yet to begin to address or redress the violence. The violence that Sims places on the body of Anarcha is the same violence that constructs the World. The only difference is that Sims utilized his place in that World to author the violence in the field of gynecological science.

Therefore, the two conditions that plague Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy, that of vesicovaginal fistulas and that of anti-Blackness, exist at the nexus point of birth, sexuation, and metaphysics. Known in the law as *partus sequitur ventrem*, or “that which is brought forth follows the womb,” Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy inherit the positionality of non-ontology, of death and abjection, at the moment of birth, and as Black “women” inherit the cultural and political responsibility to reproduce non-ontology, death, and abjection. As Spillers writes, “First of all, their New-World, diasporic plight marked a theft of the body—a willful and violent (and unimaginable from this distance) severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire. Under these conditions, we lose at least gender difference in the outcome, and the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific” (1987, 67). The condition of Blackness, then, does not supersede the condition of womanhood for Black women, but it paints over the image of “suffering womanhood” due to the question mark that is always already painted over every Black attempt to be understood as “woman” in the anti-Black world. Put plainly, the Black “woman” who suffers from the condition of vesical-vaginal fistulas suffers, but the anti-Black world does not allow her to access “suffering womanhood” since her “womanness” is always pushed outside the category of the Woman. This severing of sexual difference is the result of Black life in the New World. It is a severing that disconnects the Black from the Human community that non-Black persons have authored, sustained, regulated, and required. It is a severing that makes Black flesh ontologically commodified and fungible in ways inaccessible to the coherence of the Human subject. Hartman writes, “Put differently, the fungibility of the commodity makes the captive body an abstract and empty vessel vulnerable to the projection of others’ feelings, ideas, desires, and values; and, as property, the dispossessed body of the enslaved is the surrogate for the master’s body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and dominion” (1997, 21). This “dispossessed body of the enslaved” is identified in the work of Spillers as being “embedded in bizarre axiological ground” (1987, 65).

The Black has been severed from sexual difference, but this severing initiates a body politic of Human community that determines Blackness as Slaveness or, in Spiller’s words, as “signifying property plus.” This signification, embedded as it is in bizarre axiomatics, overdetermines the nominative properties (“Black women”) with “mythical prepossession” such that “there is no easy way for the agents buried beneath them to come clean” (Spillers 1987, 65). Thus, Spillers begins her “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe” by lingering in the void of Black gender, not as a critique of Black feminism or as a gesture away from the centrality of the question of gender for the question of Blackness, but rather to render the gender question of Blackness—a problem for the axioms of thought and being. By staying with the flesh as a primary narrative, before the structural adjustment required by the body politic as a means of procuring or extracting liberties from within a neoliberal monohumanist civil society, Spillers resists the assumptive logics that undergird the ongoing biocentric insistence of what constitutes even the difference between racial difference, sexual difference, and gender difference itself. Or rather, before intersectionality, Spillers raises the question of the incapacity to ontological resist the Humanist metaphysical violence which categorizes the Slave as Black and materially semiotically gendered/sexed them as both ungendered flesh and boundary-setting body-being. It is to this entrenchment, and against this re-entrenchment that this essay labors. For what I am after is the ways in which the questions, answers, and experiments of Human sexuation function as an antagonistic feature of the domination of Black flesh not only counterproductively enabling access to the sociogenic principles of life and the biocentric homogenizations of sex/gender but more specifically, ontologizing death onto the Slave as a matter of being without being. To start here is to start at the excess or recesses of the body itself. Spillers writes,

I would make a distinction in this case between "body" and "flesh" and impose that distinction as the central one between captive and liberated subject-positions. In that sense, before the "body" there is the "flesh," that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography. Even though the European hegemonies stole bodies—some of them female—out of West African communities in concert with the African "middleman," we regard this human and social irreparability as high crimes against the flesh, as the person of African females and African males registered the wounding. If we think of the "flesh" as a primary narrative, then we mean its seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship's hole, fallen, or "escaped" overboard. (1987, 67)

This “zero degree of social conceptualization” is the violence of metaphysics. Spillers speaks to a “primary narrative” that can hardly be narrated, which narrates itself as “nothingness,” as a way to critique the metaphysics of the Human itself. Thus, a conception of the “hieroglyphics of the flesh” is born out of attending to this metaphysical violence. The “seared, divided, ripped-apartness” is a violence that creates what Spillers describes as undecipherable suffering, undecipherable pain. It is this undecipherability that has continued to leave Blackness unthought by Western science studies. “Violence without end, violence without reprieve, violence constitutive of a metaphysical world” (Warren 2016, 36) is what turns bodies into flesh, and European hegemony continues to cycle its conceptual economy on and off the sheered flesh of the Black.

Written within Humanist onto-ethico-epistemological accounts of the body and its discourse is the givenness of gender and Blackness itself that forecloses interrogations around the disciplinary and disciplining demarcations structuring the critique of race and the critique of gender and sexuality as if both did not cohere out of the abyss of anti-Black violence. Afropessimism begins at Spillers’s provocative essay “Mama’s Baby, Papa Maybe” and the work of Fanon in order to think the Human/Black antagonism at its metaphysical nexus. For “this body, at least from the point of view of the captive community, focuses a private and particular space, at which point of convergence biological, sexual, social, cultural, linguistic, ritualistic and psychological fortunes join” (Spillers 1987, 67). Spillers rejects anything that might foreclose the possibility of seeing the indispensable connections between an anti-Black world and the sex/gender categories that are symbiotically produced within its onto-ethico-epistemological horizon. The negation of Black gender, the vacuum of its symbolic integrity in Black, is the bizarre axiomatics through which the Human reproduces itself as Human *proper*. Spillers characterizes this situation as one in which Black flesh becomes a “living laboratory.” She states, “This profitable ‘atomizing’ of the captive body provides another angle on the divided flesh: we lose any hint of a dimension of ethics, of relatedness between human personality and its anatomical features, between human personality and cultural institutions. To that extent, the procedures adopted for the captive flesh demarcate a total objectification, as the entire captive community becomes a living laboratory” (1987, 68). To be Human is to possess a presence, a presence of gender and being that anatomically and physiologically cohere to an anti-Black dimorphic cis-normative *bios*-logic. The Black is an antithesis to the Human community insofar as this corporeal symbolism of the Human authorizes its coherence in antagonism to the Black. Yet it is the ontology of being, the metaphysics of Humanism itself, which renders—in the name of the sciences and humanities—its atomized theory of sex/gender to be the universal procedure for accounting for Human difference in general. Thus, in Patrice Douglass’s words, “The figuration of black gender ruptures the axis of critical theory, which assumes political prescriptions as the logical departure from the descriptive gesture to think violence. Simply stated, black gender disallows political orientation to unthink the stasis of its conditions of violence, whether the offered prescription is ‘real’ or ‘imagined.’ Violence is locked in the celebration and the disavowal, the embrace and repulsion of blackness as genre, which is exclusive to logics of gendering but presents a profound nexus there” (2016, 22). It is this very nexus, precisely at the moment where one might rush to identify the irreducibly “woman” character of a specific form of gendered anti-Black violence or the irreducibly non-gendered character of a specific form of anti-Black violence, that Spillers’s description of the appearance of Black gender as an outcome of “a territory of cultural and political maneuver” becomes a most necessary reminder. By taking Blackness as a point of departure into thinking the question of gender, science, and beyond, towards the question of the genre of the Human itself, rather than seeing in Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy’s suffering, an instance of possession, the sole instance of reproductive violence inaugurating a perverse symbolic integrity to a claim of possessing gender, Spillers’s analysis centers ungendering as a primary narrative of violence to locate consequent elaborations of gender as forms of violence that consequently gift gender as additional violence. Thus, the “doubled” nature of gendered violence is in the giving of gender itself. The gift of gender as the gift of death redoubled as a violent entryway into *being* Human.

Black gender then is perversely anti-Oedipal. Or rather, it stems not from the biosemiotics of “genitalia” as much as it does from the prelogical violence of slavery. One is ungendered by violence in-the-first-instance on account of an axiological structure, a paradigm that names Black flesh as non-being, antagonistic to the corporeal integrity of the category of being (Human) itself. And then, (re)gendered by violence in the second instance as a means of making oneself symbolically coherent to bio-Humanist demands. Starting with this ontological terror requires one to see Blackness in-the-first-instance as ungendering from the genre of the Human, and (re)gendering as will to know and disavowal. What conditioned the possibility that would enable Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsy to become living laboratories for the cultural and political imaginaries of the Human’s most precious practice, namely, science? Indeed, it is a metaphysical procedure, a metaphysical violence, a gratuitous violence that names its object, which authors its object as an object. Such a statement need not dismiss the specificities of Black life; rather, by attending to the paradigmatic violence that “precedes and exceeds Blacks” (Wilderson III 2010, 76) we refuse the ease in which a disavow of ontological violence begets the hieroglyphics of the flesh. In other words, in thinking Blackness as Nothingness from within the ontological horizon of Humanism, as the Afropessimist assert, we attend to the dead and dying secrets of primitive accreditation.

Uncovering the sociogenic principles of civil society are crucial in elucidating the ways in which paradigmatic patterns become engrained (ontologically) into the nature of one’s answer to the question of “What is it like to be me?” and, the ways in which socio-historical patterns began to affect the sociogenic expression of underlying physical processes. Whereas though, the former raises questions around the historical and its relationship (if any) to the ontological, the latter raises questions about the representational saliency of the conceptual coherence of anything philosophically understandable as the “nature/culture” divide. Frantz Fanon’s insight regarding the *besidedness* of the phylogenic, ontogenic, and sociogenic becomes of wise intellectual use for a series of intraconnected questions that have previously been read as separate and unequal. Fanon and the Afropessimist offer a radical psychoanalytic intervention that looks towards the genome of society, or better yet, the sociogenic principles of our society itself. This deconstruction of the gaps between cortico-visceral enfleshment, psychic investment, and socially cohered onto-ethico-epistemology makes Fanon’s reading of the unconscious mind a reading that disavows any priority given to a priori unconscious drives and/or a priori biological determinations. Fanon and the Afropessimist offer a theory that sits these issues together such that any disciplinary apparatus that wishes to cohere itself upon naturalized divisions of naturalized disciplines in accordance to a demarcated logic of Bios/Nature on one side and Logos/Word on the other are themselves incoherent. For, as Wynter puts it, “they don’t want to go to the fundamental issue. Once he has said ontogeny-and-sociogeny, every discipline you’re practicing ceases to exist” (Thomas and Wynter 2006, 3).

### The Bizarre Axiological Ground of Afropessimism

This work has attempted to produce a paradigmatic analysis of what operates as the “scientific unconscious” (Warren 2018, 115) of *homo scientificus*. Calvin Warren writes in *Ontological Terror* that “black bodies become living laboratories because these bodies hold the secret of science—what it wishes to know and what it most wishes not to know. This play between knowing and not knowing, desiring and detesting, hating and admiring would seem to land us in Lacanian territory, something like a scientific unconscious” (115). Anti-Blackness as “an unconscious cultural structure, a grammar, a *weltanschauung*, a metaphysics that lives on well after, and despite, the destruction of metaphysics” (Sexton 2019, 102) not only diminishes Black thought, rendering Black speech fungible and commodifiable, but it also directs us toward which ideas are credible as “fact” and which Black ideas are not through the symbolic exchange of value that locates proximity to non-Blackness as proximity to the highest levels of conceptual prowess, power, and prestige. This conceptual economy plays itself out inside and outside the university through the channels of publication, methods of evaluation, disciplinary boundaries, investitures of credibility, and more. Latour and Woolgar write, “In this respect, scientists’ behavior is remarkably similar to that of an investor of capital. An accumulation of credibility is prerequisite to investment. The greater this stockpile, the more able the investor to reap substantial returns and thus add further to his growing capital” (2013, 195). By analyzing the repressed contents of the Western scientific narrative, we neither overcome nor supersede the metaphysical violence of *homo scientificus’* Manichean species division—instead, we open demonic ground for an unspeakable ethics and raise the stakes of the grammar of antagonism to the highest levels of abstraction. The interdisciplinary methods of inquiry in the field of science studies have attracted many progressive, leftist or left-leaning academics; however, the *kritik* of the critical field has rarely, if ever, reached beyond the onto-ethico-epistemology of the scientist (whether that be the theoretician or the experimentalist); or, in the words of Wynter, the field of science studies has yet to go “beyond the word of Man” (1989, 645). In fact, it is often considered a more comprehensive and convincing account of the social study of science if the scientists are convinced that science studies scholars have come to conclusions about the nature of scientific inquiry in agreement with the scientific community itself. Thus, this is a case of the Human in conversation with the Human. The case of a fashioned Human subjectivity that transforms intellectual dissent into intra-dialogic consensus, an intra-dialogic conversation that could be said to have reached its apex with the science wars of the 1990s. These remarks make what Wilderson says about Humanist political disagreement analogous to the Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial social theorist of science and the community of scientist they set out to critique. In Wilderson’s words, “Political agreement is secondary to species consolidation; in fact, we could say that the political disagreement might consolidate the Human species more effectively than political agreement” (2014, 16). The consolidation of the species as “Human” is never disavowed by way of the socio-philosophical investigations of the social theorist of science, but it is upheld, sustained, and perpetuated. These philosophers and sociologist of science studies, and the scientist in and of the field of science may disagree, but the Hegelian dialectic in which they participate still includes a recognition that is never granted to the Black. The socio-philosophical study of science has always positioned Black flesh as either absent or peripheral to its questions of demarcation, development, and metaphysics. Even the interventions made by feminist philosophers of science who insist on the significance of feminist standpoint epistemology and the importance of this epistemology for the proper acquisition of “strong objectivity” (Harding 1995) leave the Slave at the position of the unthought of science studies. But the specter of the Slave, the image of the Slave’s cadaver—its open, dissected, and fungible body—continues to haunt the history of science.

With an Afropessimist staging of these problematics, what occurs is paralysis—a break in the action of consensus and conflict, and an utterance of refusal and antagonism that requires an anti-disciplinary consideration. The metaphysical holocaust of the slave trade and the anti-Black world it gave birth too is a scene of negative autopoiesis anchored by an anti-Black sociogenic principle built on bizarre axiological ground. Such a ground returns us to the slipperiness of the concept of “race” as a category lacking analytic precision for our attempts towards accessing the complex interplay between the internal axioms necessary to understanding Blackness and anti-Blackness. For, as Wynter puts it, “although I use the term ‘race,’ and I have to use the term ‘race,’ ‘race’ itself is a function of something else which is much closer to ‘gender’” (Thomas and Wynter 2006, 23). The anti-Humanist abolitionism of Afropessimism restages the insistence of the reproduction of the Human category from within Black studies and beyond. Thus, to say anti-Blackness is a scene of negative autopoiesis is to say “anti-Blackness is the genome of the horticultural template of Human renewal” (Wilderson III 2010, 337), or rather, Black death and mutilation reproduces the Human by way of being its antithesis—exemplified most thoroughly and exceptionally in the ontological absence of Black “women.” By attending to the science of the flesh, the theodicy of science, and returning to the primitive accreditation process of science—as a means of tending “to the Black dead and dying” (Sharpe 2016, 10), we may set out to begin:

“The only thing in the world worth beginning:

The End of the world of course” (Césaire 2001, 22).

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### Notes

1 The onto-ethico-epistemological framework is a way of suggesting that ontological, ethical, and epistemic concerns cannot be divorced from one another. I owe my interest in this concept to Karen Barad’s *Meeting the Universe Halfway*,wherein shecontributes to “the founding of a new ontology, epistemology and ethics, including a new understanding of the nature of scientific practices” (2007, 25). While Neils Bohr is a crucial point of departure for Barad’s thinking on matters of ontological import, Barad’s notion of agential realism moves in and beyond Bohr’s thinking to develop a coherent account of how reality is performed, produced, and enacted as reality while at the same time not succumbing to the trap that *all is representation*. Nevertheless, it is the Black feminist critiques and addendums from the likes of Zakiyyah Jackson (2018) and Denise Ferreira da Silva (2016) that principally drive my usage of the onto-ethico-epistemic framework as a means of suggesting that every onto-ethico-epistemic implication cannot begin to begin without theorizing in a void. Thus, while Barad’s conception of onto-ethico-epistemology is useful to think with, her onto-politics is not so much.

2 Similar elisions on the role of anti-Black metaphysical violence from the analysis of the structure of scientific knowledge production can be found in other key classic text of science, technology, and society studies as well. See Fleck 2012 and Haraway 1989 for additional examples. Fleck utilizes the concept of syphilis to illustrate his key notion of “thought style,” which went on to be a crucial intellectual development for the thought of the historian and philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn. However, Fleck never mentions the relationship between “New” World and “Old” World colonial travels and slave trading when considering how the genesis and development of syphilis as a “scientific fact” unfolds in relationship to these travels and exploits. Thus, if womb theory “co-opted genesis for democracy, idealized as the highest form of human governance,” (James 2016, 259) then Fleck’s *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* functions as a kind of “womb theory” for science studies whose latent idealization prefigures the inability of science studies to think the research-programmes of the Tuskegee Syphilis Institute and the heinous acts of violence done to the captive maternals therein (James 2016). In addition, Haraway’s *Primate Visions*, despite its stated intentions to interrogate “gender, race, and class” presents an account of primatology unwilling to interrogate *the specificity of anti-Blackness*, thus leaving the historical ontological linking of the Black to “the missing link between Ape and Man” beyond the scope and scale of her critique. Thus, Zakiyyah Jackson’s work in *Becoming Human* (2020) becomes a necessary corrective.

3 The condition of the Black “male” breeder is a condition that jettisons the speed in which the term “breeder” is so often conflated with the term “women,” placing tension on the historical overview that might leave this figure out of the stakes of reproductive justice as a problem of an anti-Black sexual order. Roberts mentions this figure in her *Killing the Black Body* when she states, “Slaveholders’ interference with bonded men’s intimate lives was often more blunt. Some masters rented men of exceptional physical stature to serve as studs. Using terms such as ‘stock men,’ ‘travelin niggers,’ and ‘breedin niggers,’ slave men remembered being ‘weighed and tested’ then used like animals to sire chattel for their masters. Of course, this also meant forcing slave women to submit to being impregnated by these hired men” (1999, 28). Understanding this scene of subjection, as a site of sexuation, or rather, as a sadistic propagation of heteronormative sexed and gendered identity, performance, and logics, requires not a dismissal of the foray of Black feminist and intersectional concerns, but rather requires sitting the discourse around Black American “men” and “gender” within Spiller’s insistence that “the African-American male has been touched, therefore, by the *mother,* handed by her in ways that he cannot escape, and in ways that the white American male is allowed to temporize by a fatherly reprieve…Because of this peculiar American denial, the Black American male embodies the only American community of males which has had the specific occasion to learn who the female is within itself” (1987, 80). For more Black feminist and intersectional accounts on reproduction, slavery, and gendered violence see hooks 1981; Crenshaw 1990; Davis 2011; Lorde 2012.

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