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문학석사 학위논문

Toward a Countercolonial Aesthetics:
Wynter, Fanon, and Liminal Bodies

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Abstract

Toward a Countercolonial Aesthetics: Wynter, Fanon, and Liminal Bodies

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In this thesis, I investigate the nature of embodied affect and suggest the vicarious experience of liminal bodies as holding the potential for overcoming neocolonialism. By naming the current global situation as neocolonial, I intend to deal with colonialism not simply as a historico-political concept, but as being fundamentally linked to the now globally hegemonic Western structure of thought. This thesis assumes that at the core of the Western episteme are two main divisions in the understanding of human nature: a division between mind and body, and another division between reason and sense. I attempt to suture these divisions by analyzing the racialized bodies and their lived experiences. I refer to the racialized bodies of colonial and neocolonial times as liminal bodies in order to highlight the contradictory sensations that are experienced by racialized, colonized beings toward their own bodies.

Through reading of Sylvia Wynter and Frantz Fanon, I demonstrate that liminal bodies' lived experience becomes an essential proof that normative affects are discursively conditioned and serve a core function in the perpetuation of neocolonialism. I present Maturana's concept of autopoiesis to demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between society and human consciousness. Based on the newly found understanding that sensuous cognitions are fundamental to human consciousness and overall cognitive activities, I propose that in the lived experiences of liminal bodies exist certain instances of sensuous and affective perception which allow them to perceive the boundary of the hegemonic colonial discourse.

In this regard, I invest in the affective experience of liminal bodies as holding the potential for the overturning of neocolonialism and the building of an alternative collective consciousness. Therefore, I analyze a few cultural productions as examples which afford the audience to situate themselves in the liminal bodies. Ultimately, I suggest that the subversion of neocolonialism will lead to the very transformation of bodies as well as in their "lived experience." Emphasizing both the sensuous cognition and the experience of cultural productions in countering the influence of neocolonialism, I present my thesis as an attempt at a preliminary outlining of a countercolonial aesthetics.

Keywords: Sylvia Wynter, Frantz Fanon, coloniality, consciousness, aesthetics, sensuous cognition, phenomenology, lived experience, body, affect, affection, autopoiesis, liminality

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Introduction

Toward a Countercolonial Aesthetics: Wynter, Fanon, and Liminal Bodies

In this thesis, I highlight the importance of embodied affect and present it as a foundational aspect of human consciousness through the case of colonized lived experience. Based on this, I suggest vicarious experiences through cultural productions of liminal bodies' sensuous and affective perception as a potential catalyst for overcoming neocolonialism. Through the attempt, I intend to present a preliminary outlining of what I intend to call a countercolonial¹ aesthetics. I deem the approach of aesthetics to be appropriate for this project, in that the origin of Aesthetics as a discipline comes from the Greek "Aisthesis", which concerns sensory perception and knowledge produced through it as in opposition to knowledge through pure intellect. When Baumgarten in the 18th century Germany salvaged Aisthesis as an

¹In this thesis, I introduce and utilize the term "countercolonial" instead of the established critical approaches to colonialism, namely "postcolonial" and "decolonial." I use "postcolonial" cautiously as Wynter herself opposes it, considering the adverb "post" to be misleading in terms of coloniality. "Decolonial" is a term coined by Walter D. Mignolo, who seeks to establish an alternative epistemological framework by actively referencing and uncovering non-Western theories, particularly those from South America. Mignolo acknowledges that Wynter's extensive citations of non-Western canonical scholars align with the decolonial approach. However, I believe Wynter's approach deserves a distinct term, namely "countercolonial." Unlike Mignolo's emphasis on disobedience to the Western episteme, Wynter aims to address the cognitive dissonance experienced by liminal bodies as a direct consequence of the colonial episteme. Wynter perceives the neocolonial situation as inherently carrying the potential for a breakthrough, considering those under the influence of neocolonialism as equipped with the cognitive capability for emancipatory actions. To describe Wynter's specific approach, I choose the adverb "counter," which she frequently employs in her work to describe efforts that challenge the cognitive conditioning of colonialism. Examples include the "counterperspectives" of lay intelligentsia, the "countervoices" of black individuals, "counter-signifying" practices, "counterpolitics," "counterpoetics," and more.

Ultimately, the difference between decolonial and countercolonial efforts lies in the potential viability of juxtaposition. The decolonial approach strives for the coexistence of different epistemological frames in the name of pluriversality, offering an alternative to the pseudo-universality of the colonial frame. On the other hand, the countercolonial approach aims to substitute the established neocolonial system with a new and radically inclusive signifiatory frame. Both Mignolo and Wynter base their theories on Chilean biologist Maturana's concept of autopoiesis and the languaging nature of human consciousness. It can be argued that the different aims of pluriversality and genuine universality arise from different interpretations of Maturana's theory. In this thesis, following Sylvia Wynter, I advocate for a true universality. Phenomenologically speaking, different cosmologies or narratives that explain the world are directly linked to the conditioning of human perception and cannot be distanced or relativized from an individual's point of view.

Mignolo, Walter. "Sylvia Wynter: What does it mean to be human?", *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*.

independent and justified perception of truth and established the study of the sensory perception with the term “Aesthetics”,² it was the perception of beauty that was redefined as a justified perception of perfection. Because the perception of beauty was subjectively experienced as sense of pleasure, we can say that Aesthetics from its originary stage as an independent Western discipline concerned affects. Yet, the topics unique to Aesthetics such as sensuous perception and affects were still deemed a cognition of lower faculties, hence inferior to reasoning. Instead of positing a dual function of logical cognition and sensuous perception, countercolonial aesthetics proposes that sensuous perceptions form the foundation of biased logical cognition. In addition, countercolonial aesthetics views human cognition as inherently conservative, reflecting the values and symbols of a society. In a neocolonial society, the normative consciousness is formulated through normative affects toward the colonial values; therefore, countercolonial aesthetics seeks to provide subversive affective experiences as a way simultaneously of doing away with the neocolonial sense of us and of promoting a radically inclusive, alternative sense of collective identity.

To begin, this thesis interprets the contemporary global condition as neocolonial, where the mechanisms of colonial exploitation continue to operate. According to Frantz Fanon, racism lies at the core of colonialism, creating a distinction between human beings and enabling their systematic exploitation. Fanon argued that racism in colonial society leads to psychological disorders among black individuals and advocated for a scientific approach to understanding

² “Baumgarten made the theory of knowledge, which he called gnoseology the basic philosophical science, just as Wolff had put logic at the foundation. But gnoseology consists for Baumgarten not only of logic, but also of another science, aesthetics. [...] Baumgarten, [...] saw that there is also a perfection of the senses, a perfection achieved when the senses are regulated by their own rules, forms, and criteria. [...] ‘Things known are to be known by the superior faculty as the object of knowledge; things perceived (*aestheta*) [are to be known by the inferior faculty, as the object] of the science of perception, or aesthetic.’ This perfection apprehended by perception instead of by thought is the beautiful, and therefore it follows that aesthetics is the science (or art) of the beautiful. [...] Since the perception of a perfection is pleasant, it follows for Baumgarten that the function of poetry is to arouse the affects. Hence the connection of art with pleasure and feelings and judgments of delight and approbation.”

Beck, Lewis White. *Early German Philosophy : Kant and His Predecessors* , pp.284-286.

human consciousness that considers social influences, introducing the concept of "sociogeny."³ Sociogeny offers a new perspective on the scientific study of human consciousness, alongside phylogeny (genetic evolution of a species) and ontogeny (development of individuals). Fanon emphasized the importance of acknowledging the role of society and cultural values in shaping human consciousness for a comprehensive understanding of human nature. Fanon's critical examination of colonial discourse holds significance for two reasons. Firstly, it raises awareness of the role played by racialized individuals in upholding the exploitative social structure. Secondly, it highlights the importance of understanding the mechanisms through which a hegemonic social discourse, such as colonialism, influences human consciousness.

Building upon Fanon's sociogeny, Sylvia Wynter develops a "sociogenetic principle"⁴ that serves as a comprehensive theory of human consciousness. Wynter explores this principle by analyzing the neurobiological conditioning process of human perception and evaluating the fundamental rhetorical techniques employed by hegemonic discourses during this conditioning process.

Furthermore, Wynter demonstrates that the neurochemical conditioning of a hegemonic discourse manifests subjectively as psychoaffects, a concept she describes as "aesthetics."⁵

According to Wynter, it is through the conditioning of affects that a normative perception emerges, thereby establishing the hegemony of a colonial discourse. The function of normative feelings is to perceive the existing social order as naturally given. Despite the

³ Frantz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.XV.

⁴ Wynter, Sylvia. "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience, and What It Is Like to Be 'Black'", *National Identities and Socio-Political Changes in Latin America*, pp. 30-66.

⁵ —. "Rethinking 'Aesthetics': Notes Towards a Deciphering Practice", *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, pp. 237-279.

negative experiences and emotions inherent in a exploitative and hierarchical colonial society, the normative perception leads individuals to believe that these negative affects can be resolved by diligently adhering to the solutions presented by society as the answer.

Wynter's exploration of the mechanism of human consciousness reveals the limited subversive potential of discursive practices. This limitation arises from the fact that discursive significations are already attached to normative affects before interpretation occurs. In contrast, sensuous and affective cognitions have the ability to directly challenge hegemonic discourse by operating at the level of the conditioning process. Drawing on this understanding, I consider ways in which non-normative affective experiences can initiate the overcoming of neocolonial discourse's hegemony. In her work "Rethinking Aesthetics," Wynter suggests that certain cultural productions and their "counter-significations" have the potential to evoke "counter-politics of 'feelings'."⁶ I interpret counter-feelings as affective experiences that defy normatively conditioned psychoaffects, leading individuals to become conscious of the influence of hegemonic colonial discourse. Counter-feelings recognize that the negative affects one experiences are a direct result of the social structure. Wynter's statement also implies that counter-feelings can be induced by specific cultural productions, which I refer to as counter-productions.

To further clarify the concepts of counter-feelings and counter-productions, I turn to Fanon's work "Lived Experience of the Black Man." This text provides a first-person perspective of a black man and describes his sensuous and affective experiences. Through his awareness of the contradictory nature of negative self-appraisal of his own body, he realizes that it is the

⁶ "The further hypothesis here is that it is precisely against our present orthodox 'writing' of the bio-chemical 'reward/punishment' (opiate) system that the counter-signifying practices ... are directed; it should be testable and verifiable that these counter-signifying practices induce such a counter-writing and, therefore, such a counter-politics of 'feelings'..."
Ibid, p. 268.

colonial society that imposes the perception of the black body as inherently negative. The text not only serves as a depiction of the protagonist's visceral experience but also elicits equally charged affective experiences of negativity in its readers. I propose that Fanon's text can be considered a counter-production as it induces counter-feelings, enabling readers to recognize the influence of colonial discourse against the conditioning process of normative perception.

Now, having demonstrated the significance of affective and sensuous cognitions in challenging hegemonic neocolonial discourse, I will explain how normative feelings are conditioned and produced, and how they contribute to the maintenance of the status quo. To do this, we turn to Wynter's sociogenetic principle and aesthetics.

Wynter argues that each society is fundamentally structured around discourse⁷, where the linguistic capabilities of humans shape human forms of life. Symbolic meanings conveyed through discursive practices and other signifiers shape our perception and drive our actions. For instance, every society has an ideal model of being, and individuals who conform to this model are seen by others as "symbolic kin" and become the recipients of altruistic behaviors.

Simultaneously, a society possesses an origin story that establishes an original sin and a path to redemption, providing individuals with a behavioral imperative. To enhance social

⁷ In presenting Wynter's critique of colonialism, I resort to the term "discourse"; this is partly to reflect the influence of Michel Foucault upon Wynter's theory; Foucault's notion of discourse denotes an order of knowledge that gives rise to a historically and socially contingent logic and truth. Because a discourse and its rules fix meanings of representations, its function and the power structure is hidden from those individuals who are under its influence. Related to this, Wynter focuses on the interrelation of human society and human consciousness. In addition to the role of discourse as it contributes to a historically and socially specific episteme, Wynter argues that discourse conditions system-conforming affects.

At the same time, I choose the concept of discourse partly to reflect the key role of group identity and its conservative nature in the formation of human consciousness. At the ground of human consciousness is the "sense of us", a group identity. That is, the perception of the self, the other, and the world as well as the cognitive activities based on the perceptions is mediated by this sense of us. This sense of us is always built upon the concept of "descriptive statement", which is a concept that belongs to Gregory Bateson. A descriptive statement refers to a fictional signifiatory value which is foundational to a system. In order to reflect such notion without foregrounding Bateson too much, I resort to the expression "colonial discourse".

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Discourse*.

—. *The Archeology of Knowledge*.

Bateson, Gregory. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*.

stability, model behaviors are prescribed through a neurochemical conditioning of perception. Normative values are associated with pleasure-inducing neurochemicals, while non-normative or deviating values are linked to pain-inducing neurochemicals. The simultaneous stimulation of pleasure and pain aims to establish a perception of culture-specific values as absolute truths. As these neurochemicals are subjectively experienced as positive or negative feelings, Wynter connects these affective experiences to her broad understanding of aesthetics. She defines the phenomenon where individual normative affective cognitions contribute to social stability as a “phenomenon of aesthetics.”⁸

Furthermore, another rhetorical element utilized in the conditioning process of normative perception is binary opposition. Within a society, a group of individuals is designated as the symbolic opposite to the ideal mode of being. Their marginalization is justified as a violation of a fundamental social value. The consequence of this designation is a deeper attachment of individuals to the ideal mode of being. Wynter refers to these marginalized individuals as “liminal figures.” In essence, liminal figures embody the behavioral imperative. Wynter argues that in colonial and neocolonial societies, racialized blacks are designated as liminal figures, with their epidermis being portrayed as a representation of genetic inferiority, thereby justifying their marginalization.

In addition, race serves a crucial role in colonial society, specifically in relation to slavery and the notion of human fungibility. Fungibility refers to interchangeability, where human bodies are treated as commodities. According to Wynter's analysis of colonialism, racialized

⁸ “Because it is a function of the securing of the modes of social cohesion based on the inducing of culture-specific cooperative behaviors on the part of its human subjects, the phenomenon of Aesthetics and its discursive-semantic practice or rhetorical strategies, by means of whose meaning-signals such inter-altruistic behaviors are stably induced, must be governed by rules, at the level of human ‘forms of life’...” “Rethinking ‘Aesthetics’”, p.242.

black bodies become the criterion by which the value of other bodies is determined.⁹ While race serves as a measure of value, other physical markers are also invoked to assess the worth of bodies. Although initially used to determine the value of enslaved individuals during the early stages of colonialism, Wynter asserts that in today's neocolonial society, people's social and economic status is determined by the "values" assigned to their bodies. These values are determined by a combination of physical markers, including sexuality, gender, disability, age, etc., all of which are concepts mobilized through the lens of race.

Therefore, as Wynter analyzes, the neocolonial condition encompasses the dual role of liminal bodies. On one hand, these bodies symbolize the ultimate negativity in individual perception, while on the other hand, they serve as instruments in the discriminatory distribution of social and economic opportunities. In essence, the objectified and marginalized bodies of racialized blacks have a direct impact on the lived experiences of non-liminal neocolonial individuals.¹⁰ However, despite individuals experiencing feelings of frustration and injustice due to the neocolonial structure, the conditioning of perception immediately triggers negative affects toward the liminal figures and their status. This, in turn, hinders the recognition that the source of individuals' feelings of frustration is systemic.

Based on our understanding of normative feelings, we can now define the feelings that counter the hegemonic neocolonial discourse as follows: first, in line with Fanon's perspective, counter-feelings refer to the firsthand experience of negative and conflictual

⁹ "the pieza served as a general equivalent of value for the variety of groups whose labor could be exploited within the capitalist world system...establishing equivalences between a wider variety of oppressed labor power. ... the seminal importance of the trade in African slaves.... resolves the class/race and class/sex dispute by revealing each as aspects of the language of the other."

Wynter, Sylvia. "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poieses." *C.L.R. James' Caribbean*, p.81.

¹⁰ "...the pieza framework ... works as a pluriconceptual theoretics beyond even the powerful but limited imaginary of intersectionality as a spatial model where multiple, independent axes converge." Hantel, Max. "Plasticity and Fungibility On Sylvia Wynter's Pieza Framework." *Social Text*, p.109.

psychoaffects by the liminal figures. This experience is a sensuous and affective cognition that enables racialized liminal figures to become aware of the influence of the hegemonic colonial discourse through the social perception of their own bodies. For the protagonist in "Lived Experience of the Black Man," this awareness was triggered by the moment of being seen, leading to a visceral experience. Similarly, counter-productions can serve as spaces where readers can immerse themselves in the liminal body and, through the vicarious experience of conflicting sensations and emotions, gain an understanding of the workings of the neocolonial discourse.

Additionally, counter-feelings can also involve recognizing one's relationship to the liminal body. In Spike Lee's film *Do The Right Thing*, which revolves around demands for justice by black protagonists in the ghetto, there is a moment where a scene depicting the protagonist's experience of racism is followed by a montage of characters from different ethnicities shouting racist stereotypes directly into the camera. By evoking a firsthand experience of racism in the audience, the film establishes an affective connection between the liminal figure and the viewers. If Fanon's text elicits a counter-feeling as an awareness of the liminal body's role in upholding the system, *Do the Right Thing* invokes a counter-feeling that brings awareness to the connection between the lived experiences of the liminal figures and the non-white, non-black audience. It provides an opportunity for individuals to recognize the negative affects they experience in a neocolonial society—such as injustice and frustration—as being linked to the negative affective experiences imposed on the liminal figures.

Furthermore, a counter-production can induce the recognition of non-liminal individuals' own bodies and their roles in experiencing negative affects. In Cathy Park Hong's *Minor Feelings: An Asian-American Reckoning*, episodes of various people's negative affective

experiences are juxtaposed, collectively representing the experiences of Asian Americans. Through reading, readers develop a sense that the essence of racialized identity lies in the collective affective experience. The negative lived experiences of Asian Americans are a result of their bodies' socially determined values and statuses. The author intersperses histories of affinity between different races within the episodes, leading readers to recognize that the negative lived experiences of racialized Asian Americans are fundamentally connected to the parallel experiences of other racialized bodies.

In this way, counter-productions function as a site where the reader/audience can situate themselves in the liminal bodies and experience the counter-feelings. Ultimately, the aim is to induce affective and sensuous cognition of kinship with the liminal figures.

For the development of the argument, the thesis is structured into three chapters. The first chapter follows Wynter's expansion upon Fanon's notion of sociogeny to explicate the nature of human consciousness. In the second chapter, I begin by summarizing Wynter's concept of aesthetics and its role in the rise of neocolonialism. Then, I explore Wynter's goal of overturning the neocolonial discourse at the level of consciousness. Since psychoaffects serve as the mechanism for perception-conditioning in the hegemonic discourse, the overturning process can be initiated through affective and sensuous cognitions that counter this conditioning. To comprehend the conditioning process from the perspective of consciousness, I conduct a phenomenological analysis of liminal consciousness. Additionally, drawing on Wynter's idea of a relationship between counter-production and counter-feeling, I examine cultural productions that have the potential to evoke non-normative affects and prompt a shift in the audience's consciousness, fostering an intersubjective relationship with liminal figures. By exploring the nature of potential counter-feelings, I conclude that these feelings are

equivalent to an affective and sensuous cognition of kinship between liminal and non-liminal bodies, thereby lifting the discursive inscription of liminality.

In the thesis, Fanon's "The Lived Experience of the Black Man" is referenced in all three chapters, each time focusing on different aspects of the text. In the first chapter, the emphasis lies on the description of the lived experience of the gaze, setting the stage for Fanon's call for sociogeny. In chapter two, I interpret the text as a depiction of a phenomenological failure. In the final chapter, I view it as a counter-production that elicits counter-feelings in readers.

In the first chapter, I follow Wynter's sociogenetic principle as it builds upon Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and his seminal call for sociogeny. The opening section raises the question of the nature of consciousness. Drawing upon Thomas Nagel's proposition that consciousness is species-specific, Wynter adds that human consciousness identifies kin based not on genes, but on symbolic values. Therefore, human consciousness is not species-specific but culture-specific.

In sections two and three, I conduct close readings of Fanon's "The Black Man and Language" and the first half of "The Lived Experience of the Black Man" to provide descriptions where the consciousness of the colonized and their lived experiences exemplify the workings of colonial culture. While colonialism necessitates the marginalization of colonized blacks, the systemic nature of this marginalization remains opaque to the colonized. The alienated consciousness of the French Antilleans, as well as the traumatic lived experiences of black individuals in France, highlight Fanon's call for sociogeny.

In the final section, I first explain Fanon's concept of sociogeny and present Wynter's comprehensive theory of the sociogenetic principle. Wynter reformulates Fanon's analysis of

the French Antilleans' mimicry of colonial whites as a phenomenon of the colonial "mode of sociogeny" within her sociogenetic principle. Regarding the mechanism of consciousness formation, Wynter references the neurobiological Internal Reward System (IRS)¹¹, in which a natural opioid system signals sensations of pleasure and pain. The balance of these opposing opioid peptides determines normative perception, resulting in normative behaviors that align with a specific mode of sociogeny.

In the second chapter, I establish a connection between human consciousness and discussions of aesthetics. The neurochemical sensations of pleasure and pain are subjectively experienced as affective feelings, determining one's normative psychoaffective sensibilities. Drawing upon Wynter's work "Rethinking 'Aesthetics'," I define aesthetics as the normative sensuous cognitions of pleasure and pain elicited toward discursive practices and representations. Through congruous and consistent conditioning of individuals on the level of sensuous cognition, aesthetics achieves a representation of society and its symbolic values as absolute to an individual, thereby contributing to social cohesion.¹² Wynter distinguishes between two aspects of aesthetics: Aesthetic 1 for the general concept and Aesthetic 2 for the neocolonial phenomenon.

Wynter also employs the term "autopoiesis" to describe a society and its aesthetic phenomenon.¹³ Originally coined by biologists Maturana and Varela, autopoiesis refers to an organism or ecosystem where the system's elements are self-reproduced within the system by

¹¹ Danielli, James F. "Altruism and the internal reward system or the opium of the people," *Journal of Social and Biological Sciences*, pp. 87-94.

¹² "Rethinking 'Aesthetics'", p.269.

¹³ "1492: A new world view", pp.31-32.

its components or individuals.¹⁴ Wynter draws a parallel in human society, where individuals produce and reproduce symbolic meanings that underpin a society, yet are simultaneously directed by those symbolic meanings in both perception and behaviors.

Based on this understanding, I analyze Aesthetic 2 and the neocolonial order of discourse in the second section, focusing on the symbolic meanings represented by the neocolonial order of discourse as the ultimate truth and the rhetorical mechanisms employed in the conditioning process. I provide a historical approach to unravel Aesthetic 2 and demonstrate the gradual changes in its hegemonic narrative. The historical summary highlights a situation where the advent of physical and biological sciences enabled partial cognitive autonomy from the phenomenon of aesthetics but also resulted in the naturalization of the liminal status of racialized blacks through the concept of race. This dialectical analysis holds significance for Wynter, as she proposes overcoming neocolonialism through the development of a new science of humans, referred to as the "autopoietic turn/overtturn."¹⁵

However, I diverge from Wynter's speculation regarding the path to the autopoietic turn/overtturn and instead focus on the level of consciousness. In section 3, I search for descriptions of potentially subversive and emancipatory aesthetic experiences in "Rethinking 'Aesthetics'." The notions of counter-significations found in certain cultural productions and

¹⁴ "An autopoietic machine is a machine organized (defined as a unity) as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components which: (i) through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced them; and (ii) constitute it (the machine) as a concrete unity in space in which they (the components) exist by specifying the topological domain of its realization as such a network."

Maturana, Humberto; Varela, Francisco. *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living*, p.78.

¹⁵ "The concept of the Autopoietic Turn/Overtturn is also here put forward in its own terms. Specifically, it is put forth as the praxis of two proposals—that of Aime Cesaire's 1945 proposed new and hybrid 'science of the Word/Nature' and Frantz Fanon's 1952 epochal redefinition in correlatedly hybrid and, therefore, meta-Darwinian terms of who-we-are as humans."

Wynter, Sylvia. "The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overtturn, its Autonomy of Human Agency and the Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition", *Black Knowledges/Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology*, p.209.

their ability to evoke counter-feelings serve as a basis for contemplating the subversive potentials of affective cognitions. Exploring the nature of counter-feelings in section 4, I turn to the liminal figures. Since this thesis is concerned with transformations that occur at the level of consciousness, I analyze Fanon's "The Lived Experience of the Black Man." The liminal lived experience, which provides a phenomenological description from the first-person perspective of consciousness, is depicted as a failure: a failure on the part of the black man to attain a state of consciousness delineated as a universal condition by phenomenology and a failure on the part of phenomenology itself to account for the lived experience of the black man. Consequently, the liminal counter-feeling encompasses negative affects and sensuous cognitions that also establish a sense of boundary within the hegemonic discourse. In relation to the phenomenological examination of the liminal counter-feeling, the final chapter begins by suggesting a phenomenological approach to the autopoietic turn/overtake, aiming for a more comprehensive understanding of the event as it unfolds within consciousness. Drawing on Fanon scholar Lewis Gordon's phenomenological interpretation of Wynter's theory, I propose that the autopoietic turn/overtake, which entails overcoming the neocolonial discourse, involves establishing an intersubjective relationship between liminal and non-liminal figures.

In section two, I explore counter-productions that have the potential to evoke counter-feelings. First, I examine Fanon's "The Lived Experience of a Black Man" as a literary production that immerses the reader in the conflicted lived experience of the racialized and colonized black liminal body. Then, I delve into Wynter's suggestion of a counter-production, specifically focusing on a particular scene in Spike Lee's 1989 film *Do the Right Thing* and how it can serve as a moment that potentially elicits counter-feelings from the perspective of

the audience's lived experience. Lastly, I propose Cathy Park Hong's 2020 book *Minor Feelings* as another counter-production. Through the author's exploration of her own negative affective experiences and the juxtaposition of these experiences with the contemporary history of Asian Americans and the Civil Rights Movement, the text provides readers with a profound understanding of their own affective experiences of negativity as racialized lived experiences, fostering a sense of affective kinship with neocolonial liminal figures, particularly racialized blacks.

Ultimately, in the final section of chapter 3, I conclude the thesis with a suggestion that if our affections can be conditioned with an alternative discourse, the differently formulated consciousness can bring about a transformation in bodies and in the lived experiences of bodies. In this way, we can consider the autopoietic turn/overtake as an event that brings about transformations in bodies. Alongside the literal changes in bodies, such as the rewiring of the Internal Reward System (IRS) as proposed by Wynter's neurophysiological theory, bodies also undergo transformations within the phenomenological understanding of the autopoietic turn/overtake. With a shift in consciousness, one no longer perceives the discursively imposed physical markers on other human bodies in the same way as before. Simultaneously, the experience of one's own body through the gaze of others is bound to undergo a transformation. Human bodies are no longer perceived solely based on their fungibility. Based upon such understanding of lived experience of different bodies, I go one step further and suggest that countercolonial aesthetics do not invest in diversity as the solution to the current global, neocolonial condition. This is because, as I will explain in chapter 1, the scientific discoveries on the nature of human consciousness reveal that humans are bound to be hostile toward those beings not identified as symbolic kins; in this regard, moralistic

behaviors or the virtue of tolerance is deemed superficial. While Fanon's description of the fragmented lived experience of the black man highlights that bodily perception is crucial in revealing the social distinction of human bodies that is inherent to colonialism, it is also important that we do not assume the differences in bodily experience as being natural. That is, the criticism of colonial universality does not automatically link to the assumption of universality itself as being exploitative or unattainable. This pertains not only to race but also to gender, sexuality, and disabilities, among many others that define human bodies—it is the discursively elected significations of bodily traits that yield to embodied affects and fragmented lived experiences. With a new collective orientation in consciousness, the established discursive matrix for perceiving human bodies can be dismantled, resulting in novel lived experiences stemming from differently embodied consciousness.

Chapter 1. Sociogeny and Sociogenic Principle

In this chapter, I begin by addressing two fundamental questions posed by Fanon: the role of racism in colonialism and its influence on human consciousness. Fanon advocates for the inclusion of sociogeny as a scientific approach to understanding human psychology, alongside the established methods of phylogeny and ontogeny. Phylogeny examines the evolutionary origin and development of specific groups of organisms, while ontogeny focuses on the biological development of an individual from conception to death.¹⁶ Building upon Fanon's seminal insights, Sylvia Wynter further develops the principle of human consciousness. In this chapter, I delve into Wynter's formulation of the sociogenic principle.

1.1. On the Nature of Consciousness

In this section, I aim to demonstrate the adaptive and culture-specific nature of consciousness as a preliminary understanding of the alienated condition of colonized consciousness.

What does it mean to be conscious as a human being? In his seminal work “What It Is Like To be a Bat”¹⁷, Thomas Nagel proposes that consciousness is a property that can be identified “as that of a common reality”, and is shared by individuals within the same species. In order for an objective description of the subjective character of experience, a preliminary understanding should be that “fundamentally an organism has conscious mental states if and

¹⁶ *American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology*, <https://dictionary.apa.org/ontogeny>
<https://dictionary.apa.org/phylogeny>.

¹⁷ Nagel, Thomas. “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” *The Philosophical Review*.

only if there is something it is like to be that organism—something it is like for the organism.” While Nagel focuses on intraspecies differences for his argument, he briefly mentions physical differences among people, such as their abilities of seeing or hearing, as potential determinants of varying consciousness between individuals. However, he does not explore the possible interspecies differences of human beings. In this section, I draw inspiration from Sylvia Wynter and her paper “Towards Sociogenetic Principle”¹⁸ to delve deeper into the search for the fundamental determinants of human consciousness.

A crucial insight provided by Nagel is that consciousness is inherent to and exclusive to a particular species. The species-specific nature of consciousness suggests that the formation of consciousness is dominated by the group (species) rather than the individual. This assumption is appropriate considering that, in biological terms, the primary purpose of a species is the stable transmission and prosperity of its genes.¹⁹ Therefore, we can posit that the purpose of consciousness is to drive behaviors in individuals that are advantageous for the species.²⁰ This can be described as the adaptive nature of consciousness, where individual consciousness serves the benefit of the species. In this process, the true discrepancy that may exist between what is beneficial for the species and what is beneficial for the individual organism becomes blurred, and individuals are guided to prioritize the former.²¹

¹⁸ Wynter, Sylvia. “Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience, and What It Is Like to Be “Black.”” *National identities and sociopolitical changes in Latin America*.

¹⁹ “the genes which comprise its genome, genes for whose reproductive imperative the organism is merely a vehicle” Richard Dawkins, cited by Wynter, Ibid, p.49.

²⁰ “each organism must know and classify the world in terms that are of adaptive advantage to the organism in spite of the fact that the way it knows the world is not necessarily concordant with what the world veridically is, outside of its viewpoint” Gerald Edelman, cited by Wynter, Ibid, p.48.

²¹ The neurological process and the psychoaffects which facilitates such in human beings is clarified by J. F. Danielli and is referred to as the Internal Reward System. We will get back to this part in section 3.

This idea helps us understand seemingly altruistic behaviors observed in certain animal or insect species. Why do some individuals sacrifice their own chances of survival for the benefit of others? Although these acts may appear selfless from an outsider's perspective, they are entirely rational when viewed from a group perspective. For instance, the protection of younger members by older ones can increase the likelihood of successful transmission of genetic information. In such cases, the precondition for altruistic behaviors is the presence of shared genetic information between the agent and the receiver.²² From this, we can infer that species-specific consciousness elicits apparent altruism among individuals based on a sense²³ of kin-relatedness.

However, altruistic behaviors observed in humans extend beyond kinship relations. To understand the differences in altruistic behaviors between humans and other organisms, we must first acknowledge the significant genetic diversity within the human population compared to animal or insect populations. One sociological explanation for this is the occurrence of bipedalism in humans, which results in the premature birth of infants and a prolonged stage of child rearing that requires a higher degree of reciprocity beyond genetic kinship-based altruism.²⁴ In other words, humans live in complex groups or societies that transcend the boundaries of shared genes. Therefore, to ensure the stability of the human

²² Danielli, James F. "Altruism and the Internal Reward System or the Opium of the People", *Journal of Social and Biological Structures*.

²³ I put "sense" of kin-relatedness to emphasize that it is ultimately the individual that function as the agent of the adaptive behaviors.

²⁴ "At the same time, the runaway evolution of the human brain correlated with its option for bipedalism; the upright stance made it necessary for their infants to be born early, and the protracted stage of helplessness of their young now called for a mode of cooperative rearing and therefore for a mode of eusociality which went beyond the limits of the modes of genetically determined kinship characteristic of the primate family (Campbell; 1972:21-23, 1988L 31-32). The genetically programmed modes of an eusociality characteristic of all other forms of organic life proved insufficient for the human species." Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle", p.47.

species, the adaptive nature of consciousness should elicit altruistic behaviors that can impact all individuals belonging to the same society.

The key to eliciting an alternative form of kin-relatedness lies in the unique human capacity for language.²⁵ Through words and meanings, symbolic values are attributed to objects, and individuals who learn and use language are provided with guidelines for perception, which shape their mode of consciousness. While other organisms rely on genes as the standard for the adaptive mode of consciousness, with what is advantageous for genetic prosperity seen as positive and what is hazardous for genetic stability seen as negative, the human species organizes its mode of consciousness based on societal values. In other words, human consciousness is geared toward preserving and propagating the values of a society. Socialization plays a vital role in shaping individuals to recognize these social values as self-evident and behave instinctively to protect them. Wynter argues that the individual human subject becomes a participant in the “same order of symbolically coded consciousness, and thereby subjectively experience themselves as culturally co-defined conspecifics, or symbolic kin” through the processes of socialization.²⁶

Consequently, we can conclude that instead of species-specific consciousness, humans possess culture-specific consciousness. The term "culture-specific consciousness" highlights the binary concept of nature/culture and emphasizes this particular aspect of human consciousness that has yet to be fully explored in science.²⁷

²⁵ Wynter quotes from two scholars, one a sociologist, Donald Campbell, the other a linguist, Philip Lieberman for the argument here. Ibid, p.46.

²⁶ Ibid, p.47.

²⁷ We will return to this point in section 3.

1.2. Language and Culture

In this section, I conduct a close reading of the “The Black Man and Language” chapter of Frantz Fanon's “Black Skin, White Masks” to underscore the alienated consciousness experienced by colonized black individuals. The influence of colonial discourse becomes evident through the colonized people's preference for using French over Creole.

So far, we have explored how language can be viewed as a distinct human capacity and a significant cultural element that aligns individual modes of consciousness to serve society. Conversely, by examining consciousness and the subjective experiences of individuals, we can uncover the underlying symbolic values of a society. Fanon discusses the function of language, stating: “a man who possesses a language possesses as an indirect consequence the world expressed and implied by this language.”²⁸ Here, I want to draw attention to his use of the term “indirect consequence,” which suggests that one's perception is inevitably shaped by cultural values, regardless of or against one's conscious will.

In the opening chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*, titled “The Black Man and Language”, Fanon examines the linguistic practices of French Antilleans. Throughout this chapter, Fanon vividly demonstrates how the influence of colonial culture is so deeply ingrained that the colonized individuals yearn to emulate the colonizers. Although the alienation is apparent to us, it remains opaque to the colonized Antilleans.

In the French Antilles, a clear hierarchical distinction exists between the two languages, French and Creole, as a direct consequence of colonization.²⁹ Creole is often denigrated as

²⁸ Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.2.

²⁹ “There is nothing comparable in the French Antilles. The official language is French; elementary-school teachers keep a close eye on their pupils to make sure they are not speaking Creole. ..The problem perhaps lies in the fact that in the Antilles, ..., there is a dialect and there is the French language.” Ibid, p.11.

low-class and unrefined, while French is associated with social status and sophistication.³⁰ Moreover, the mastery of the French language is equated with whiteness itself, particularly within the Antillean community, as it guarantees the acquisition of white privilege and the status of a white person.³¹

Within the context of the French Antilles, two distinct linguistic dimensions exist for the colonized blacks: one with their fellow black Antilleans and another with the whites.³² When interacting with fellow black Antilleans, individuals may adopt a pseudo-white identity, which is determined by their level of proficiency in the French language. This symbolic value also extends to encounters with non-French speaking African blacks, who do not share the same French colonial cultural context.: “Antilleans get annoyed at being taken for Senegalese.... It’s because the Martinican is more ‘evolué’ than the African—meaning that he is closer to the white man”.³³ But also, “[t]hey (Guadeloupeans) are more savage than we (Martinicans) are— meaning once again that they are farther removed from the white man.” As is reflected in the sentence, there is a prevailing darwinian myth of evolutionary continuity from ape to man, where blacks are perceived as the missing link, deeply ingrained in the perception of Martinicans. This perception creates a graph of continuity, where Senegalese and Guadeloupeans, due to their relative lack of French proficiency, are perceived as closer to apes than Martinicans.³⁴

³⁰ “In the French Antilles the bourgeoisie does not use Creole, except when speaking to servants. At school the young Martinican is taught to treat the dialect with contempt. Avoid Creolisms. Some families forbid speaking Creole at home, and mothers call their children little ragamuffins for using it.”, Ibid, p.4.

³¹ “Among a group of young Antilleans, he who can express himself, who masters the language, is the one to look out for: be wary of him; he’s almost white. In France, they say “to speak like a book.” In Martinique they say “to speak like a white man.””, Ibid, pp.4-5.

³² Ibid, p.1.

³³ Ibid, p.9.

³⁴ Ibid, p.10.

In the second dimension, when a Martinican comes in contact with a white person, the power of the French language is overshadowed by their skin color. This situation leads to black individuals becoming fixated on their French fluency, striving to demonstrate flawlessness to white individuals. This is fundamentally different from the experiences of other Europeans, as for black individuals, fluency in French becomes a platform to prove themselves as equals. For white men, broken French is often assumed to be a sign of fluency in another language, whereas for black people, it is directly linked to their intellect.³⁵ Fanon observes that some Antilleans meticulously hone their French pronunciation to avoid detection of a Creole accent.³⁶

Conversely, white people also tend to adopt pidgins when speaking to black people, using a broken French that is infantilizing and condescending. This manner of speech is automatically employed and later modified based on the addressed person's educational or social background.³⁷ “Yet, we’ll be told, there is no intention to willfully give offense. OK, but it is precisely this absence of will—this offhand manner; this casualness; and the ease with which they classify him, imprison him at an uncivilized and primitive level—that is insulting.”³⁸ This lack of will on the part of white people exemplifies a consciousness shaped by colonial culture-specific norms. These subconscious linguistic choices by white

³⁵ “They speak French badly. Little Robinson Crusoe, alias Prospero, is in his element. He explains, informs, comments, and helps them with their studies. But with the black man, he is utterly stupefied; the black man has put himself on an equal footing; the game is no longer possible; he’s a pure replica of the white man, who has to surrender to the facts.” Ibid, p.19.

³⁶ “The black man entering France reacts against the much of the Martinican who swallows his r’s. He’ll go to work on it and enter into open conflict with it. He will make every effort not to roll his r’s, but also to make them stand out. On the lookout for the slightest reaction of others, listening to himself speak and not trusting his own tongue, an unfortunately lazy organ, he will lock himself in his room and read for hours—desprately working on his *diction*.” Ibid, p.5.

³⁷ Ibid, p.14.

³⁸ Ibid, p.15.

individuals further perpetuate colonizing effects upon the addressed black people, reinforcing the cultural mechanism.

Antilleans who have been deeply influenced by colonial values come to perceive their native culture as feeble and inferior compared to French civilization, seeing themselves as feeble and meager without the grace of colonial culture. In their reality, France, the mainland, represents everything ideal, and the move to France changes their self-perception, as they believe they have acquired the status of a real human being, that of a white man. This is the context in which we should understand the following sentence: "“The more the black Antillean assimilates the French language, the whiter he gets—i.e., the closer he comes to becoming a true human being.”³⁹ For those whose perception is shaped by colonial culture, it is justified and true that the status of a true human being is only afforded to the white race.

Fanon reports on the physiognomic changes of Antilleans returning from France: "After a fairly long stay in the metropole, many Antilleans return home to be deified....The black man who has lived in France for a certain time returns home radically transformed. Genetically speaking, his phenotype undergoes an absolute, definitive mutation."⁴⁰ Instead of focusing on the scientific validity of such claims, let us consider the profound influence of colonial values on an individual's psyche. The mainland, France, becomes the epitome of the ideal, and the returning Antillean perceives that they have garnered the positive symbolic values of whiteness simply by visiting the place.

Fanon also mentions similar transformations that can be observed in those leaving for France.

³⁹ Ibid, p.2.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.3.

There is a kind of spell cast from afar, and the black man who leaves in one week for the metropole creates an aura of magic around him where the words Paris, Marseille, the Sorbonne, and Pigalle represent the high points. On departure, the amputation of his being vanishes as the ocean liner comes into view. He can read the authority and mutation he has acquired in the eyes of those accompanying him to the ship.⁴¹

Fanon's descriptions of the phenotypical mutations of those who leave for and return from France, though more literary than scientific, highlight the intricate relationship between mind and body in human beings. According to Wynter's perspective, these descriptions are crucial as they emphasize the fundamental role of consciousness in human existence. Traditionally, humans have been depicted as a combination of mind and body, but the exact relationship between the two has been relatively absent in Western disciplinary discussions of human nature. This has led scientific accounts of human beings to assume a naturalized universality, positing that the body and bodily needs are predetermined by physical nature. However, we have seen that society and culture significantly influence collective consciousness, rendering the scientific descriptions of human nature incomplete without considering these insights. Fanon's arguments for "sociogeny," which will be discussed in the next section, further support this evaluation.

An Antillean who is returning from France is determined to uphold his newly acquired pseudo-white subjectivity and behaves as though he has erased every trace of his life in Martinique: "A new returnee... he can no longer understand Creole....Most of all he assumes a critical attitude toward his fellow islanders. He knows everything. He proves himself through his language."⁴² He exclusively speaks in French and pretends to have forgotten

⁴¹ Ibid, p.7.

⁴² Ibid, p.7.

vocabularies commonly used in Martinique to demonstrate his detachment from the colonized culture, which he is intent on maintaining. “The fact that the newly returned Martinican adopts a language different from that of the community in which he was born is evidence of a shift and a split.”⁴³ Amidst various anecdotes, Fanon points out that colonized individuals within colonial society are often unaware of the mechanism of alienation, as their perceptions are shaped by colonial cultural values.

The preference for languages reflects the colonial norm under which the consciousness of Antilleans is conditioned. However, within the premise of the colonial Antilles, the colonized Antilleans are yet to be conscious of the fact that their systemic marginalization plays a central role in maintaining the colonial system.

1.3. The Lived Experience of the Black Man

In this section, I provide a brief reading of the experience of the gaze described in "The Lived Experience of the Black Man". It serves as a first-person account of the influence of the discourse, which we will analyze in the final section.

As we observed in the first section, a black man in his native land is made to desire cultural symbols of the colonizer, resulting in the colonized person's subjectivity wearing the mask of a white one. The stark facts of colonization are evident in the arrested natural development of native culture.⁴⁴ However, in the French Antilles, where the direct presence of colonizers is absent, the consciousness formation process, or socialization, largely takes place among

⁴³ Ibid, p.9.

⁴⁴ “Blacks have had to deal with two systems of reference. Their metaphysics, or less pretentiously their customs and the agencies to which they refer, were abolished because they were in contradiction with a new civilization that imposed its own.” Ibid, p.90.

fellow Antilleans. For the development of the consciousness process, Fanon provides a phenomenological description: “a slow construction of myself as a body in a spatial and temporal world—such seems to be the schema. It is not imposed on me; it is rather a definitive structuring of myself and the world—definitive because it creates a genuine dialectic between my body and the world.”⁴⁵

Related to this, we can say that in the Antilles, a black person surrounded mostly by fellow colonized individuals remains oblivious to the typicality of a colonized body schema. The apparent messages conveyed are that they can be made equivalent to their colonizers through mimicking and mastering the colonizer's culture, leading these colonized individuals to believe that they are now entitled to be treated as equals.⁴⁶ In this state, issues of colonialism may seem like a matter of historical nature.

However, it is only when a black person finds themselves in the mainland, surrounded by real white people, that they realize a white subjectivity, the only legitimate subjectivity, is not afforded to them.⁴⁷ The colonial education instilled in the colonized people to aspire to the white subject is betrayed, revealing that the reverse is true in reality: a black person must

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.91.

⁴⁶ “In the twentieth century the black man on his home territory is oblivious of the moment when his inferiority is determined by the Other. Naturally, we have had the opportunity to discuss the black problem with friends and, less often, with African-Americans. Together we proclaimed loud and clear the equality of man in the world.” Ibid, p.90.

⁴⁷ “Whereas I was prepared to forget, to forgive, and to love, my message was flung back at me like a slap in the face. The white world, the only decent one, was preventing me from participating. It demanded of me that I behave like a black man—or at least like a Negro. I hailed the world, and the world amputated my enthusiasm.” Ibid, p.94.

remain black in relation to a white person. In short, a black person is forced to function as a 'being for others.'^{48 49}

In the fifth chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*, “The Lived Experience of the Black Man”, Fanon captures the moment of himself 'being seen'⁵⁰ on a train filled with white people. A phenomenological shift occurs at that moment. Confronted with the white gaze, the black man can no longer situate himself as a subject in relation to the environment. The genuine dialectic between oneself and the world is abolished.⁵¹ The lived experience of the black man is now mediated by the white gaze: “In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one’s body is solely negating. It’s an image in the third person. All around the body reigns an atmosphere of certain uncertainty.”⁵² A black man's subjectivity is no longer defined from within but by the colonial society from without. The body schema, a typical phenomenological process that presumably should universally describe human subjective experience, is revealed as no longer valid to describe the black man's consciousness.

The black man notices his blackness because black skin is given a symbolic function in colonial culture.⁵³ His black body becomes 'solely negating,' and he begins to struggle with its conspicuousness: "My blackness was there, dense and undeniable. It tormented me,

⁴⁸ “As long as the black man remains on his home territory, except for petty internal quarrels, he will not have to experience his being for others.” Ibid, p.89.

⁴⁹ The implication of ‘a being for others’ will be explained later in the thesis with the concept of liminal figures, with a focus on explication of the negative connotation cast upon a being and its essential function in the maintenance of a society.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.89.

⁵¹ “Disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other, the white man, who had no scruples about imprisoning me, I transported myself on that particular day far, very far, from my self, and gave myself up as an object.”, Ibid, p.92

⁵² Ibid, p.90.

⁵³ As we have covered in the first section with the linguistic property of human, we are made to perceive objects as they serve symbolic functions within a specific culture.

pursued me, made me uneasy, and exasperated me.”⁵⁴ He becomes ashamed of being black, feeling inappropriate for the setting. For the first time, the black man faces the reality of his colonial existence: a black body taking up space in a white world. Fanon likens this disillusionment to the becoming of a cockroach.

I slip into the corners, my long antenna encountering the various axioms on the surface of things: the Negro’s clothes smell of Negro; the Negro has white teeth; the Negro has big feet; the Negro has a broad chest. I slip into corners; I keep silent; all I want is to be anonymous, to be forgotten. Look, I’ll agree to everything, on condition I go unnoticed.⁵⁵

I arrive slowly in the world; sudden emergencies are no longer my habit. I crawl along. The white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me. Once their microtomes are sharpened, the Whites objectively cut sections of my reality. I have been betrayed. I sense, I see in this white gaze that it’s the arrival not of a new man, but of a new type of man, a new species. A Negro, in fact!⁵⁶

After the initial shock, Fanon delves into examining the forces that contributed to the emergence of this newly formed black consciousness. The factors that triggered this change possess three distinct characteristics. Firstly, its roots can be traced back to social narratives of myths, legends, and stories. Secondly, the attacks are indiscriminate, blind to individuality. Lastly, Fanon notes that it is impervious to scientific rebuttal, indicating its operation at a

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.96.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.96.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.95.

fundamental level beyond the realm of science and other disciplinary discourses. Let's explore these characteristics in detail.

To begin, the negative implications of being black originate from legends, stories, and mythical history. "At the start of my history that others have fabricated for me, the pedestal of cannibalism was given pride of place so that I wouldn't forget. They inscribed on my chromosomes certain genes of various thickness representing cannibalism. Next to the *sex linked*, they discovered the *racial linked*."⁵⁷ Anecdotes and stories carrying negative stereotypes⁵⁸ circulate within the white, colonial culture, influencing the lived experience of blacks. These racist stories and myths become inserted between the spatial/temporal world and the body, contributing to the formation of black consciousness. Fanon refers to this mediated process as the "historical-racial schema":

Beneath the body schema I had created a historical-racial schema. The data I used were provided not by "remnants of feelings and notions of the tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, or visual nature" but by the Other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories. I thought I was being asked to construct a physiological self, to balance space and localize sensations, when all the time they were clamoring for more.⁵⁹

In explaining the "historical-racial schema," Fanon emphasizes that the 'details, anecdotes, and stories' operate at a more fundamental level of consciousness than the basic elements delineated by phenomenology. "I couldn't take it any longer, for I already knew there were

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.100.

⁵⁸ "I was responsible not only for my body but also for my race and my ancestors. I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and above all, yes, above all, the grinning *Y a bon Banania*." Ibid, p.92.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.91.

legends, stories, history, and especially the historicity that Jaspers had taught me. As a result, the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema.”⁶⁰ The body schema is transformed into a racial schema, erasing all individualities except the racial element from the black man's subjective experience.

“Negroes are savages, morons, and illiterates. But I knew personally that in my case these assertions were wrong. There was this myth of the Negro that had to be destroyed at all costs.”⁶¹

The black man's initial reaction to these all-devouring racist stories is to protect himself. However, his attempts to rebut the stereotypes by demonstrating his individuality are crushed. He is coerced to represent all the symbolic values that the black race carries within colonial culture. In this process, the black man's subjective experience becomes a collective experience of colonized black people.

As a man of science, Fanon turns to scientific facts and logical reasoning, which clearly disprove racial stereotypes. “Scientists reluctantly admitted that the Negro was identical to the white man: same morphology, same histology. Reason was assured of victory on every level. I reintegrated the brotherhood of man. But I was soon disillusioned.”⁶² Yet, despite the scientific evidence, racism as a rhetoric remains influential.⁶³ Fanon faces an irrational

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.92.

⁶¹ Ibid, p.96.

⁶² Ibid, p.99.

⁶³ While colonialism is the political domination and economic exploitation of a nation and its people, Fanon and Wynter's theory manifest that racism is essential to colonialism. This is because, as I will further demonstrate in the following chapters, racism in its many forms (rhetorics can take the form of either evolutionary biology or cultural styles) essentially inferiorizes a human group so as to facilitate their exploitation. Therefore, Fanon deems the concept of race and racism as a sub-cultural element of a colonial society. In relation to Fanon, Wynter defines the concept of race and racism a bit more narrowly as a pseudo-scientific notion that depends on the concept of genetics. In both Fanon and Wynter's theory, racism involves the conditioning of affective responses in individuals. Put differently, racism is the conditioned affective response to the sensory perception of a visual information that is fundamental to the formulation of individual consciousness which in turn maintains a colonial society.

tendency impervious to reasoning and scientific facts, describing it with vocabularies of affect: "It was hatred; I was hated, detested, and despised, not by my next-door neighbor or a close cousin, but by an entire race. I was up against something irrational."⁶⁴

Throughout this section, we observe the shift in the lived experience of a black man from a typical individual body schema to a historical-racial schema, a crucial modification made by Fanon to the phenomenological concept of consciousness. This shift hints at the fundamental role of culture in the formation of one's consciousness and the crucial role of race and racism in colonial culture. Fanon defines the ruthless force stirring the colonized black man's lived experience as "hatred," an intense negative emotional response of colonial society toward the black race. We will explore these observations as themes for subsequent discussions.

1.4. Sociogeny and The Sociogenetic Principle

In this final section, we will first explore Fanon's call for "sociogeny," which emphasizes the need for a scientific examination of the profound social influences on human consciousness. We will then delve into Sylvia Wynter's sociogenetic principle, which serves as a response to Fanon's call and elucidates the nature of consciousness shaped by hegemonic discourses.

Based on the examination of the lived experience of the black man, Fanon challenges the naive assumption of universality that is often presumed in Western thinking: "There is a dramatic conflict in what is commonly called the human sciences. Should we postulate a typical human reality and describe its psychic modalities, taking into account only the

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.97.

imperfections, or should we not rather make a constant, solid endeavor to understand man in an ever-changing light?"⁶⁵

Fanon refers to this as "human sciences," but ironically, there is no comprehensive science of humanity. Natural science has historically treated human beings as part of a continuum with other natural organisms, as most evident in Darwinian theory of evolution.

Our only hope of getting out of the situation is to pose the problem correctly, for all these findings and all this research have a single aim: to get man to admit he is nothing, absolutely nothing— and get him to eradicate this narcissism whereby he thinks he is different from other “animals”.⁶⁶

All in all, I grasp my narcissism with both hands and I reject the vileness of those who want to turn man into a machine. If the debate cannot be opened up on a philosophical level—i.e., the fundamental demands of human reality— I agree to place it on a psychoanalytical level: in other words, the “misfires”, just as we talk about an engine misfiring.⁶⁷

To address the "engine misfirings" manifested in phenomena like black autophobia or white racism, Fanon advocates for a significantly expanded understanding of human nature.

Looking back at our earlier discussion on human consciousness, we can deduce that such mental states are culture-specific, meaning that "misfires" are observed in individuals whose identities are associated with negativity in their society. Therefore, a justifiable scientific assessment of such cases should consider the social determinants and be rooted in a thorough

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.6.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.6.

⁶⁷ Ibid, pp.6-7.

knowledge of the mechanisms through which social values influence and shape individual consciousness.

Reacting against the constitutionalizing trend at the end of the nineteenth century, Freud demanded that the individual factor be taken into account in psychoanalysis. He replaced the phylogenetic theory by an ontogenetic approach. We shall see that the alienation of the black man is not an individual question. Alongside phylogeny and ontogeny, there is also sociogeny. In a way, in answer to the wishes of Leconte and Damey, let us say that here it is a question of sociodiagnostics.⁶⁸

Fanon's call for sociogeny represents a significant departure from the false universality often found in Western thinking, which assumes a typical, ahistorical, and acultural concept of human beings. Fanon's achievement is twofold: first, the idea of sociogeny offers a novel and more accurate understanding of human nature; second, through sociogeny, individual case studies can be transformed into opportunities for examining problematic cultural values. This is why Fanon asserts that recognizing sociogeny in human nature becomes a matter of sociodiagnostics.

Building upon Fanon's sociogeny as a theoretical foundation, Sylvia Wynter introduces what she terms the "sociogenetic principle"⁶⁹ as a unique attribute of humans that has not been adequately acknowledged in scientific discourse until now. According to Wynter, the sociogenetic principle can be defined as the "information-encoding organizational principle of each culture's criterion of being/non-being."⁷⁰ As discussed earlier in section one, Wynter's concept of the sociogenetic principle is analogous to the genetic principle in natural

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.XV.

⁶⁹ As in the title of the paper, it is also written as "sociogenic principle", to reflect Fanon's contribution to the formation of it.

⁷⁰ Wynter, Sylvia. "Towards the Sociogenic Principle", p.54.

organisms, where genes are conserved and transmitted. In the case of humans, it is the sociogenetic principle, representing the culture-specific ideal mode of being human, that is conserved and transmitted through individuals. Similar to the adaptive mode of consciousness in natural organisms guiding individuals toward the benefit of their genes, human consciousness directs individuals toward the preservation of the criterion of being/non-being, leading to the idealization of a specific mode of being human while rebuking those that do not conform to it.

Individuals undergo processes of socialization that establish the adaptively advantageous parameters of perception. As referenced by Wynter with allusion to Fanon, "All humans wear cultural masks, resulting in that, although born as biological humans, we can experience ourselves as human only through the mediation of the processes of socialization effected by the invented tekne or cultural technology to which we give the name 'culture'."⁷¹ Although we addressed the culture-specific nature of human consciousness in section one, we have yet to comprehend how the processes of socialization mediate this conditioning. In the following discussion, I will explicate how such conditioning processes occur at the level of human neurophysiology and induce desirable psychoaffective responses in individual subjects.⁷² By gaining these insights, we can better understand collective responses toward race (such as the "hatred" mentioned by Fanon) as socially conditioned phenomena.

In section one, while discussing the adaptive nature of consciousness, I briefly mentioned the potential gap between the benefit for the species and the benefit for the individual organism. It is through a modification in perception that we observe manifestations of altruism, wherein an individual's adaptive mode of consciousness navigates them to sacrifice

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 53.

⁷² Ibid, p.57.

their own sake for the benefit of the group. This social coaxing or navigating targets the subjective experience of individuals, meaning that “the individual must filter the external through the mediation of what he/she is socialized to experience with reference to his/her culture-specific identity as ‘good’ or ‘bad.’”⁷³

Wynter proposes that the fabrication of subjective experience occurs through neurochemistry. Discoveries in the field of neurobiology⁷⁴ show that in all living species, sensations of pleasure and pain are the effects of a natural opioid system, which exists to signal reward (likely by beta-endorphin) and punishment (by dynorphins).⁷⁵ It is through the chemical balance of these opposing opioid peptides that adaptive consciousness is molded, and desirable behaviors are driven in individual organisms. In natural organisms, the goal is stable reproduction, and thus the desirable mode of being is shaped by the subjective experience of individuals to make them reliable carriers of genetic information.

We also explored how manifest altruism in human beings extends beyond genetic similarities and benefits those who share the same culture. Biologist J. F. Danielli observes that for humans "preservation of one's in-group (or group selfishness) seems frequently to

⁷³ Ibid, p.49.

⁷⁴ I notice a meaningful overlap in current trends in neuropsychology and cognitive science with Wynter's sociogenetic principle, especially in its interest in affective intelligence and the centrality of vicarious bodily experience in the change of individuals' political beliefs. At the same time, I also notice that psychological studies which target a shift in political beliefs in individuals through affective changes fail to recognize the inherent relation between different political issues, such as the relation between issues of sexual or racial minority, or even environmental issues. Therefore, I suggest that insights of Fanon's sociogeny and Wynter's notion of aesthetics can contribute significantly to the broadening of perspectives for those engaged in contemporary natural scientific discussions. For a few examples in the areas of neuropsychology and cognitive science:

Maister L, Slater M, Sanchez-Vives MV, Tsakiris M. "Changing bodies changes minds: owning another body affects social cognition." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*. 2015, January. Vol. 19, No, 1, pp. 6-12.

Redlawsk, David P. et al. "The Affective Tipping Point: Do Motivated Reasoners Ever "Get It"?" *Political Psychology*, Vol. 31, No.4, 2010, pp. 563-593.

McRaney, David. *How Minds Change : The Surprising Science of Belief, Opinion, and Persuasion*, New York, NY : Portfolio/Penguin, c2022.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.50.

have replaced genetic selfishness."⁷⁶ Stating that “anthropological data indicate that the range of altruistic actions actually performed in a culture depends upon the mores of that culture, and varies widely between cultures”⁷⁷, he suggests that the biochemical system of opioids functions as an internal reward system and is correlated with a society and its cultural values in the case of humans. Danielli defines this correlation as a "social program," a neuronal-discursive mechanism through which gene-based kinship and altruism in humans are substituted by culture-specific altruism.

Wynter examines two cultures that clearly demonstrate the workings of different social programs by comparing Antonio de Teruel's writings from the 17th century with the autophobia experienced by blacks in a colonial setting. The former writings document the reversed aesthetic appreciations toward black and white skin colors among indigenous Congolese.⁷⁸ In Congolese society, white epidermal traits evoke negative emotional reactions, as evident in the people's attitudes toward albinos and Europeans. When juxtaposed with this case, it becomes clear that the autophobia of colonized blacks is not based on genetic-instinctual revulsion.⁷⁹ The psychoaffective responses toward white skin in Congolese culture are not different from those toward blacks in the colonial setting; such a comparison reveals that the positive/negative affects experienced by subjects pertain less to the objects and more to the joint effects of opioid systems and culture-specific semantic functions.

The direct discursive functions upon consciousness make it impossible for an individual to objectively regard deviations from the ideal mode of being. For those individuals whose

⁷⁶“Rethinking ‘Aesthetics’: Notes Toward a Deciphering Practice,” p. 247.

⁷⁷ Danielli, James F. “Altruism and the internal reward system or the opium of the people,” p.88.

⁷⁸ “Towards the Sociogenic Principle”, p.52.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.52.

identities coincide with the ideal mode of being, their consciousness is self-evident to them. However, for those whose identities do not completely overlap with the criterion, they are bound to feel what traditional psychology would define as ‘the aberration of affect’, such as autophobia. This leads to a negative attitude toward others with non-ideal identities, which is naturally assumed. Therefore, we can deduce from Fanon's call for sociogeny in *Black Skin, White Masks* that in a colonial society, the only permitted ideal mode of being is a white subject.⁸⁰

In this chapter, we have come to an understanding that human consciousness is influenced by neurochemical conditioning of perception. The sensations of pleasure and pain, subjectively experienced as feelings or affects, invite us to take an aesthetic approach to consciousness and neocolonial discourse. In the next chapter, building on Wynter's rethinking of aesthetics, I will delve deeper into the nature of neocolonial discourse and explore the speculative potential of affective experiences.

⁸⁰ When expanding beyond the scope of the thesis, the normal subject can be further specified, with such identities as gender/sexuality/class and more.

Chapter 2. Against the Grain : Countering the Neocolonial Discourse

In this chapter, I begin by following Wynter's text "Rethinking 'Aesthetics': Notes Towards a Deciphering Practice"⁸¹ and explore the implications of the sociogenetic principle's neurochemically induced sensibilities of pleasure and pain in shaping normative psychoaffects. By analyzing the neocolonial discourse and its discursive-affective conditioning elements, I propose specific sensuous and affective cognitions that can counter the effects of the conditioning process.

2.1. Aesthetics and Autopoiesis

In this section, I explore a redefined concept of aesthetics and a biological concept of autopoiesis, following Wynter's definition of a society as an order of discourse. The conditioning of affects is demonstrated as a central aspect in the hegemonization of a discourse.

As we discussed in the first chapter, socialization in the human species occurs through a neurochemical conditioning process, shaping individual perceptions and behaviors to align with a culture-specific ideal mode of being—an aspect Wynter terms "sociogeny." This mode of sociogeny is fundamental to a society as it promotes social cohesion and serves as the criterion for individuals to recognize those who share the same mode of sociogeny as symbolic kin.

⁸¹ Wynter, Sylvia. *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, pp. 237-279.

Parallel to the genetic kin-relatedness that gives rise to cooperative behaviors in animals (AGKR), Wynter defines altruism in humans as being prompted by symbolic kin-relatedness (ASKR). This concept of ASKR is described in her paper “Rethinking ‘Aesthetics’: Notes Towards a Deciphering Practice” as the expression of “the phenomenon of aesthetic”: “The transcultural phenomenon of aesthetic is the expression, at the level of human forms of life of the AGKR.”⁸²

Wynter's use of the term aesthetics refers to affective and sensuous cognitions that become subject to the conditioning of consciousness by hegemonic discourse. Aesthetics, in Wynter's view, involves the psychoaffective sensibilities of pleasure and pain elicited toward discursive practices and representations. By consistently impacting individuals at the level of sensuous cognition, the phenomenon of aesthetics accomplishes a representation of society and its symbolic values as absolute, thereby maintaining social cohesion.⁸³

In this context, aesthetics pertains to the discursive-semantic⁸⁴ practices and rhetorical strategies at all levels of empirical social reality, resulting in culture-specific symbolic modes of altruism. Aesthetics, as defined by Wynter, is a universal and transcultural phenomenon.⁸⁵ For clarity, the discussion of aesthetics is divided into two sections. In this section, we focus on Aesthetic 1, the general, transculturally constant phenomenon of aesthetics. In the next section, we delve into the neocolonial discourse and its phenomenon of aesthetics, referred to as Aesthetic 2.

⁸² “Rethinking ‘Aesthetics’”, p.242.

⁸³ Ibid, p.269.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.242.

⁸⁵ “...the ‘unitary system of meaning’ or ‘semantic game’ which conditions the psycho-affective fields of each mode of aesthetics must provide ‘truths’...”
Ibid, p.247.

Moving on to Aesthetic 1, its purpose is to produce a unitary system of meanings..⁸⁶

Through consistent associations of good and bad meanings, individuals come to recognize the criterion of the good and the bad as the "truth." Richard Rorty terms this the "truth of solidarity,"⁸⁷ serving to bind a society, and Wynter refers to it as the "adaptive truth," essential for the stable reproduction of a society. These adaptive truths form a core precondition for social stability, relying on the consistency of the "good" and "bad" signals. Following Wynter, we can understand the nature of a society as an order of discourse on a semantic level or an order of knowledge on a disciplinary level.⁸⁸

Given that the "good" and "bad" signals for natural organisms are directly linked to species' survival, we can interchange these terms with "life" and "death". In this context, the "good" represents symbolic "life," while the "bad" signifies symbolic "death." Society and its systemic matrix of symbolic meanings produce culture-specific "life" signals for individuals, alongside ideas and objects attached to symbolic "deaths."

Functioning on the level of perception, these adaptive truths are both descriptive and directive. They not only describe the Self, Other, and the World to individuals but also function as behavioral imperatives. Wynter notes that the force of such adaptive truths remains influential even when these subjective understandings become dysfunctional and detrimental for individual subjects. Individuals may be shielded from the realization that

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.244.

⁸⁷ Wynter, Sylvia. "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?: Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations." *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, p.22.

⁸⁸ "The study of letters must therefore be reinvented in new terms that can enable it to take as its object not only literature but, more comprehensively, *the ordo verborum or orders of discourse*, whose processes of intertextualization institute all human forms of life. In this context, 'fables' whose grace 'stirs the mind,' can be seen as inseparable from the functioning of our orders of consciousness. It is precisely these languages, and the artificial motivation schemas that they enact, that are the causal source of our human behaviors; that they function in a lawlike manner as the analogue of the genetic motivation systems specific to purely organic life, but verbally mediated at the level of human forms of life." Emphasis added.
Wynter, Sylvia. "Columbus, the Ocean Blue, and Fables That Stir the Mind: To Reinvent the Study of Letters." *Poetics of the Americas* p.161.

these self-evident truths are effective only within the boundaries of a specific culture. As long as they are perceived as absolute, such adaptive truths hold validity. Consequently, individuals under the influence of a certain mode of sociogeny do not manifest altruism toward other human individuals who do not share the same mode of sociogeny. Their consciousness, under the influence of a particular mode of sociogeny, does not identify those people attached to the symbolic "death" signal as kin.

In chapter 1, we explored Danielli's biological theory, which emphasized the social function of the neurobiological conditioning process, referring to it as a "social program." Wynter proposes that Aesthetic 1 also elucidates this same mechanism as a "social program."⁸⁹ Here, a social program refers to the process of conditioning adaptive truths into individuals through the IRS mechanism.⁹⁰ The concept of a social program views all orders of discourse as means to recode the IRS over the genetic imperative, ultimately inducing altruistic behaviors and ensuring social cohesion. Danielli observes that the orders of discourses function as the "opium of the people," with the neurochemicals being likened to opiates.⁹¹

Wynter defines Aesthetic 1 as the determinant of "the ensemble of collective behaviors by means of which each human order effects its autopoeisis as a living, self-organizing (i.e.

⁸⁹ "I shall propose here that the 'social program' of each human 'form of life' is clearly the same phenomenon as that of Aesthetic 1."
"Rethinking 'Aesthetics'", p.247.

⁹⁰ It is relevant to note on the exact cause and effect relation as Danielli suggested it and Wynter highlighted: the biochemicals of pleasure and pain effected by the IRS in the brain is defined by a mode of sociogeny and its order of discourse. If the scientific understandings of human beings have been criticized as being reductionist, it is because they had reversed the understanding of this mechanism. In other words, they thought the bodily mechanism being the determinant of the social. We can understand this as the biocentric understanding of human beings, which Wynter attempts to overcome through a reversed understanding of this cause and effect relation. We may also be able to recall Fanon's description in chapter 1 on the physiognomic changes of the Antilleans who have either been to or will soon be going off to France. Although a seemingly bizarre description at a first glance, we can clearly see Fanon's intention of manifesting the physical human body under the influence of the colonized consciousness.

⁹¹ Ibid, p.246.

cybernet-ic) system.”⁹² For her, self-organization parallels the biological concept of "autopoiesis" coined by biologists Maturana and Varela.⁹³ Autopoiesis refers to systems where the components or individuals within the system reproduce and sustain the elements required for the system's maintenance.⁹⁴ Wynter extends this idea to human society, where individuals produce and reproduce symbolic meanings that form the foundation of a society, yet they are directed by these symbolic meanings in both perception and behavior. The distinction between biological ecosystems and human society lies in the fictional nature of the essential discourses upholding society, as they are not bound to genetics or the physical universe. To maintain stable production of meanings and optimize the "survival" of a particular mode of being, individual cognition is blocked from realizing its own authorship in this process.⁹⁵

The process of overseeing the production of cohering meanings transcends the normal consciousness of individual subjects and remains unreachable to us. Aesthetic 1 presents self-evident and absolute truths to individuals by incorporating all social discursive-semantic practices and consistently attaching psychoaffective sensibilities to them. Indeed, Wynter argues that “it is only by means of these rule-governed positive/negative correlations at all of these levels that the ‘conditioning’ processes, by means of which humans are ‘socialized’ as specific modes of the subject and, therefore, as always already altruistically aggregated and

⁹² Ibid, p.259.

⁹³ “1492: A new world view”, pp.31-32.

⁹⁴ "An autopoietic machine is a machine organized (defined as a unity) as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components which: (i) through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced them; and (ii) constitute it (the machine) as a concrete unity in space in which they (the components) exist by specifying the topological domain of its realization as such a network.”
Maturana, Humberto; Varela, Francisco. *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living*, 1980, p.78.

⁹⁵ I touch on this necessary reversal of cause and effect in the next section and relate it to the universal phenomenon of religion in human societies.

symbolically kin-related individuals, can be effected.”⁹⁶ In the next section, we delve into the evaluation of Aesthetic 2 to reveal how affective conditioning represents the adaptive "truth," symbolic "life," and "death" to individuals.

2.2. Aesthetics 2 and the Neocolonial Discourse

In this section, I highlight the centrality of race and racialized blacks within the neocolonial order of discourse. It provides the conceptual groundwork for exploring the subversive potential of sensuous cognitions.

In the previous section, we observed how Wynter defines a society as an order of discourse, where discursive practices and other significations collectively influence individual affective perception to elicit an adaptive truth. While this mechanism is universal, the mode of sociogeny varies for each society, being essentially fictional and not tied to our genetic makeup. To ensure the stable production and maintenance of a society, the fact of self-producership must be shielded from our consciousness. This universal assurance has been achieved by creating transcendental figures and casting them into the role of producers—a creation of religion.⁹⁷ The inversion of cause and effect in the production of meanings and the introduction of the idea of supernaturals serve to absolutize the mode of sociogeny and ensure the phenomenon of aesthetics.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ “Rethinking ‘Aesthetics’”, p. 253-254.

⁹⁷ For Wynter’s summary of the evolution in the Western hegemonic mode of sociogeny, I refer to two texts mainly: "1492: A New World View", *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, pp. 5-57, and "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation - An Argument", *The New Centennial Review*, pp. 257-337.

⁹⁸ “Rethinking ‘Aesthetics’”, p.273.

In this regard, we can think of a society figuratively as an extremely persuasive and all-encompassing rhetorical narrative⁹⁹; it prescribes while it describes. Based on this understanding, I now delve into the historical examination of Aesthetic 2 to demonstrate why Wynter refers to this globally hegemonic order of discourse as neocolonial rather than late-capitalist.¹⁰⁰ In the gradual changes to the Western hegemonic discourse, the concept of race was introduced to replace the symbolic role of other conceptualized objects.

The "enormous act of narration,"¹⁰¹ or the hegemonic Western discourse, maintains its influence by preserving a portion of its original version through historical transformations. What is retained in the transumptive chain of the neocolonial discourse is the format of an "origin story."¹⁰² An origin story combines two fundamental descriptions: the postulate of a significant ill and a plan for salvation. Functioning as a behavior-regulatory imperative, the origin story serves as the foundation for building a general order of existence.

Wynter traces the origin of the neocolonial discourse back to feudal Europe, where the phenomenon of aesthetics centered around the religion of Judeo-Christianity, and the mode of sociogeny was theocentric. Their origin story postulates the original sin as the significant ill and presents a plan for salvation through religious redemption. Its order of knowledge was also theocentric, and Ptolemaic astronomy served the religion and the master discipline,

⁹⁹ In this regard, Wynter defines humans as essentially "homo narrans". "Unparalleled Catastrophe", p.25.

¹⁰⁰ Harold Bloom defines the rhetorical technique of transumption as such: transumptive chains "function to retain 'central linkages...vital to tradition,' with the continuity kept going 'by means of its retroping (i.e. transuming) of earlier tropes.'" Wynter, Sylvia. "Columbus, the Ocean Blue, and Fables That Stir the Mind," p.152.

¹⁰¹ Wynter, Sylvia. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom", *The New Centennial Review*, p.263.

¹⁰² Ibid, p.265.

theology.¹⁰³ Therefore, Earth was understood as stationary, in opposition to the moving celestial bodies. This adaptive knowledge symbolically distinguished Earth and the lay people as the abode of fallen men, in contrast to the symbolic life embodied in God and his intermediary, the clergy class.

Wynter notes that the first challenge to the theocentric mode of sociogeny came from the lay intelligentsia. They presented a new image of man, understanding him as the son of God, for whom God has created the earth. The phrase "Propter nos homines,"¹⁰⁴ which translates to "for the sake of us" in English, described this new relation between God and man. This new understanding of humans gave rise to physical and geographical sciences.¹⁰⁵ Physics, the first non-adaptive knowledge of the universe and earth, emerged during this time.

In this way, a ratiocentric mode of being replaced the theocentric mode of being in the Western order of discourse. The ideal man was inscribed as one equipped with rationality. The origin story of this time ran as follows: the ultimate affliction is irrationality or being tied to sensory aspects, and the cure is rational redemption. However, this symbolic kinship was not extended to the indigenous people or the Africans encountered by Europeans during colonial expeditions. Instead, based on the concept of rationality, the indigenous people of America were categorized as irrational, and Africans were labeled as subrational. This circularly legitimized the ratiocentric sociogeny and the image of rational Europeans, justifying the expropriation and usurpation of the indigenous people and Africans. Therefore,

¹⁰³ "Cardinal Bellarmine said: 'if the Earth moves, it would vitiate our entire plan of salvation.' Theocentrically, to be at the center was to be at the dregs of the universe. The center was then the most degraded place to be!" "1492", p14.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p.27.

¹⁰⁵ It here seems appropriate to touch on Wynter's emphasis on science and scientific thinking. Her argument for a new science of Word/human has received some criticisms (see for example, Silva, Denise Ferreira da, "Before Man: Sylvia Wynter's Rewriting of the Modern Episteme", *On Being Human as Praxis*). Within the scope of this thesis, however, I will focus on the implication of science as being opposed to mystification, dealing mainly with cognitive emancipation concerning the nature and mechanism specific to human beings.

while from the beginning of colonial expeditions, the Western hegemonic discourse designated Africans as the embodiment of symbolic "death"—the "Other" to the "us," and the symbolic "life"—we can see that during this time such designation was based on the concept of rationality.

According to Wynter, the epistemic rupture that gave rise to the contemporary, globally hegemonic neocolonial order of discourse occurred with the introduction of biology. Similar to the extrapolation enabled in the field of physics, the Darwinian theory of natural selection and evolution was "extrapolated" to all natural organisms, including human beings. The mode of sociogeny was defined as eugenic whites, while the symbolic counterpart was found in dysgenic negroes. The concept of race was newly introduced to justify the division between "us" and "others". Wynter coins the term "dysslected"¹⁰⁶ to describe the signifiatory position the African blacks are put in: the notion of dysselection implies that blacks are fictionally racialized and made to symbolize the naturally inferior. Wynter argues that it is based on this biocentric mode of sociogeny, with racialized blacks as the central signifiatory role of symbolic death, that other social hierarchies, such as class and sexuality, were produced and justified.

Therefore, we have come to understand that Aesthetic 2 incorporates epidermal traits and attaches them to positive and negative affects in conditioning individual perception, justifying the status quo to individuals. Wynter's historical explanation reveals that an episteme, involving an origin story and an ideal mode of being, always precedes modes of life, such as

¹⁰⁶ For Wynter's usage of the term, see: *On Being Human as Praxis*, 2015. And, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation - An Argument," CR: *The New Centennial Review*, 2003.

Related to "dysselection", Wynter also uses the term "dysgenic" and "dysbeing", — for this, see: "On How We Mistook the Map for Our Territory and Re-imprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of *Désêtre*: Black Studies Toward the Human Project." *Not Only the Master's Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice*, 2006.

the economy. According to Wynter, a mode of domination—the concept of race—precedes a mode of production. It is based on this understanding of race as a mode of domination that Wynter defines the current globally hegemonic mode of sociogeny as neocolonial instead of late-capitalist.

Based on the new biocentric mode of being, the economy took over the position once occupied by theology as the master discipline. The origin story of Aesthetic 2 is as follows: we are afflicted with natural scarcity, and the cure is ceaseless production and economic growth. Additionally, Wynter notes that in the last few decades, due to the rise of technical automation, consumption has replaced production in the mode of capital accumulation.¹⁰⁷ This led to the emergence of a new category of humans: the jobless and poor.

This group of "new poor" is considered the logical and systemic refuse in the evolution of the mode of capital accumulation, placing them at the bottom of the social hierarchy. They are perceived as naturally dysselected human beings, different from "us." Wynter highlights a significant overlap in demographics between the blacks and the jobless and poor as evidence of Aesthetic 2. While Fanon defines colonialism as a mechanism for systemic exploitation of humans, Wynter demonstrates that racialized blacks still play a central role in justifying the discriminatory distributional system. The social and economic marginalization of the jobless and poor, especially racialized blacks, is justified by labeling them as dysselected, which in turn reinforces the neocolonial order of knowledge in individual perception.

A subsequent task after analyzing the neocolonial discourse and its Aesthetic 2 is to suggest a way of overcoming its influence. Wynter's theoretical endeavors direct toward developing an alternative scientific language capable of identifying the relation between discourse and

¹⁰⁷ Wynter, Sylvia. "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues", *Voices of the African Diaspora*, pp.14.

perception. In recent writings, Wynter suggests this task under the name of an "autopoetic turn/overtun." For Wynter, it involves exercising full autonomy of cognition, based on the scientific understanding of the discursively conditioned nature of human perception.

However, this thesis diverges from Wynter's direction and intends to focus on the realm of human consciousness. The intention is to clarify the potential roles of affective and sensuous cognitions in relation to Wynter's final task of an autopoetic turn/overtun.

2.3. Deciphering Practice

How does an autopoetic turn/overtun open up to individual consciousness? How are the sensuous cognitions involved in the event of an autopoetic turn/overtun? To answer this question, I turn to Wynter's descriptions of a "deciphering practice."

In the final sections of "Rethinking 'Aesthetics'," Wynter presents an alternative method of criticism called a deciphering practice. The notion of deciphering in Wynter's approach implies the cognitive challenge of grasping both the autopoetic influence upon one's consciousness and the significations that escape the system. The deciphering practice, with the aid of neurobiological means, aims to evaluate artworks and their significations based on the resulting perceptual experience. It involves a unique intellectual effort to detach artworks and art criticisms from their conventional field of meaning and instead assess the sensibilities

elicited and their functions served in the signifiatory mechanism.¹⁰⁸ The focus is on whether an artwork elicits system-cohering or countering perceptions on the part of the viewer.

Against our present practice of criticism even in its most deconstructive and "rhetorically" demystifying forms, this paper, therefore, proposes a turn towards a deciphering practice based on a new postulate of causality in place of the "human nature" causality postulate of our present cultural Imaginary, in place, also, of its counter-versions, i.e., the "mode of production" causality of Marxism, and the "patriarchy" postulate of causality of feminism. This new postulate is that of the correlated discursive-cum-biochemical causality of our narratively instituted "cultural Imaginaries", their modes of the subject, and "forms" or "ways" of life.¹⁰⁹

When understanding the deciphering practice as an aesthetic criticism, it is contrasted with conventional art criticism and the discipline of aesthetics in that the former does not invest in the intention of the artist or the content of the artwork. Instead, it aims to unveil the artwork's functional role in an order of discourse. Simultaneously, we can suggest that it represents an

¹⁰⁸ "A deciphering practice, therefore, sets out to take the image/ sound signifying practices of film (and television) as the objects of a new mode of inquiry, one that will and can, in the words of Heinz Pagels, erase the 'traditional barriers between the natural sciences and the humanities' in order to make our 'narratively constructed worlds' and their behavior-regulating 'orders of feeling and beliefs,' in other words, our cultural Imaginaries, 'subject to scientific description in a new way.' Such a practice will reveal their rules of functioning rather than merely replicate and perpetuate these rules." "Rethinking 'Aesthetics'", p.261.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 260.

expansion of the discipline of aesthetics¹¹⁰; Wynter's notion of aesthetics does not see a division between rationality and bodily senses. It focuses on the neurochemically produced psychoaffects that individuals have as a lived experience and enables a sense of the influence of the social structure and its symbolic matrix of meaning.

Regarding the method of evaluation, a deciphering practice focuses on the signifying practices of cultural productions and examines their signifiatory relation to the social context and discriminatory distributional ratios.¹¹¹ Wynter proposes that the correlation between

¹¹⁰ Wynter criticizes the disciplinary posit of a division between rationality and senses in Kant's aesthetics as being a phenomenon of Aesthetic 2; it ultimately serves to represent *homo aestheticus*, one equivalent to the mode of sociogeny of the Western hegemonic order of discourse, as the universal standard.

For the explanation, Wynter quotes from Pierre Bourdieu's critique of the aesthetic concept of taste. As Bourdieu puts forth, Kant's theory of aesthetics is maintained upon the binary opposition of the taste of reflection and the taste of the sense, and represent the former as the superior one. The taste of reflection is characteristic of the middle class, while the taste of sense belongs to the lower class. Bourdieu and Wynter criticize that Kant's theoretical demonstration of the superiority of the taste of reflection is based on the presumption of evolutionary processes of natural selection, and contributes to further strengthening it. The value hierarchy between the two types of tastes, Bourdieu shows, is correlated with the socio-political level of class hierarchy.

Adding to this, Wynter alerts that the same hierarchy of aesthetic tastes is witnessed in the sociocultural level of race ("highbrow" and "lowbrow" tastes) and, in the socio-economic level between Western versus non-Western cultures; and in the present context of consumer-driven society, also between developed and underdeveloped nations. The discourse of philosophical aesthetics is therefore problematic because it depends on the developed world's middle class as their sole datum for theorizing *homo aestheticus*, the ideal mode of being for thinking aesthetics and aesthetic experience. The posited *homo aestheticus* is equivalent to the neocolonial mode of sociogeny. Wynter criticizes that the philosophical aesthetics functions so as to normalize and universalize such mode of being by means of an "ideological mechanism". Such mechanism, we can say, is equal to Aesthetic 2. In the process, the lived experience of this population group is represented as the generic aesthetic experience of any human subject. Wynter argues that "by extrapolation, its existential experiencing of our present socio-global universe" is presented "as the general equivalent of human 'taste' and, therefore, its world and class-specific existential experience as the general equivalent of all human existence." Ibid, pp. 248-249.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.

¹¹¹ "A deciphering practice will seek to function correlately at four levels. The first level investigates the "signifying practices" of the text itself. The second level investigates the specific social environment or cultural dimension specific to the film text as a performative complex of meanings or "symbol-matter information system" which is structured by the terms of the behavior-regulating code that brings it into being as such an environment/dimension. The third level brings the results of the first two levels together in order to correlate those constancies and regularities which replicate each other at the level of the film text, as well as that of the socio-environmental effectivities of its social text.

At this third level then, all correlations between the dominant/subordinate, positively/negatively marked roles with respect to the signifying practices of representation, and those with respect to the social text's empirically verified distributional ratios of power, wealth, privilege, and social strata, in effect of the "goods" and "bads" of the order, will provide the data from which to deduce what the signifying practices, at the level of representation and their performative acts of meaning, are intended to do—that is, what collective behaviors they are intended to induce and how precisely their practices of signification are enabled to function as, in Rorty's terms, "our present metaphysico-epistemological ways of firming up our habits." Ibid, p. 267.

discursive representations and the social distributions of power, wealth, and privilege may reveal the specific nature of system-conforming normative perceptions and behaviors that are intended for inducement.

While deliberating on the final step of the deciphering practice, Wynter suggests that with further development, we may be able to scientifically describe the exact mechanism of how ““counter-meanings of counter-productions elicits counter-feelings.”: “The further hypothesis here is that it is precisely against our present orthodox ‘writing’ of the bio-chemical ‘reward/punishment’ (opiate) system that the counter-signifying practices ... are directed; it should be testable and verifiable that these counter-signifying practices induce such a counter-writing and, therefore, such a counter-politics of ‘feelings’ ...”¹¹²

I take particular interest in this statement; not only does the mechanism suggest it occurs on the level of consciousness, but it also involves affective experiences of cultural productions. In short, it invites an aesthetic approach.

Before expanding on the statement, a fuller comprehension can be useful: the adjective "counter," as used in the context of "Rethinking 'Aesthetics'," signifies the perceptual effects that oppose the phenomenon of aesthetics. We can also interpret counter-writing in the same way, as an act of overturning an order of discourse. Wynter often describes an autopoietic society as a languaging system¹¹³, where it writes fundamental social values—a mode of sociogeny and an origin story—onto human consciousness as absolute truths through discursive practices and other significations. Thus, we can understand Wynter's notion of "counter-writing" as being equivalent to an autopoietic turn/overturn.

¹¹² Ibid, p.268.

¹¹³ “1492,” pp.31-32.

“Columbus, the Ocean Blue, and Fables that stir the mind,” endnote 73.

From the final statement of Wynter's deciphering practice, we can deduce that an autopoietic turn/overturn can also occur on the level of consciousness through "counter-feelings" triggered by "counter-productions." Here, I suggest that we understand counter-feelings as an affective cognition, an awareness of the boundaries of perception as discursively delimited. In connection with the emancipatory affective cognition, Wynter suggests that there are beings whose designated social roles provide cognitive conditions where they can experience the discursive boundary as limited: liminal figures.

2.4. Liminal Figures

In this section, I explore the concept of liminal figures and their unique experiences. The sensuous and affective cognitions that liminal figures have of themselves are presented as counter-feelings. Based on the nature of these counter-feelings, I redefine liminal figures as liminal bodies.

The figure of the liminal is a concept adopted by Wynter from the anthropologist Asmarom Legesse and his book *Gada*, which studies the Borana peoples of Ethiopia and their traditional cultural order.¹¹⁴ Similar to intellectuals in modern societies, intellectuals in the Borana society also function as the "guardians, elaborators, and disseminators of the instituting of prescriptive categories on which their societies are founded,"¹¹⁵ resulting in an inability to see the "outside" of the adaptive truth and its aesthetic. As a consequence, they cannot realize what makes the "normal" normal, the "real" real, and the "self-evident" self-evident for their society and its members. Wynter argues that intellectuals are prisoners of the

¹¹⁴ "Towards the Sociogenetic Principle," pp.57-58.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.57.

self-evidence of the order of consciousness. In contrast to mainstream intellectuals and their cognitive opacity, there exists another group of individuals in Borana society, as in all human societies, who play an essential symbolic role of negativity—the "other" to the "us." Legesse defines this group as liminal figures. Through their negated mode of being, other members of society can perceive themselves as ideal, and the society can maintain its cohesion. In other words, the symbolic death attached to this social group facilitates the normative beings' attachment to a mode of sociogeny as a symbolic life.

In "Rethinking Aesthetics," Wynter posits that all human societies are necessarily based on the preanalytic designation of the negated mode of being. To elaborate on this, Wynter draws from Kristeva's concept of the abject.¹¹⁶ As previously discussed with the original form of Aesthetic 2 and its theocentric mode of sociogeny, European subjects were driven to realize their being according to the ideal self of feudal Christianity. In this process, all earlier forms of the abject were "subsumed under the topos of the mankind's enslavement to original sin"¹¹⁷. Kristeva uses the example of the leper, whose disease was understood among feudal Europeans as a due punishment for the violations of Christian values, particularly the corporeal sin of promiscuity committed by the leper's parents. The signifying existence of the leper further tied individuals to the theocentric mode of sociogeny and its origin story of the original sin and spiritual redemption. According to Wynter, in each society, the sign-complex of the abject is "everywhere empirically embodied in an interned and excluded group category."¹¹⁸ This group category plays a vital social role in verifying the adaptive "truth" by strengthening the positivity of sociogeny and impelling individuals to identify themselves as

¹¹⁶ "Rethinking 'Aesthetics'", pp.254-255.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p.254.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p.254.

conspecifics with fellow "normal" subjects. Their main symbolic function is to signify the "other" and drive subjects to attach themselves to the adaptive "truth" and the mode of sociogeny.¹¹⁹

Adding to the symbolic role of social pariahs that the concept of abject sheds light on, the concept of liminal figures introduces another dimension: the unique potential for cognition of the function of discourse. Referring back to *Gada*, Legesse suggests that the liminally deviant category possesses a certain cognitive advantage. Liminal, in a literal sense, refers to a situation of being on the threshold of two different places. Liminal figures are not completely positioned outside the boundary of society but rather situated both internally and externally, allowing their consciousness to be conditioned and formulated according to the same mode of sociogeny as established intellectuals. Consequently, they experience negative psychoaffects toward themselves. To be more specific, their consciousness is conditioned in a way that they subjectively experience the meanings attached to themselves as negative. It is this necessarily conflicted consciousness of liminal figures that Wynter assumes provides potential moments of going beyond the self-evident adaptive truths and gaining a sense of the inside/outside of society.

To understand the specific nature of the particular cognitive experience of a racialized black as a neocolonial liminal figure, let us first examine a sentence where Fanon evaluates cases of black self-alienation as follows: ““All in all, I grasp my narcissism with both hands and I reject the vileness of those who want to turn man into a machine. If the debate cannot be opened up on a philosophical level—i.e., the fundamental demands of human reality— I

¹¹⁹ For concepts that touch upon the embodied negativity serving a society as a discursive system, Wynter also mentions Lacan's *lack-of-being* and Bauman's *conceptual otherness*. For the discussions related to the latter two concepts, see Wynter's "Is 'Development' a Purely Empirical Concept or also Teleological? A Perspective from 'We the Underdeveloped'", *Prospects for Recovery and Sustainable Development in Africa*, pp. 299-316. Also, *Do Not Call Us Negroes: How 'Multicultural' Textbooks Perpetuate Racism*.

agree to place it on a psychoanalytical level: in other words, the “misfires”, just as we talk about an engine misfiring.”¹²⁰

Fanon's metaphor of an engine for human consciousness brings to mind the notion of modern technology and the phenomenological crisis that Heidegger explains using the example of a broken hammer.¹²¹ When you are engaged in an activity, you do not consciously think about the tool you are using. It is only when the hammer breaks or malfunctions that the activity stops, and you become aware of the tool. Heidegger argues that when everything functions accordingly, you do not have a specific sense of the object. Applying this notion to Fanon, the engine of human consciousness, when engaging with the self, others, and the world in a phenomenologically sound or normative way, does not have a chance to reflect on its nature; everything is self-evident. However, when the lived experience or body schema breaks down and becomes problematic, one is inadvertently granted the intellectual distance to consider the issue as a separate and independent matter.

In connection to the notion of liminal counter-feeling as an experience of a phenomenological failure, let us return to Fanon's text. As evident from the expression "the lived experience (*l'expérience vécue*)" in the title, it is a phenomenological description of an experience. The structure of experience in phenomenology involves what Husserl referred to as "intentionality," which indicates the state of consciousness as being directed toward objects. For an experience to occur, there must be an object as the focus of perception.¹²² In this context, we can understand the lived experience that Fanon writes about as a report of the

¹²⁰ Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.34.

¹²¹ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*.

¹²² Smith, David Woodruff, "Phenomenology", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/>>.

failure of such intentionality. The perception is frustrated from directing toward the outside and is repeatedly forced to turn toward oneself.

Drawing from Merleau-Ponty's explanation, it is a phenomenology of the body's relation with space, starting not from an "I can" but from "I cannot."¹²³ The bodily awareness of a racialized body within a colonial society is that of an object.¹²⁴ If we understand sensuous perceptions as cognitions through our body, we can think of Fanon's lived experience as a sensuous perception, like the following: it is a perception of society as a colonial order of discourse, with racialized black individuals serving as symbolic death, through the perception of one's objectified body. In other words, the depiction of a liminal lived experience as a phenomenological failure reveals the boundary of the colonial order of discourse. The idea of intentionality is useful here: liminal figures, as subjects with consciousness, can distance themselves from the dominant discourse and regard it as an object. With such intentionality, liminal consciousness can recognize the discursive representation of the absolute and universal as a structural formulation made effective through the positing of a logical refuse: the liminal self.

In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sarah Ahmed writes about parallel phenomenological failures that reveal the limitations of the posit of universality in phenomenology's discourse. For example, Husserl's nonchalant way of "putting aside" his familial background to philosophize the phenomenological experience is contrasted with Adrienne Rich's experience of being

¹²³ "The body's relationship with space is therefore intentional, although as an "I can" rather than an "I think"; bodily space is a multi-layered manner of relating to things, so that the body is not "in" space but lives or inhabits it."
Toadvine, Ted, "Maurice Merleau-Ponty", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/merleau-ponty/>>.

¹²⁴ "Merleau-Ponty, following Husserl, suggests that the "I can" proceeds from overcoming disorientation, from reorienting the body so that the line of the body follows the vertical and horizontal axes. ... The weakening of this involvement causes body to collapse, and to become an object alongside other objects. ... The point at which the body becomes an object, Fanon's phenomenology of the black body begins."
Ahmed, Sarah. *Queer Phenomenology*, p.159.

constantly bombarded by her children whenever she tries to engage in writerly activities.¹²⁵ Rich, as a woman, cannot simply "put aside" her familial duties. By juxtaposing these two different experiences, Ahmed demonstrates that the supposed universality of phenomenology is only relevant when not accounting for the social roles individuals are assigned to play. In this way, the theory of phenomenology is shown to be lacking in accounting for fundamental differences in the subjective experiences brought about by social identities. Alternatively, we can also say that phenomenology, with such lack, re/produces significations of the socially unburdened selective beings as the ideal mode of being—a mode of sociogeny, a symbolic life.

Based on the recapitulation of Aesthetic 2, we have learned that it is founded on the ultimate dysgenic marker of black race, which leads to the social effectiveness and naturalization of other marginalized identities. In other words, physical markers such as age, gender, or disabilities are incorporated and used to determine the value of different bodies based on the measure of race. Social and economic hierarchies are then distributed to bodies according to their relative "proximity" to blacks.

In light of this understanding, I suggest rethinking liminal figures as liminal bodies. Liminal bodies contribute to the fungibility of human bodies, becoming the source of negative lived experiences for individuals in the neocolonial society. The conditioned affective response to liminal bodies effectively prevents the recognition of the continuity between non-liminal bodies and liminal bodies.

In this sense, we can understand that liminal consciousness plays a significant role in the event of an autopoietic turn/overturn. As an embodied consciousness, it possesses the potential

¹²⁵ Ibid, p.32.

to cognize the boundary of discourse through the experience of perceiving its own body. In the next section, to highlight the affective experiences and transformations occurring in consciousness, I present a phenomenological understanding of an autopoietic turn/overturn.

Chapter 3. Toward a Countercolonial Aesthetics

For the final stage of a "deciphering practice," Wynter hypothesizes that further cooperation of the deciphering practice with the field of neuroscience may reveal the physical impact of liminal counter-productions upon human discursive-neuronal orders of consciousness, that "it should be testable and verifiable that these counter-signifying practices induce such a counter-writing, and such a counter-politics of 'feelings'".¹²⁶ This counter-writing can be linked to Wynter's theoretical goal of an "autopoetic turn/overturn."¹²⁷ However, despite being suggestive, Wynter does not provide concrete explanations about how affective experiences of counter-productions can lead to an overcoming of the neocolonial order of discourse. In order to speculate on this matter, I first suggest that we approach an autopoetic turn/overturn phenomenologically, as it opens up to consciousness. Subsequently, I discuss counter-productions, which can induce a shift in the lived experiences of the audience.

3.1. Autopoetic Turn/Overturn and Liminal Bodies

In this section, building upon the previous section's phenomenological approach to liminal consciousness, I expand on the notion of an autopoetic turn/overturn as interpreted by Lewis Gordon as a phenomenological event.

¹²⁶ "Rethinking 'Aesthetics'", p.268

¹²⁷ "The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoetic Turn/Overturn, its Autonomy of Human Agency, and the Extraterritoriality of (Self-) Cognition." *Black Knowledges/Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology*. p.209.

In phenomenology, consciousness of the self arises when one distinguishes oneself from the environment and recognizes one's own temporal and spatial situatedness as a being.¹²⁸ Thus, a subject is always understood as an embodied consciousness, with the body serving as the starting point for the emergence of consciousness.¹²⁹

Upon distinguishing oneself from the environment, consciousness is able to perceive an object as a separate entity. An experience is always "of" something, and the object of the experience can be grasped when one directs attention to it. If the object lacks consciousness or has non-human consciousness, this intentional regard amounts to sensory perception.¹³⁰

However, if the object is a human being with consciousness, one must also assume the inner life and subjectivity of the object. This assumption allows for an understanding of the subjective experience of a human other as an intersubjective relation between subjects with different perspectives. Thus, a phenomenological understanding of intersubjective relations involves recognizing the perspectives of others.¹³¹

¹²⁸ The discussions of phenomenology consults the following:
Smith, David Woodruff, "Phenomenology", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/>>.
Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*.

¹²⁹ "To intend, one must intend from somewhere. But somewhere for living beings is an originary point of their own unsurpassability; no living creature can, in other words, surpass its own location except as an analogical positing of that location at another point ('there'). This originary point is the body. If consciousness were not embodied, it would not be somewhere, and not to be somewhere is to be nowhere."
Gordon, Lewis. "Is the Human a Teleological Suspension of Man? Phenomenological Exploration of Sylvia Wynter's Fanonian and Biodicean Reflections," *Caribbean Reasonings: After Man Towards the Human – Critical Essays on Sylvia Wynter*, p.249.

¹³⁰ "...intentional activity always has with it the negation of one state in the positive intention of another. When applied to things that are not conscious, such activity takes the form of surface relations. There is not an 'inside' to which to appeal, which makes the epistemological project one of thematizing how such things appear. ...At such level would only be the sensory-perceptive matrix."
Ibid, p.249.

¹³¹ "Other consciousnesses present multiperspectives on the world and, with them, multiple arrangements that can be communicated in an array of signs and symbols through which language manifests itself. To be conscious of another human being brings with it ever-evolving situations, and these situations, marked by intersubjective relations, set the framework for the layers and layers of concepts and practices that constitute the social world."
Ibid, p.249.

However, in a society where an other is considered a liminal figure, the subject fails to recognize the other as an embodied consciousness worthy of intersubjective relation. In colonial and neocolonial societies, liminal figures, particularly racialized blacks, are only perceived based on their epidermal traits, reducing them to objects of sensory perception. Fanon, as we have seen, describes his experience of being noticed as a black man in white France as such : “the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema.”¹³² As Fanon's experience in white France illustrates, the intersubjective relation between the racialized black and the white is shaped by an epidermal racial schema. The liminal, racialized black person experiences this schema because their epidermal traits are perceived by others, influencing their own lived experiences.

Regarding the lived experience of the viewing subject, we can observe that the physical markers identified on the bodies of liminal figures trigger opiate-blocking neurochemicals, leading to a psychoaffective cognition of these figures as negative. This perception directs one's behaviors away from what the liminal figures represent and toward the prevailing mode of sociogeny. The interaction between the normative human being and the deviant, liminal human other is thus not between two human beings, but rather as one human consciousness perceiving a physically embodied negative object, shaping the lived experiences of both. In such conditions, only certain subjects can contribute to intersubjective relations and consciousness formation; subjectivity is selectively given. In the hegemonic colonial order of discourse, subjectivity is limitedly formulated through intersubjective relations between other subjects who are commensurate with each other. The universality posited and represented in

¹³² Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.92.

such a society is necessarily tautological and solipsistic.¹³³ A society with fundamentally defective human relations cannot genuinely claim universality, as it purports to be.

Gordon suggests that the modern episteme, as Wynter problematizes it, is akin to Sartre's concept of "bad faith,"¹³⁴ where the denial of empathy leads to self-denial. In this context, denying the inner life of Others, particularly liminal figures, inevitably suppresses all consciousness, resulting in an ethical crisis. Systemic exploitation and discrimination stem from the assumption that liminal figures lack subjectivity and are perceived as objects, allowing violence without moral questioning.¹³⁵

Gordon's assessment of violence and ethics is particularly relevant when considering Wynter's critique of the troubling acronym "N.H.I." used by the Los Angeles Police Department.¹³⁶ It stands for "No Humans Involved" and refers to cases involving young, jobless black males living in the inner city ghetto area.¹³⁷ Violence is permitted because these liminal figures are not regarded as worthy subjectivities with inner lives shaping their

¹³³ "His model becomes, in a word, himself, and in such an identity relation, there is only degenerative difference, which issues the return of a contradictory solipsism — the self as world by virtue of a denial of others without whom the self could not have been posited in the first place." "Is the Human a Teleological Suspension of Man?," p.248.

¹³⁴ "Sartre realized that denying the subjective life of others requires suppressing that encounter both outwardly and inwardly. The outer-inner distinction militates against the solipsism occasioned by the denial, for, in effect, such denial exemplifies a desire to be the only point of view, to be, literally, the world. How can there be inner-outer relations when there is nowhere beyond the self? But such a self could not emerge as self except where distinguished from an other self. Sartre's word for this phenomenon is *mauvaise-foi*, 'bad faith.'" Ibid, p.239.

Also, Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Bad Faith and Antiracism*.

¹³⁵ "Fanon's insight, shared by Du Bois, is that where there is no inner subjectivity, where there is no being, where there is no one there, and where there is no link to another subjectivity as ward, guardian, or owner, then all is permitted. Since in fact there is an other human being in the denied relationship evidenced by, say, anti-black racism, what this means is that there is a subjectivity that is experiencing a world in which all is permitted against him or her. The conclusion, marked in red over half a millennium, is ineluctable: structured violence." Ibid, p.240.

¹³⁶ Wynter, Sylvia. "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues", *Voices of the African Diaspora*, pp.13-16.

¹³⁷ "Public officials of the judicial system of Los Angeles routinely used the N. H. I. to refer to any case involving a breach of the rights of young, jobless, black males living in the inner city ghetto." Ibid, p.13.

consciousness. Wynter notes that the police jargon was revealed after the Rodney King case, where media coverage of police brutality against a black male ignited public outrage, leading to the 1992 "South Central Los Angeles Uprising."¹³⁸

This jargon exemplifies normative affects attached to the demographic defined by the term, explaining how the police could act with extreme violence toward black males in the ghetto. Within Wynter's analysis of the United States' social context, the ghetto blacks represent the ultimate liminal figure. As the mode of capital accumulation shifted from production to consumption, the lowest class lost their positions as laborers and producers while still being expected to be consumers.¹³⁹

Their role as liminal figures became instrumental in justifying the social and economic hierarchy, as Affirmative Action programs incorporated middle-class black people closer to normative forms of life after the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. The poor and jobless ghetto blacks' role in the neocolonial phenomenon of aesthetics partly justifies the existence of middle-class black lives to society by distinguishing them from ghetto lives in individual perception.

Additionally, for immigrants of different ethnicities who arrived in the US after the 1960s, the poor and jobless racialized blacks served as the embodied imperative, prompting immigrants to further assimilate into the normative mode of being—the neocolonial mode of sociogeny.

¹³⁸ Wynter's choice of term for what is more commonly called the LA riot or the Rodney King riot. Wynter's intention in choosing "uprising" over "riot" may be to emphasize the nature of the event as a collective resistance against systemic discrimination and violence.

¹³⁹ Here, Wynter quotes Bauman's terminology "post industrial new poor" for explanation. Ibid, p.14. Also, Bauman, Zygmund. *Legislators and Interpreters*, 1987. Wynter expands on the modes of capital as it shifts from production to accumulation and the implication with C.L.R. James' concepts in: "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception", pp 63-91.

The exhibition of negative affects or even physical violence toward ghetto blacks signifies the influence of the hegemonic neocolonial discourse in individuals' consciousness.

Therefore, an autopoietic turn/overtake on the social level should bring about a change where the poor and jobless ghetto black lives are no longer referred to as "no humans" by city officials, and their subjectivity is recognized. Lewis Gordon, in reading Wynter, comments that striving for the status of "human other" is essential for blacks, as it allows for sound and legitimate interactions leading to meaningful transformations for both parties.¹⁴⁰

Having phenomenologically analyzed the neocolonial condition and the autopoietic turn/overtake, it's important to note that liminal subjectivity exists as a phenomenological anomaly. Despite being systematically denied subjectivity, it becomes the only point of consciousness where the neocolonial order of discourse can be regarded as an object. Returning to Wynter's notion of counter-feelings induced by counter-productions, I suggest initiating an autopoietic turn/overtake through cultural productions that provide readers or audiences with an experience of the liminal consciousness—the lived experience of a liminal body.

3.2. Counter-Productions as Sites of Becoming Liminal Bodies

In this section, I explore examples of counter-productions that offer potential experiences of liminal bodies. These counter-productions can function as sites where the audience's

¹⁴⁰ "This dimension suggests an emendation of Wynter's claim that the consequence of the system of man is a human other. Such an other entails a social relationship through which ethical problematics can be formed. The dehumanizing practices that constitute racism are the denial of a human relationship, which means also the denial of an other. It is the claim of a non-self-non-other relationship. A liberation struggle involves, then, not a fight against otherness but laying the groundwork for the claim to being an other — an other human being." "Is the Human a Teleological Suspension of Man?", pp.250-251.

perception of the "reality" is challenged, no longer taken as naturally given. Through such experiences, the hitherto self-evident truths and hegemonic discourse may be perceived as conflicting or no longer absolute.

To begin, let's examine Fanon's "The Lived Experience of the Black Man" as a counter-production. This text vividly portrays an experience of trauma, where the protagonist struggles to find the appropriate language to express a series of overwhelming incidents.¹⁴¹ In the first chapter, we discussed the groundbreaking experience of the gaze. Afterward, the protagonist embarks on a desperate journey to reclaim black subjectivity. Here's a brief summary of the journey depicted in the text.

Initially, the protagonist turns to Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* in search of a theoretical explanation for a parallel situation. However, this text fails to provide an answer because while jewishness is "overdetermined from the inside," blackness is "overdetermined from the outside."¹⁴² The problematics of anti-Semitism do not offer the protagonist a suitable explanation for their experience since the black stereotype, unlike the jewish stereotype, is not manifested in one's demeanor but in one's appearance.

When the protagonist mentions experiencing racism among his fellow white friends, he is met with soothing words, assuring him that color prejudice will soon disappear as it is merely a failure of certain personalities. People try to comfort him by mentioning other respectable black friends they know. However, these responses fail to provide the desired answer.

¹⁴¹ My interpretation of trauma follows Freud's definition:

"Such an event as an external trauma is bound to provoke a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organism's energy and to set in motion every possible defensive measure. ... There is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus, and another problem arises instead—the problem of mastering the amounts of stimulus which have broken in and of binding them, in psychical sense, so that they can be disposed of."

Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, pp.29-30.

¹⁴² "The Lived Experience of a Black Man", *Black Skin, White Masks*, p.95.

Frustrated by the rational approach, the protagonist attempts to affirm the so-called originality of his race, exemplified in Senghor's concept of "rhythm."¹⁴³ He intentionally turns to values considered irrational and primitive, in contrast to the rationalism of Western civilization, struggling to identify with them. However, the emphasis on primitiveness as black originality is soon refuted, as it is argued that primitivism represents a phase in the evolution of civilization, rendering this alternative engulfed by ostensible universalism.

This series of restless yet futile pursuits of salvation for black identity is portrayed in a dialogue form between the protagonist and a personified Western culture. Here, the protagonist continually fails to make the white man acknowledge the legitimacy of the black subject. Instead of being an abstract criticism of colonialism or racism, the use of conversation and ordinary language allows the reader to experience the struggle as the living reality of blacks.

The protagonist then turns to books on black antiquity, seeking proof that black civilizations were not merely a phase from which whites evolved. However, such attempts at demonstration prove futile, as the demonstrations merely serve as an appendix to Western civilization as the absolute standard.

The final blow comes with Sartre's *Black Orpheus*, where black existence is intellectualized as being a phase in the dialectical progression of Marxist revolution: "Negritude is dedicated to its own destruction, it is transition and not result, a means and not the ultimate goal".¹⁴⁴ When all means of protest are exhausted, the protagonist's final resort is an emotional cry:

¹⁴³ Ibid, p.102.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p.112.

“Not responsible for my acts, at the crossroad between Nothingness and Infinity, I began to weep.”¹⁴⁵

In between the search and defeat, visceral descriptions of the protagonist's state of mind are inserted. For example, "Disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other, the white man, who had no scruples about imprisoning me, I transported myself on that particular day far, very far, from my self, and gave myself up as an object. What did this mean to me? Peeling, stripping my skin, causing a hemorrhage that left congealed black blood all over my body.”¹⁴⁶ Through these visceral and emotional descriptions, we come to understand that the colonial order of discourse does not provide the proper language for liminal experiences, which highlights the limit of colonialism's discursive boundary.

After finishing the text, the reader is left with questions charged with equally frustrated emotions. What is the reader to take away from a text that describes failures and the feelings of failures? I suggest that such a frustrated reaction on the part of the reader can be described as a counter-feeling. These psychoaffects of distress are the targeted affective experience of counter-production. Reading "The Lived Experience of the Black Man” situates the reader in the liminal body of the protagonist, allowing for a vicarious experience of the liminal perspective. This experience gives rise to negative affects and makes the reader aware of the perception-conditioning influence of the hegemonic colonial discourse. The cognition of the influence of colonialism is made possible because affects are fundamental to the formation of consciousness. The sociogenetic principle manifests that the conditioning of affects is fundamental to the formation of system-conforming consciousness. While factual data and other objective descriptions are processed through reasoning, this process does not reach the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p.119.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p.92.

fundamental level of affects and thus cannot target the group identity of human consciousness. Cultural productions, such as Fanon's text, directly aim at inducing negative and deviating affects, unsettling the neocolonial consciousness.

Now, we need to bring the task of an autopoietic turn/overturn into the contemporary context and relate it to current cultural productions. To bridge between Fanon's anti-colonial context and the current globally hegemonic neocolonial situation, I will introduce Wynter's own example of a liminal counter-production: Spike Lee's 1989 film *Do the Right Thing*.¹⁴⁷ The story centers on an Italian-owned pizza shop in Brooklyn, New York, which has been open for 25 years and has seen the neighborhood turn into a ghetto. One day, a black customer raises the question of why the owner does not put up pictures of black people on his Wall of Fame, given that the shop serves mainly black customers. When the Italian owner ignores the suggestion, tension builds up between the pizza shop's family and the black neighborhood. One night, a confrontation takes place and escalates into a physical altercation. The police arrive, but their violent intervention causes the death of a young black man. Witnessing this, the crowd erupts into a riot.

The film carries strong feelings of frustration and distress that intensify as the story progresses. We can say that the film is an affective expression of the contemporary liminal black lives. Although the film was released three years before the South Central Los Angeles Uprising, it delivers parallel lived experiences of the racialized ghetto blacks.

Wynter sees that the film's signifying practices are directed against the normative sentiments of our present neocolonial phenomenon of aesthetic. This is not only because the ghetto blacks are presented as protagonists, but also because the protagonists demand due

¹⁴⁷ "Rethinking 'Aesthetics'," p.250.

acknowledgment. In short, the film conveys the neocolonial liminal lived experience that society gives form to yet criminalizes. If at the beginning of the film, the audience does not readily sympathize with the protagonists and their demands, the continuing experience of the protagonist's perspective can lead the audience to feel feelings of injustice by the end of the film. We can say that the experience of sitting through the film affords the audience with affects that counter the neocolonial phenomenon of aesthetic.

At the same time, in addition to the counter-feelings that can be elicited on the part of the audience by following the plot, I take interest in two consecutive scenes in the movie as crucial moments that ignite in the audience an experience of counter-feeling. The first scene shows a quarrel between the son of the Italian pizza shop, Pino, and the black protagonist, Mookie, who works there. When the Italian mindlessly uses a derogatory word for blacks, Mookie asks Pino who his favorite basketball player, rock star, and movie star are. Pino replies, "Magic Johnson, Eddie Murphy, and Prince"—all black people. Mookie intends to see in Pino's response a self-recognition of the absurdity of racism.

However, Pino argues that these stars are "more than black." What is implied is that blackness, as Pino perceives it, excludes excellence or social achievements. In short, the stereotypical understanding of blackness infers a lack of success. After Pino's response, the two part bitterly. In this scene, the audience can understand that Mookie is feeling frustration and anger, yet they may recognize those affects as being separate from themselves.

The next scene shows the neighbors on the block, one at a time, looking straight into the camera and shouting out racial slurs. These people come from different ethnicities and identities, i.e., Black, Italian, Hispanic, Jewish, and Korean. One by one, they fill up the screen and spit out stereotypes of other ethnicities.

CLOSE--MOOKIE

43.

MOOKIE

Dago, wop, garlic-breath, guinea,
pizza-slinging, spaghetti-bending,
Vic Damone, Perry Como, Luciano
Pavarotti, Sole Mio, nonsinging
motherfucker.

CUT TO:

CLOSE--PINO

PINO

You gold-teeth, gold-chain-wearing,
fried-chicken-and-biscuit-eatin',
monkey, ape, baboon, big thigh,
fast-running, three-hundred-sixty-
degree-basketball-dunking spade
Moulán Yan.

CUT TO:

CLOSE--STEVIE

STEVIE

You slant-eyed, me-no-speak-
American, own every fruit and
vegetable stand in New York,
Reverend Moon, Summer Olympics '88,
Korean kick-boxing bastard.

CUT TO:

CLOSE--OFFICER LONG

OFFICER LONG

Goya bean-eating, fifteen in a car,
thirty in an apartment, pointed
shoes, red-wearing, Menudo, meda-
meda Puerto Rican cocksucker.

CUT TO:

CLOSE--KOREAN CLERK

KOREAN CLERK

It's cheap, I got a good price for
you, Mayor Koch, "How I'm doing,"
chocolate-egg-cream-drinking, bagel
and lox, B'nai B'rith asshole.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ *Do the Right Thing*, Spike Lee, 1989, scene 43.

Let us approach this scene from the perspective of the audience's lived experience. Suppose you are not a black person but belong to one of the ethnicities targeted by the racial slurs. The movie has been playing for around half an hour, and you have followed the protagonists with whom you are gradually feeling close. However, their source of frustration is an issue you recognize as ultimately not related to you. You do not live in the ghetto neighborhood, you are not black, and you are not demanding the racist Italian pizza shop owners to hang pictures of your people on the wall of fame. Even when the protagonist, Mookie, experiences direct racism, you might only feel a secondary feeling of injustice.

Then, suddenly, the movie turns to a montage of faces that shout out racist stereotypes. Partly due to the preposterousness and partly due to familiarity, you may find the scene comical. Indeed, the overall reaction in the theater might be laughter. You may feel like you are laughing along with other people in the audience and feel connected to them. However, suddenly the screen fills up with the face of an actor whose eyes look straight into yours and shout out racist stereotypes of your ethnicity. Suddenly, you cannot keep on laughing. The presence of the racist figure on the screen feels domineering, and some of the stereotypes might remind you of incidents you've experienced in your life. At times, you may not have been able to voice objections, and you may have pondered over the notion of the racist slur, even after the incident.

At the same time, you notice the laughter of people around you. These people do not seem to be stirred by these racial slurs. Then you may experience again a feeling of injustice, but this time not secondary. This affective experience directly relates you to the affective experiences of the protagonists. In short, the affective and sensuous experience of the scene transports you to the liminal body.

As a non-normative (non-white) yet non-liminal individual living in a neocolonial society, you may not have recognized the negative affects you experience in relation to the affective experiences of liminal figures. The very function of neocolonial liminal figures is to affectively distance individuals from what they symbolize and further attach them to neocolonial values.¹⁴⁹

Neocolonialism operates by electing the racialized black body as the measure of discriminatory distribution, while biologized representations of bodies essentialize and naturalize their hierarchized social and economic status. This conditioning of affects makes it challenging for individuals to see the connection between the social perception of their bodies and the social perception of liminal bodies. Non-liminal beings find it difficult to recognize that their bodies and the discriminatory social values attached to them give rise to their lived experiences.

In contrast, the scenes in the film *Do the Right Thing* induce negative affective experiences in the audience, enabling a connection with the protagonists through those affects. The counter-feelings reveal to the audience that lived experiences are always racialized experiences. The liminal lived experience parallels the affects experienced in daily life. The counter-feelings offered in the film create an alternative sense of kinship based on the recognition of shared affective experiences.

Having said this, I turn to a current literature and approach it as a counter-production. In Cathy Park Hong's book *Minor Feelings*,¹⁵⁰ the writer introduces the concept of "minor feelings" as affective cognitions of the neocolonial structure. In Hong's term, "minor feelings" are "the racialized range of emotions that are negative, dysphoric, and therefore

¹⁴⁹ Rethinking 'Aesthetics', p.257.

¹⁵⁰ Hong, Cathy Park. *Minor feelings: an Asian American Reckoning*.

untelegenic, built from the sediments of everyday racial experience and the irritant of having one's perception of reality constantly questioned or dismissed."¹⁵¹ In other words, minor feelings are the affective cognitions of the neocolonial structure. These feelings shape Hong's lived experience but also deter her from directly identifying it as a result of neocolonialism.

The neocolonial phenomenon of aesthetic produces what Hong refers to as "minor feelings," which share qualities of conflict similar to Fanon's description of the lived experience of the black man. "'Minor feelings occur when American optimism is enforced upon you, which contradicts your own racialized reality, thereby creating a static of cognitive dissonance.'"¹⁵² The cognitive dissonance arises from the discrepancy between the hegemonic neocolonial discourse and the affective and sensuous cognition of it.

Readers of *Minor Feelings* encounter various vignettes that involve experiences of discrimination and violence, representing identities that do not neatly fit into the notion of Asian American. The essence of Asian American identity is identified in the shared qualities of these lived experiences—the minor feelings.¹⁵³

One specific affect that Hong focuses on is shame. Shame is experienced by non-White, non-liminal individuals when they realize they are not at the top of the social hierarchy but

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p.55.

¹⁵² Ibid, p.56.

¹⁵³ "I turned to the modular essay because I am only capable of 'speaking nearby' the Asian American condition, which is so involuted that I can't stretch myself across it. The more I try to pin it, the more it escapes my grasp..."
Ibid, p.103.

also not situated at the very bottom. This complex position makes them both victims and perpetrators of discrimination.¹⁵⁴

Shame can be considered a transitional affect, sometimes linked to guilt, which may block affective kinship with liminal figures or lead to a defensive attitude that reinforces the hegemonic neocolonial system.¹⁵⁵ At the extreme case, the negative experience of shame can lead to a defensive attitude, which further attaches an individual to the hegemonic, neocolonial system.¹⁵⁶ However, in other instances, shame can lead to a counter-feeling,¹⁵⁷ offering an affective and sensuous experience that raises awareness of society's workings.¹⁵⁸

In her thorough exploration of the affective experience, Hong illustrates how the negative lived experiences of Asian Americans can be connected to the collective experience of individuals living in a neocolonial society.

¹⁵⁴ "Shame is often associated with Asianness and the Confucian system of honor alongside its incomprehensible rites of shame, but that is not the shame I'm talking about. My shame is not cultural but political. It is being painfully aware of the power dynamic that pulls at the levers of social interactions and the cringing indignity of where I am in that order either as the afflicted—or as the afflicter. I am a dog cone of shame. I am a urinal cake of shame. This feeling eats away at my identity until my body is hollowed out and I am nothing but pure incinerating shame."
Ibid, p.76.

¹⁵⁵ "When I was growing up, black and brown kids were casually racist. Korean kids were casually racist. It didn't hurt so much when a nonwhite kid called me slant-eyed, because I had a slur to throw back at them. I can't think of a blameless victim among us. But it would be wrong of me to say that we were all on equal footing, which is why I can't just write about my bad English next to your bad English. In my efforts to speak nearby, I also have to confront the distance between us, which is challenging because once I implicate myself, I can never implicate myself enough. The distance between us is class. In K-town, Koreans worked the front and Mexicans worked the back. I made a friend whom my mother said I couldn't play with, and when I asked why, she said it was because she was Mexican. The horror of it was that I told this friend. I said, 'I can't play with you because you're Mexican,' and she said, 'But I'm Puerto Rican.'"
Ibid, pp.108-109.

¹⁵⁶ "It's also human nature to repel shame by penalizing and refusing continued engagement with the source of their shame."
Ibid, p.88

¹⁵⁷ "Watching a parent being debased like a child is the deepest shame. I cannot count the number of times I have seen my parents condescended to or mocked by white adults. ... To grow up Asian in America is to witness the humiliation of authority figures like your parents and to learn not to depend on them: they cannot protect you."
Ibid, p.77.

¹⁵⁸ "Shame gives me the ability to split myself into the first and third person. To recognize myself, as Sartre writes, 'as the Other sees me.'"
Ibid, p.77.

Simultaneously, Hong aims to ground this commonality in the affective experience to encourage readers to find connections between Asian Americans and other racialized, marginalized individuals.¹⁵⁹ She weaves stories of Asian American injustice with sketches of Richard Pryor, a black stand-up comic, and histories of the Civil Rights movement, leading both the author and readers to unexpected discoveries.:

The first time I saw the famous photograph of Yuri Kochiyama was only a few years ago. The black-and-white photograph was snapped right after Malcom X was shot at Manhattan's Audubon Ballroom on February 21, 1965. He is splayed out on the floor, surrounded by a crowd trying to revive him. She is the only person tending to him whose face isn't cropped out. She is kneeling in her black coat, cradling Malcom X's head on her lap. Upon closer inspection, I notice that she is propping his head up with her two hands while another woman is undoing his tie to better see his bullet wounds. She looks like she is in her forties, wearing cat-eye glasses that frame her thin angular features. Who is this Asian woman? And why am I surprised to see an Asian woman in this photograph?¹⁶⁰

Making connections between different racialized identities is crucial because, without such connections based on parallel lived experiences, individuals may fall back into the neocolonial discursive matrix of perception. In this state, one perpetually desires to reach the norm but constantly fails to do so. Hong describes this situation as follows:

It's like being ghosted, I suppose, where, deprived of all social clues, I have no relational gauge for my own behavior. I ransack my mind for what I could have done,

¹⁵⁹ "So as long as it lasts, I want to write nearby [other ethnicities' bad English]...I can't speak for the Latinx experience, but I can write about my bad English nearby Toscano's bad English while providing gaps between passages for the reader to stitch a thread between us."
Ibid, p.105.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p.186.

could have said. I stop trusting what I see, what I hear. My ego is in free fall while my superego is boundless, railing that my existence is not enough, never enough, so I become compulsive in my efforts to do better, *be* better, blindly following this country's gospel of self-interest, proving my individual worth by expanding my net worth, until I vanish.¹⁶¹

Although "Minor Feelings" may not offer readers an experience as visceral as Fanon's text "The Lived Experience of the Black Man" does, it is a counter-production that provides readers with counter-feelings. The various vignettes describe the negative affective experiences of racialized beings. By reading and connecting different episodes, readers come to recognize that the lived experiences of Asian Americans are not solely the result of a system that also shapes the experiences of other marginalized identities. Instead, they realize there can be a kinship between different identities based on such shared experiences.

3.3. Transformation in Bodies

For the conclusion of the chapter, I propose that an autopoietic turn/overtake entails a transformation in human bodies. The transformation of liminal bodies during an autopoietic turn/overtake progresses through three stages: from being objectified bodies to becoming sites for experiencing counter-feelings, and ultimately establishing themselves in novel forms. Let us recapitulate each stage.

Regarding the initial condition of liminal bodies, which we explored through Fanon's "The Lived Experience of the Black Man," I will provide an additional example: the concept of

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p.35

"pieza." Wynter's notion of pieza is borrowed from the Trinidadian scholar C.L.R. James' theory and describes the historical origin of fungible human bodies.¹⁶² Pieza was "the name given by the Portuguese, during the slave trade, to the African who functioned as the standard measure. He was a man of twenty-five years, approximately, in good health, calculated to give a certain amount of physical labor."¹⁶³ It was the standard measure of value for African slaves. This standard measure was then used to commodify other subjugated human bodies, determining their worth based on various categories such as age and gender: "for example, three teenagers equaling one pieza, and older men and women thrown in a job lot as refuse."¹⁶⁴

From this historical context, we can deduce that since the establishment of the Atlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century, the racialized black body has served as a general category of value, commodifying other subjugated human bodies and giving rise to human fungibility. In its initial condition, the liminal body functions as the operative site of signification for the mode of sociogeny and its discursive statements by being objectified.

However, with a countercolonial aesthetics and its task of an autopoietic turn/overtake, we can reevaluate liminal bodies as sites that yield potential counter-meanings. The conflictual experience of one's own body can turn into a cognition of the discursive boundary of neocolonialism, surpassing the limitations of phenomenology.

Simultaneously, certain counter-productions provide phenomenological experiences where the audience can step into the liminal body and experience the neocolonial discourse as conflictual and limited. These cognitions are affective and sensuous in nature.

¹⁶² This is also to show that although Wynter uses scientific concepts to explain human consciousness, Wynter understands that the circulation of descriptive statements are necessarily inflected by human bodies.

¹⁶³ Wynter, Sylvia. "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception," p.81.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p.81.

Counter-productions aim to induce a counter-feeling, which leads to an affective cognition of kinship. Through the phenomenological experience of a counter-production, the non-normative and non-liminal audience can recognize a continuum between their own negative affective experiences and the lived experiences of the liminal figures.

Finally, with an autopoietic turn/overturn, we can expect a transformation of the liminal bodies, which involves three aspects: physiological changes involving the IRS, changes in one's perception of other human bodies, and changes in one's regard of one's own body.

Wynter's sociogenetic principle and the mechanism of IRS enlighten us that a transformation of human consciousness involves the realignment of our neurobiological mechanism. In this sense, a new orientation in consciousness leads to a literal change in the human body, a rewiring of the neural system.

Furthermore, with the shift in consciousness, one no longer perceives the physical markers on other human bodies as one used to. The transformation of human consciousness leads to the rewriting of society as an order of discourse and its inscription of human Others. As a result, a human body perceives and reacts to other human bodies in a novel way. Similarly, the experience of one's own body through the gaze of others is also bound to transform. In the phenomenological sense that one's self-identity is based upon the reception of oneself by others, such a shifted experience of being seen yields a transformed understanding of one's own body.

In this chapter, I explored the autopoietic turn/overturn as a phenomenological event and imagined potential counter-feelings that can initiate it. The counter-feelings take the form of affective and sensuous cognitions and can be induced through the phenomenological experience that a counter-production provides. Wynter emphasizes that a sense of symbolic

kinship grounds a human society, and through counter-feelings, countercolonial aesthetics aims to induce a sensuous and affective kinship.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I introduced the concept of countercolonial aesthetics and explored how affective and sensuous cognitions of subversive potential can be induced through cultural productions involving liminal bodies, working against the effects of the hegemonic neocolonial discourse.

As I have demonstrated, Wynter's theoretical expansion upon Fanon's seminal call for sociogeny incorporates neuroscientific discoveries while recognizing the fundamental role of narratives in fully understanding human consciousness. Symbolic messages, often presented in the form of binary oppositions and therefore rhetorical, condition human perception by eliciting sensibilities of pleasure for normative values and sensibilities of pain for deviating values. The resulting effects of this neurochemical conditioning process are subjectively experienced as affects. Consequently, we are provided with a framework to consider the experience of affective cognitions in relation to the task of overturning the hegemony of neocolonialism.

Simultaneously, the concept of race has prompted a reevaluation of the notion of the body and its role in shaping the lived experiences of individuals within a neocolonial society. The historical analysis of neocolonialism reveals that while all human societies designate certain individuals as liminal figures, embodying negativity in contrast to the ideal mode of sociogeny, the emergence of biology, particularly the Darwinian rhetoric of bioevolution, has facilitated the use of race to designate colonial liminal figures. In other words, whereas in different societies, liminal figures are explained as those who have violated a fundamental social rule, in colonial and neocolonial societies, the very epidermal traits of human bodies

are presented to individual perception as the basis for the rejected status of liminal figures.

The colonial social order sustains its system by appropriating an entire group of people through racialization and naturalizing their marginalized status as a consequence of genetics.

Furthermore, with Wynter's theory I highlighted the fact that racialization enables the fungibility of human bodies. Based on racial categorization, other physical markers such as age, gender, sexuality, disability, and so on, are selected and subsequently used to justify the discriminatory distribution of social and economic opportunities. In a way, we can say that our ability to identify marginalized identities and correlate them with their physical attributes is a result of the workings of neocolonialism.

Based on this understanding of the significance of bodies in colonialism, we can interpret the affective and sensuous cognitions of liminal racialized blacks regarding their own bodies as inherently subversive. As demonstrated through the exploration of Fanon's "The Lived Experience of the Black Man," the black subject's negative perception of their own body—a deviant psychoaffect—becomes a moment of visceral realization of their body's role in perpetuating the colonial society. In essence, the subject recognizes the influence of colonialism against the grain of the conditioning process of normative perception.

In addition to the conflicting first-hand experiences of liminal bodies, I also suggest that the negative affective experiences of non-liminal, non-normative individuals can potentially be subversive. Counter-productions have the capacity to evoke in the non-liminal audience an affective cognition of the interconnectedness between their bodies and the liminal bodies.

In relation to this, I depart from interpretations of black lived experiences that view them as fundamentally distinct from other minority experiences and therefore untranslatable. I do not believe that the ultimate unattainability of the racialized black experience should be the final

message of either Wynter's or Fanon's theoretical endeavors. The centrality of race does not imply that other marginalized identities are secondary or peripheral. In fact, Wynter often refers to the neocolonial, biocentric mode of sociogeny as a "genre of 'Man'" and attributes the origin of the concept of "genre" to gender identities:

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." Once you say, "besides ontogeny, there's sociogeny," then there cannot be only one mode of sociogeny; there cannot be only one mode of being human; there are a multiplicity of modes. So I coined the word "genre," or I adapted it, because "genre" and "gender" come from the same root. They mean "kind."... I'm trying to insist that "race" is really a code-word for "genre". Our issue is not the issue of "race". Our issue is the issue of the genre of "Man". It is this issue of the "genre" of "Man" that causes all the "-isms".¹⁶⁵

Wynter's understanding of gender is that it has functioned as the original and most persistent signifying category for establishing a mode of sociogeny, an ideal mode of being human specific to a society. Different societies and different times have attached various categories simultaneously to human bodies, creating their respective genre of "Man." Therefore, while the historical examination of colonialism and neocolonialism highlights the concept of race and approaches it through the lived experiences of racialized blacks, the theory demonstrates that the symbolic values imposed upon racialized blacks are inherently linked to other minorities and their lived experiences. Consequently, while this thesis acknowledges the historicity and centrality of race to neocolonialism, the implications of countercolonial aesthetics should not be narrowly interpreted as limited solely to race.

¹⁶⁵ Sylvia Wynter and Greg Thomas, "Proud Flesh Inter/Views Sylvia Wynter", *Proud Flesh: A New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics & Consciousness*.

In this thesis, with the concept of countercolonial aesthetics I developed the discussion on two different levels. In the first two chapters, I approached the aesthetics broadly as concerning the formation of consciousness and of a sense of identity. Then in the final chapter, I looked at different cultural productions which can potentially undo the colonial, normative consciousness. In the sense that I invest in the idea of transformational experience of cultural productions, it can be said that countercolonial aesthetics does deal with traditional topics of aesthetics, one of which is the experience of artworks. However, the liminal counter-productions which are mentioned in this thesis cannot be strictly defined as “art”; to be specific, Fanon’s text of “Lived Experience of the Black Man” cannot be neatly categorized as a writing that belongs to the genre of either literature or academic text. Similarly, one cannot help but withhold the attempts to define the specific genre for the proses written by poet Cathy Park Hong in *Minor Feelings*. In this way, we can say that countercolonial aesthetics does not distinguish between what is art and what is not; instead, I prefer to use Wynter’s more inclusive and neutral term of “cultural production”. Cultural production refers generally to creations yielded by human consciousness for human consciousness. While cultural productions of normative consciousness function to serve the autopoiesis of a given society, those cultural productions created by liminal consciousness potentially convey a sense of the limit of the given reality, and thereby allows for a sense of an alternative reality.

Also, while the primary focus of countercolonial aesthetics on cultural productions lies in the cognitive transformations that can be achieved through the experience of them, its understanding of cultural productions is not solely utilitarian. Both Wynter and Fanon write about specific artworks and their special potentials. Fanon provides an extensive description

of the changes observed in artworks of different genres that accompany the emergence of an authentic national consciousness.¹⁶⁶ For Wynter, poetry stands out from other discourses and cultural productions due to its grasp of human nature.¹⁶⁷ Poetry highlights the narrative and fictive elements that are inherent to human existence, implicitly and explicitly demonstrating that humans write their realities and selves into being. In this regard, I propose that countercolonial aesthetics integrates the poetic understanding of human nature into the broader comprehension of human beings.

Having explored the new realm that opens up in the realm of countercolonial aesthetics, a natural question arises: what becomes of the discipline of aesthetics following Fanon and Wynter's reinterpretation of it?

Upon the publication of "Rethinking 'Aesthetics,'" a former colleague of Wynter at West Indies University expressed frustration in an open letter, pondering the implications of her work for his role as an aesthetician and the inherent coloniality embedded within the discipline.¹⁶⁸ After outlining in this thesis a preliminary framework for countercolonial aesthetics, I propose that Wynter's reimagining of aesthetics brings us back to the original notion of the discipline: a study of sensuous perceptions. However, countercolonial aesthetics

¹⁶⁶ Fanon, Frantz. "On National Culture", *Wretched of the Earth*.

¹⁶⁷ "Nevertheless, Césaire maintained that in the midst of this 'great silence,' a new form of knowledge—a new form of "science of ourselves—is now possible, indeed necessary. Such a new 'science,' he proposed, must be one that returns to the 'very first days of humanity'—the 'very first days of the species' on what is now natural-scientifically cum linguistically known to be the Southwest region of Africa—and thereby takes as its starting point the uniquely human capacity to convey meaning and symbols through language, i.e., through the Word. And it is 'on the word,' Césaire wrote, that he—line the poet—'gambles all our possibilities[...as the] first and last chance' for humankind. For just 'as the new Cartesian algebra permitted the construction of a theoretical physics, he continued, 'so too an original handling of the word can make possible at any moment a new theoretical and heedless science that poetry could already give an approximate notion of. Then the time will. Come again,' he concluded, 'when the study of the word will condition the study of nature'."

Wynter, Sylvia. "The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overturn, its Autonomy of Human Agency, and the Extraterritoriality of (Self-) Cognition." *Black Knowledges/Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology*, p. 209.

¹⁶⁸ Taylor, Clyde. "Report from Beyond the Aesthetic Zip Code Zone To: Sylvia Wynter." *Journal of West Indian Literature*, pp.8-11.

goes beyond the traditional boundaries of reason and senses, now encompassing a broader scope of knowledge and topics. In light of contemporary findings in neuropsychology and cognitive science that underscore the significance of affective intelligence for overall human consciousness, countercolonial aesthetics contributes by speculating on the nature of diverse modes of affective experiences that can prompt a shift in human cognition. Countercolonial aesthetics can delve into transformative affective experiences and how they can be induced in individuals. It can also explore the nature of the transformative impact that certain affective experiences can have on individuals' established perceptions within a neocolonial society. With these various areas of inquiry opening up within the field of aesthetics, this thesis suggests that the discipline of aesthetics can pioneer the sensual exploration of new kinships and radically expand the cognitive boundaries of "us."

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국문 초록

본고는 실비아 윈터와 프란츠 파농의 이론에 기반하여 경계적 몸들(liminal bodies)의 체험된 경험들(lived experience)의 전복적 가능성을 탐구한다. 이를 위해 우선 본고는 오늘날의 전 지구적인 위기 상황을 신식민주의(neocoloniality)의 상태로 진단한다. 이러한 인식은 식민주의를 해게모니화된 서구의 사유 구조와 근본적으로 연결된 것으로 해석하는 탈식민적(decolonial)인 접근법에 기반한다. 본고는 서구의 인식체계의 핵심에는 인간 본성에 대한 두 가지의 이분법적인 이해가 있다고 파악한다. 우선 인간의 본질에 대해서는 정신과 신체로 나뉜 재현과 접근이 이루어져 왔으며, 또한 인간의 의식에 대해서는 이성과 감각이라는 이분법적이고 위계화된 인지가 상정되어 온 것이다. 본고는 이러한 서구의 인식 체계 속에서 인종이라는 허구적 개념이 인간의 몸에 덧씌워졌고, 이를 통해 인간의 몸이 상호교환 가능한(fungible) 재화로써 식민주의와 신식민주의 사회 속에서 착취되어 왔다고 분석한다.

본고는 인종화된 몸들과 그들의 체험된 경험을 실천적으로 분석함으로써 이러한 이분법들을 봉합하고자 한다. 본고는 식민지 시대와 신식민주의 시대의 인종화된 몸들을 ‘경계적 몸’이라고 지칭한다. ‘경계적 몸’은 인종화된 피식민 주체들이 스스로의 신체에 대하여 경험하는 모순된 감각들을 부각하기 위해 고안되었다. 본고는 마추라나의 자기생산체계 개념에 기반하여, 한 사회와 개인 사이에는 규범적인 의식의 구성을 통한 상호적 관계가 존재하며, 이러한 규범적 의식의 구성에는 정동의 조건화가 핵심적인 역할을 한다는 것을 제안한다. 이 과정에서 본고는 인간의 의식과 정동(affect) 사이의 관계를 체화된 인지(embodied cognition)의 관점에서 재정의한다.

체화된 정동과 감각적 인식이 인간의 의식과 사회의 구성에 핵심적이라는 이해를 바탕으로, 본고는 경계적 몸들의 체험된 경험 속에는 해게모니화된 신식민주의의 담론적 한계에 대한 인지를 제공하는 특수한 감각적 지각의 순간들이 존재한다고 제안한다. 나아가, 본고는 경계적 몸의 감각적 지각을 간접적으로 경험하는 것이 신식민주의의 전복을 위해 기능할 수 있음을 제안한다. 이에 대한 예시로, 본고는 경계적 몸의 체험된 경험을 관객에게 제공하는 몇몇 문화적 생산물들을 분석한다. 궁극적으로, 본고는 신식민주의의 전복이 체화된 경험의 변화 뿐만 아니라 몸 자체의 변화로 이어질 수 있다고 제안한다. 체화된 정동과 감각적 경험의 전복성에 대한 탐구를 기반으로 신식민주의에 대한 넘어서기를 상상한다는 점에서, 본고는 카운터콜로니얼(countercolonial) 미학에 대한 개괄에의 기초적인 시도라고 할 수 있다.

주요어: 실비아 윈터, 프란츠 파농, 탈식민성, 식민성, 몸, 정동, 체화된 인지, 감각적 지각, 체화된 경험, 자기생산체계

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