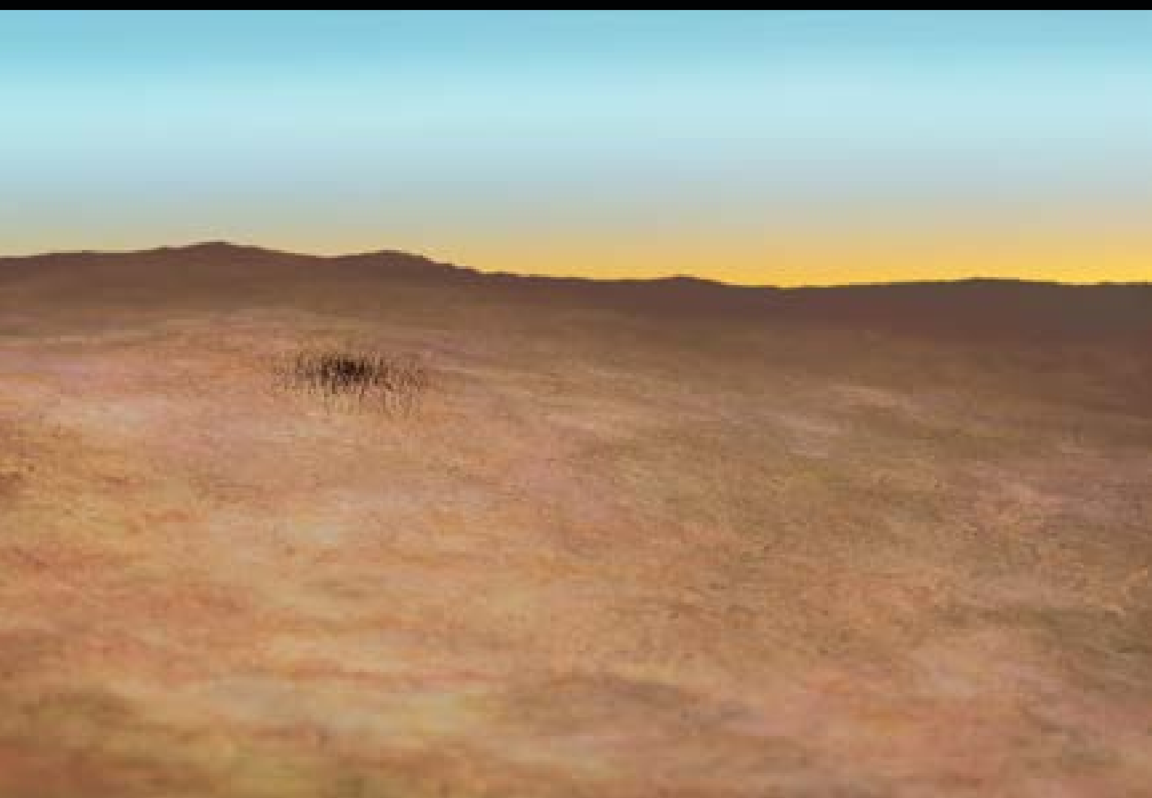

The Difference Aesthetics Makes

On the Humanities "After Man"

Kandice Chuh

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Cover art: Allan deSouza, "He gazed into the liquid
darkness in which desires drowned, from where the
body's delicious pains emerged." Photograph. Courtesy
of the artist and Talwar Gallery, New York.

For Josh, Cole, and Georgia,
With love.

The struggle of our new millennium will be between the ongoing imperative of securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself, and that of securing the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves.

— SYLVIA WYNTER, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom"

Our contemporary moment is so replete with assumptions that freedom is made universal through liberal political enfranchisement and the globalization of capitalism that it has become difficult to write or imagine alternative knowledges, to act on behalf of alternative projects or communities. Within this context, it is necessary to act within but to think beyond our received humanist tradition and, all the while, to imagine a much more complicated set of stories about the emergence of the now, in which what is foreclosed as unknowable is forever saturating the "what-can-be-known." We are left with the project of visualizing, mourning, and thinking "other humanities" within the received genealogy of "the human."

— LISA LOWE, "The Intimacies of Four Continents"

I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism that would try not to judge but to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply not judgments but signs of existence; it would summon them, drag them from their sleep. Perhaps it would invent them sometimes—all the better. All the better. Criticism that hands down sentences sends me to sleep; I'd like a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be sovereign or dressed in red. It would bear the lightning of possible storms.

— MICHEL FOUCAULT, "The Masked Philosopher"

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Preface

The Difference Aesthetics Makes offers a series of propositions intended to describe a humanism different from bourgeois liberal humanism, and to suggest how and toward what ends the humanities might be organized around such an alternative and what work they might do. While others have responded to the manifold critiques of liberal humanism through work circulating under such rubrics as post-, anti-, or critical humanism, in this book, I try to bring to bear the subjugated or disavowed humanisms—what I provisionally and collectively refer to as *illiberal humanisms*—generated through intellectual and creative work disidentified from bourgeois liberalism and its cognate onto-epistemologies. I show how illiberal humanisms afford a humanities that illuminates the role of bourgeois liberal humanism and its accompanying humanities in the (re)production of social inequality by their contribution to the naturalization of social hierarchies, while they also provide alternative theorizations and models for ways of being and knowing, and the elicitation of sensibilities that accord with them. Illiberal humanisms bring forward an understanding of human beingness to be defined not by discrete and self-possessed individuality but instead by constitutive relationality; they argue the displacement of the primacy of the visual characterizing the epistemologies of bourgeois liberal modernity by the generation of rationalities that make sense through visceral multisensory experiences of the world; they afford the emergence of a critical taxonomy that features encounter without conquest and entanglement in lieu of terms and concepts inhering in knowledge paradigms that hold the political and cultural, and economic and artistic as discretely bounded realms; and they facilitate the articulation and elaboration of epistemes thoroughly incommensurate with the developmental geographies and temporalities of bourgeois liberal humanism.

It is a grounding premise of this book that the centrality of the aesthetic to the philosophies and practical structures of liberal humanism—in this book, exemplified by Kant's work and its impact, and by the discipline of

English and the field of American Literature—keys us into the ways that this reigning humanism sorts people into the fit and unfit, the rational and the unreasonable, Man and other, Man and woman, and Human and racialized subject. In this project, aesthetics refers to the relationships among the senses and the processes and structures of value making by which certain sensibilities become common sense and others are disavowed, subjugated, or otherwise obscured. Aesthetics in this regard may be understood as integral to the production of particular kinds of difference—for example, that of the racial and colonial order, that of sex-gender regulation—as part of the naturalized visceral experience of the world. At the same time, aesthetics are the grounds of uncommon, illiberal sensibilities. These are sensibilities incommensurate to the epistemologies and common sense of liberal humanism: they posit relationality and entanglement rather than individuality and autochthony as the grounds of human ontology; they refuse bourgeois aspirations and illuminate their parochialism; and they radically disidentify from the teleological narrative of progressive development that gives texture to liberal humanism. The aesthetics of illiberal humanisms both emerge from and afford social formations characterized by neither identity nor consensus, and instead by not only shared recognition and apprehension of the damage resulting from such potent fictions, but also a fundamental refusal to be defined or disciplined by them.

In addition to the cited and textual interlocutors animating this book, the discussions here reflect the conversations, both formal and informal, some ongoing and others only momentary, with colleagues in the richest sense of what that term means. Tita Chico, William Cohen, Roderick Ferguson, Gayatri Gopinath, J. Jack Halberstam, Laura Hyun Yi Kang, Lisa Lowe, Jodi Melamed, the late José Esteban Muñoz, Karen Shimakawa, and Siobhan Somerville have in a variety of ways been deeply a part of this project, so much so that it is often difficult for me to distinguish the thoughts that are mine from ours; I've tried to do justice to the ideas that are yours. Their generosity, brilliance, and humor are enabling in every way, in relation to this book and well beyond it.

I'm so pleased also to be able finally to acknowledge, with huge appreciation, the many others who read sometimes aimless drafts, talked with me through unkempt ideas, provided formal and informal research assistance, commiserated and encouraged, induced laughter, gave sustaining care of varying kinds, and through all of it made me try to make this book better:

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I taught for many years at the University of Maryland, College Park, and now work at the CUNY Graduate Center. I learn an enormous amount from students at both institutions; they collectively have my thanks, as their work and engagement infuse and invigorate everything, including most certainly this project.

My thanks to Duke University Press for publishing this book. My editor, Ken Wissoker, offered astonishing support and insight—to say nothing of patience and friendship—over the many, many years it took to shape this project into a book. I am grateful as well for Elizabeth Ault's knowledgeable guidance and Christopher Catanese's and Stephanie Gomez Menzies's smart and careful work in shepherding me and this book through publication. I'm indebted to the critical eye of the readers the press secured.

Allan deSouza and Sarah Sze readily provided permission to use images of their work, for which I am enormously grateful. My thanks as well to Adam Rose and Mike Barnett of Sarah Sze Studio for facilitating these permissions. DeSouza's piece is printed here with the gracious courtesy of both the artist and the Talwar Gallery, New York. Sze's work appears courtesy of Tanya Bonakdar Gallery and Victoria Miro Gallery.

I also offer thanks to the audiences who offered generative feedback at the many places I've had opportunity to share pieces of this project: Haverford College, the University of Hong Kong, Clemson University, Yale University, Columbia University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Indiana University, the University of Texas

at Austin, New York University, Northwestern University, and Duke University. Some of these audiences heard the most undeveloped nuggets of this work way back when—my especial thanks for your patience.

Much of this book was thought and written on Peaks Island, Maine, on days enriched by people and place both. All of it was written with the care of family, both bio- and chosen. As ever, I am grateful to my parents for making everything possible, and to my sister, Patricia Chuh, for her abiding love. Of Josh, Cole, and Georgia, to whom this book is dedicated, I feel most strongly the inadequacy of words to convey gratitude and love; you have them both in abundance.

Anything worthwhile in this book results from being with this enormous, wonderful collective of people; the errant bits are completely my own.

Introduction

The Difference Aesthetics Makes

Our present arrangements of knowledge . . . were put in place in the nineteenth century as a function of the epistemic/discursive constitution of the "figure of Man." . . . Therefore, the unifying goal of minority discourse . . . will necessarily be to accelerate the conceptual "erasing" of the figure of Man. If it is to effect such a rupture, minority discourse must set out to bring closure to our present order of discourse. —SYLVIA WYNTER, "On Disenchanting Discourse"

I write in the conviction that sometimes it is best to sabotage what is inexorably to hand. — GAYATRI SPIVAK, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*

While it is impossible to ignore the manifold adverse effects of the corporatization and intensifying privatization of the university on the humanities, neither is it possible to stand simply in defense of the disciplinary formations clustered under the rubric of "the humanities," which have been and continue to be instrumental to the production and sustenance of social hierarchies and their subtending structures and material inequalities. This, the overarching proposition of this book, comes of acknowledging that the humanities and their corollary disciplinary structures have long been central to the organization and conduct of social life constituting Western Civilization.[1] The history of the humanities and the disciplinary structures organizing their emergence is of a piece with the history of the civilizational discourses subtending the legitimation of empire and capital, and bespeaks the onto-epistemologies that have come to secure liberal modernity's common sense. In this light, the crisis confronting the humanities calls less for their

defense and instead prompts the crafting of a vision of what a defensible humanities might be and do, and how it differs from its dominant iteration.

This book pursues such a project. I try to elaborate the principles and concepts of this other humanities, derived from what I provisionally refer to as "illiberal humanisms." Radically different from liberal humanism and its cognate humanities, these other humanisms, these other humanities, have long existed and percolate institutionally largely within and through minoritized discourses. *The Difference Aesthetics Makes* records my effort to enunciate this alternative. The illiberal humanities are directed toward the protection and flourishing of people and of ways of being and knowing and of inhabiting the planet that liberal humanism, wrought through the defining structures of modernity, tries so hard to extinguish. They are part of the project of "bring[ing] to closure our present order of discourse," as Sylvia Wynter elegantly puts it, such that "the human" is and can be thought and apprehended for the fullness and radical diversity of being aggressively discounted in and by bourgeois liberal humanism and its contemporary materialization through neoliberal ideologies.[2]

This project is pointedly inspired by Wynter, from whose writings this book takes its subtitle. Throughout her capacious work, she has insisted on taking Western humanism and its manifestations in the practices of racial colonialism as objects of knowledge. Several decades ago, Wynter cautioned against the seductions of incorporation into the institution in the course of theorizing the need to go "beyond the grounding analogic of the episteme or 'fundamental arrangements of knowledge' of which our present practice of literary criticism (in effect of normal 'majority discourse') is an interconnected component."[3] This includes going "beyond the ontology of the figure of man and the empowering *normalizing* discourses with which this 'figure,' as the projected model/criterion of being of the globally dominant Western-European bourgeoisie, is still enchantedly constituted."[4] Wynter establishes, in other words, the need for us to engage the human, to think and work "after Man."

My effort to do so by drawing out illiberal humanisms and nominating them as such may be understood as an attempt to give positive weight to alternatives to liberal humanism—that is, to specify the content and contours of such alternatives so that in collective, collaborative form, they may shift the grounds of sensibility, from what we are called to stand against to what we will stand for under the penumbra of the humanities. For reasons

I discuss more fully later in this introduction, I emphasize and use aesthetic inquiry as a method necessary to bringing illiberal humanisms to the fore. Perhaps counterintuitively, because of the role of aesthetics in securing the common sense of bourgeois liberal modernity, aesthetic inquiry provides entry to the apprehension of illiberal, uncommon sensibilities. It is the procedure for calling into question the structures and processes of (e)valuation that subtend the *sensus communis* and the means by which sensibilities that differ and dissent from liberal common sense are brought to bear. This book unfolds by attending to this double-voiced quality of the aesthetic. As a method, aesthetic inquiry insists that we acknowledge a dialectical relationship between liberal and illiberal humanisms. By doing so, it illuminates the need to activate ways of knowing cognizant of the exponentially greater power and authority that has secured liberalism in the structuring of modernity, and submits that the defunctioning of that authority cannot be accomplished without the elaboration of understandings of the human and cognate rationalities afforded by subjugated knowledges. As I suggest in what follows, aesthetic inquiry emphasizes sensibility as a crucial domain of knowledge and politics; it affords recognition of both the relations and practices of power that legitimate and naturalize certain ideas over others, and the knowledge and ways of living subjugated or disavowed in the process. My effort here is to emphasize poiesis in critique—to amplify, by routing through aesthetics, the presence and potential of alternatives to liberal humanist onto-epistemologies that give rise to the narrow definition of the human around which the modern condition has been organized.[5]

I take as a point of departure for this project the by now familiar, wide-ranging critiques of liberal humanism. They have established the falsity of and damages done by its claims to universality and resoundingly decried its uses and dissemination toward the ends of imperialism and colonialism, White supremacy and capitalism, environmental devastation, patriarchy, and compulsory normativization of multiple kinds. Cathected to liberalism, this humanism has both relied on and naturalized the liberal subject as the ideal human. Accordingly, this reigning humanism advances the notion that goodness, prosperity, and freedom follow from humanity's constitution by discrete and self-conscious individuals in possession of the capacity to transcend subjective experience by sheer will tethered to the faculty of reason. Liberal humanism posits the sovereignty and autochthony of the human even as—or precisely because—it justifies the conquest and dispossession,

enslavement and eradication that constitute the course of liberalism in its intimate partnership with capitalism.

While others have responded to or advanced these critiques by focusing attention away from the human—toward objects and animals, for example—I hesitate to cede the ground of humanism, a reluctance out of which this book in part grew. I think we need more rather than less attention to and accounts of human activity and behavior, accounts that, contra liberal humanism, take as axiomatic the humanity and humanism of precisely those people sacrificed to the liberal ideal. I am interested not so much in arguing who counts as human as I am in claiming humanism as a name designating efforts to proliferate ways of being and knowing radically disidentified from its liberal iteration. To be clear, I am not arguing against other approaches to thinking in difference from liberal humanism; I am, instead, arguing for the emancipation of the human from liberalism's grasp. I wish to claim rather than cede the potency of the construct, to take seriously the parochiality of liberalism's account of the human and bring forward the articulations that insist on the human as a social entity and worldly being, that acknowledge the stubborn hold of liberalism but refuse to collapse into its fold.

I write from the belief that we need to articulate a common ground through the interaction of the specificities of our uncommon bases and practices of knowledge; we—those who are committed to the twofold project of critiquing normativities and the violence of the status quo, and working toward and for alternatives—need to activate ways of going beyond the sometimes strenuous demands of disciplinarity and professionalization, ways that are not so much interdisciplinary but are instead deliberately promiscuous. The dictates of the university demand that we identify categorically—as Asian Americanists, literary critics, historians, queer theorists, and so on—as a shorthand for our intellectual and political genealogies. My elaboration in this book of an illiberal humanities derives in part from the hunch that it may act as an intellectual space for collaborating across and in spite of institutionalized knowledge formations, to challenge disciplinary divisions and the continuing stultifying consequences of liberal and neoliberal multicultural ideologies and corresponding structures. Illiberal humanities in this respect is a construct I offer to provide theoretical leverage; it acts as a counterhegemonic point of entry into illuminating the relationship of knowledge practices to structures and relationships of power. They can thus no more be contained within specific programs or units than can theory

writ large. In this broad-scoping way, illiberal humanities bear the promise of gathering a critical mass constituted in and by an undisciplined relationship to the university. It is the site of the "strange affinities" of which Roderick Ferguson and Grace Hong write, a space of encounters necessary to apprehending the world in uncommonsensical ways.[6] In that spirit and against customary practice, here, I have paid little heed to remaining faithful to any intellectual tradition. I invoke Enlightenment philosophies alongside Caribbeanist epistemologies, Asian Americanist critique with theorizations of Blackness, queer theory and literary studies, and so on. My hope is that these perhaps unexpected encounters will create openings for thinking in unhabituated ways; I believe they have done so for me.

The humanisms sketched in this project are illiberal in their difference from liberalism's tenets, but are not a simple substitute for liberal humanism. Rather, illiberal humanisms bespeak an orientation that recognizes liberal humanism as but one version, one that has come to have the effect of truth through the powerful machinery of modernity. Illiberal humanisms are palpable, available to apprehension, in the thought and creative work of precisely those subjugated by and in the name of liberal humanism. In and through them, relationality and entanglement rather than individuality and authochthony as the grounds of human ontology come to the fore; bourgeois aspirations are illuminated for their fundamental meanness; and a fuller, embodied accounting of reason and rationality emerges. In this, I follow the lead of the artists, writers, and thinkers—sometimes all in one—whose work prompts sustained attention to the human after Man. Langston Hughes, Lan Samantha Chang, Leslie Marmon Silko, Toni Morrison, Ruth Ozeki, Monique Truong, Carrie Mae Weems, Sarah Sze, and Allan deSouza offer work that show and tell us of humanism in an illiberal key. I mean quite literally that I have followed their lead, in that the thinking I offer here comes of trying to make sense (out) of their work, by engaging their ideas and entering their sensibilities. Their work thus functions less as evidence for an argument than as primary interlocutors in this project. In fact, this relationship to their work and ideas is a facet of illiberal humanist pedagogy, wherein mastery is displaced by the prompt to collective thought, and subjects (critics) and objects (texts) are understood in their mutuality. Relationality, as this book suggests, is as much a principle for organizing knowledge production as it is a reference to a condition of being.

The overarching questions with which I am concerned are these: Can

the humanities be oriented toward the ends of generating and proliferating imaginaries disidentified from the ideologies and logics of liberalism and derived instead from attention to the entangled histories of and ongoing connection among the impoverishment of peoples and worlds, enslaved and gendered labor, Indigenous dispossession, developmentalism, and knowledge work? What pedagogies and practices afford the generation and proliferation of imaginaries organized by the radical, irrevocable relationality of these connections? The project at hand is to identify and undo the occlusions of entangled histories by such institutions of knowledge and acculturation as universities, and thus make our knowledge practices accountable to and for them. Concurrently, it is to elicit subjects and social structures disinvested in the consignment of such knowledge to either the realm of past history or the sanitized sphere of pure knowledge, and informed and shaped instead by its ongoingness, its presence and active impact in and on the here and now.

Contexts and Genealogies

Perhaps the influence of cultural studies on this present project is already clear. Explicitly, in a theoretical register, the political edge of aesthetic inquiry rests in its function as an approach that re-sounds what Stuart Hall, in a 1980 essay, helpfully identified as one of the key governing paradigms characterizing British cultural studies of that era, namely, the "culturalist." Growing out of the work of Raymond Williams, the culturalist paradigm emphasizes the study of culture, theorized to refer to "a whole way of life" (Williams, quoted in Hall)—that is, as the analysis of "relationships between elements in a whole way of life." Hall clarifies, "'Culture' is not a practice; nor is it simply the descriptive sum of the 'mores and folkways' of societies. . . . It is threaded through *all* social practices, and is the sum of their interrelationship."[7] It is thus the task of the critic to illuminate and analyze "those patterns of organization, those characteristic forms of human energy which can be discovered as revealing themselves—in 'unexpected identities and correspondences' as well as in 'discontinuities of an unexpected kind'—within or underlying *all* social practices."[8] Oriented thus, my use of the aesthetic is with a view toward investigating how it coordinates relationships between elements in the whole way of life to which we commonly give the name modernity, including those discontinuities, those subjugated ways

of life and knowing, that have persisted as integral if disavowed elements of the current conjuncture.

While Hall was writing in an era (the late 1970s–early '80s) defined by the formalization of what we have become accustomed to calling neoliberalization in economic and social policies, the project of investigating the terrain of (un)common sensibility has renewed exigency now. As the recent surge of student activism on campuses across the world attests, the intensifying inequality along the axes of race, gender, sexuality, class, and caste that describes the global condition localizes in the curricular and social experiences of students. Understood as a historical phenomenon, globalization most often refers to the contemporary establishment and multifaceted and sometimes contradictory consequences of the worldwide integration of finance, technology, economy, and culture. Thoroughly uneven in influence and effect, the widening and acceleration of interconnectedness characteristic of this era has had a pronounced effect on both the idea and practical life of the university.

The realms of the economic and the educational, intimately linked from the inception of the university, now appear increasingly to dissolve into each other such that "audit culture" all too accurately describes the global scene of education as much as that of the corporation.[9] As Ned Rossiter observes, despite the quite disparate effects of globalization across the world, there is a "distinctive homogeneity" in much of the educational policies of the globalized world.[10] The everyday lives as well as career itineraries of academics are tethered to mechanisms of accounting whereby both material resources and capital accrue to productivity measured in quantity often delinked from questions of quality or social significance, and the embrace of metrics of efficiency buttresses the increasing reliance on contingent faculty who are regularly paid unlivable wages. As the university has transformed along these lines, that it may not be viable as a site of intellectual work critical of power and policy is emerging as an increasingly compelling truth.[11] The interests of the academy, the marketplace, and the state grow increasingly to be one and the same, with resources flowing to potentially patentable research and away from work less easily commodified.

In the domain of educational policy, both within and outside of the United States, the global now serves as an aspiration (e.g., the production of a global citizenry) as well as a marketing strategy, and is deployed toward the ends of enhancing national competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Globalization has wrought distinctive divisions of labor that correlate with the shift to the particular form capitalism has taken to establish what has saliently been called the Knowledge Economy. While modes of production and labor that emerged in earlier eras continue, they have been supplemented and in some respects overwritten by the commodification of innovation.[12] The university has in this context been a distinctively important site of globalization. In a Knowledge Economy, higher education gains greater prominence as an apparatus of national competitiveness, one dedicated to the production of innovation, and the enormous expansion of state-sponsored universities across the world bespeaks this condition.[13] U.S. colleges and universities have leveraged the value of a U.S. degree in the global economic context by establishing and bolstering international branches.[14] At the same time, internationalization of the student bodies of U.S. universities and colleges has proceeded apace, with a record high of some 975,000 international students in the 2014–15 academic year. Students from India, China, and Brazil account for most of the 10 percent growth from the previous academic year, and students from China constitute a third of the entire number. The internationalization of the student body in U.S. universities is clearly a function of the sharply heavier reliance that academic institutions must have on private sources (tuition dollars and private donors and foundations) in the face of the withdrawal of public funds, but is often rhetorically justified in terms of the opportunity it provides for domestic student interaction with their international counterparts—this, in order better to be prepared for the globalized world.[15]

Within this shifting context, belief in higher education's ability to secure the social mobility promised as part of the American dream is deeply shaken. Remember that social mobility is an index of the significance of demography to life circumstances and involves complex sets of interactions between inherited and acquired capital.[16] In the United States especially, public education is meant to lessen this significance by providing opportunity to accumulate more capital regardless of circumstances of origin. The 1862 Morrill Act ("An Act donating Public lands to the several States and Territories which may provide Colleges for the Benefit of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts") established "the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college [in each state] where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the

mechanic arts . . . in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life" (Section 4), and became the basis for the establishment of public land grant universities. Designed to address the situation of White farmers who were confronting industrialization and corollary waning of their significance to the economy, the 1862 act had an 1890 iteration, which provided for what we now refer to as the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or HBCUs.[17] Along with the Homestead Act passed in the same year, the 1862 Morrill Act documents the seizure of Indigenous lands—some two million square miles—in the service of democracy.[18] This was not only or even primarily a process of the direct transfer of land, but rather was characterized by the financialization of land—its transformation into real estate (the land was given to states to be sold, not to be built upon directly)—and, in this regard, enacts the concept of education as an investment in (the future of the nation through) its citizenry. The democratizing function of higher education was consolidated as a governing fantasy in the mid-twentieth century, characterized in the United States as a period of relative prosperity for more of the working population. "The collective settlement," as Lauren Berlant concisely explains, "was that as long as the economy was expanding everyone would have a shot at creatively inventing their version of the good life, and not just assuming the position allotted to them by embedded class, racial, and gendered histories of devalued and unrecognized economic and social labor. The half century since the collective settlement was established embeds many generations in a binding fantasy."[19] The 1944 GI Bill (the Serviceman's Readjustment Act) underwrote a substantial increase in college enrollment, followed by the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963 that provided for the growth of community colleges, the Higher Education Act of 1964, and the 1972 creation of Pell Grants and the Indian Education Act, which collectively extended and further concretized the principles of access and the combination of preparation for work and liberal training embedded in the Morrill acts.

It is thus in light of this history of legislative/public commitment to education as a pathway to social mobility that the current withdrawal of public monies from education plays out as a sign of both transformation of the ideal of democracy and its relationship to the economic interests of the nation. As Berlant puts it, "the revocation of educational democracy, a stand for a public investment in everyone who wanted a shot [at the good life]," translates

W. E. B. Du Bois's incisive and era-defining question, "How does it feel to be a problem?" to "How does it feel to be a bad investment?"[20] Educational policies enacted in a variety of nations that are aspirational or active participants in the global economy echo this logic and rhetoric.[21] What makes a citizen, a nation, competitive in the global marketplace? What is the value and content of education in this context?

It is unsurprising given these conditions that the defense of the humanities has largely taken the form of arguments for their instrumental relevance—for example, that businesses desire the kinds of critical thinking and writing skills that are the stuff of humanistic training, or that the encounters with diverse cultures afforded by a liberal arts curriculum are necessary preparation for the emergent global citizen. While I understand the traction such arguments have, this book takes a different tack in addressing the current situation, partly as a result of two observations. The first is the acknowledgment that insofar as such defenses are designed to forestall and reverse defunding, they have simply by and large failed. The weakness of liberalism as a defense against the voraciousness of racial capitalism and colonialism's pasts and presents is evident in every sector of society, not least in the university. Such failure presents not so much an opportunity—laden as that term is with optimistic connotation—as an exigent condition that compels reckoning with liberalism's end(s), with its participatory history in the precipitation of the current conjuncture. That is, and second, such arguments seem tacitly if not actively to affirm the rightness of the liberal vision, without regard for the destructive effects on the world and on most people of the developmental narrative advanced by the tethering of educational democracy to a liberal-capitalist vision of social mobility. In that light, I think we cannot be satisfied to remain within the dominant terms of debate. I hope with this book to bolster and contribute to a different kind of conversation, one that deliberately brackets the instrumental in order to invite attention to the foundational histories and assumptions underlying the defensive position.

I suggest that "the university" be understood as an idea and a site structured by the aspirations of a given social formation. While it is lived in the particularities of its manifestation as a specific institution, the idea of the university frames and reflects the general systems and hierarchies of value and evaluation that constitute a society's reigning ideals. Though academic discourse, however politically engaged it might be, is alone insufficient to

the task of transforming the world at large, the university remains an index of broad sociopolitical, cultural, and economic conditions such that its practices and arrangements cannot not be addressed. In the United States, only a small fraction of the population will attend college; smaller still the numbers who pursue graduate education, and yet even smaller those who will join the professoriate.[22] If the twentieth century saw the deliberate expansion of access to college education under the provisions and resources of such manifestly nation-building policies as the GI Bill as well as the agendas of explicitly progressive-minded social movements, we are in this century witnessing the narrowing of educational access largely as a consequence of politico-economic policies that simultaneously increase and individualize costs.[23] That these foreclosures are occurring despite the presence and activities of politicized scholar-teachers and associated units in the university is a stark reminder that if the transformation of the university is to be meaningful in any substantial way, it cannot be by holding its perfectability as an ideal or goal to be pursued by means of striving for representational equality. Rather, we might bear in mind that the university is a specific site of the articulation of hegemonic ideologies and counterhegemonic formations; or, in other words, that the university socializes capital and the state.[24] The challenge, then, is to particularize how to take advantage of this positioning, not in defense of the university but instead to understand why and how it continues to operate as a technology of social stratification, and whether it may be made to work otherwise.

The promise of the good life at the core of the ideal of social mobility through educational investment is multiply structured as a sacrificial model.[25] Not only does it require individual sacrifice (often gendered and generational—e.g., on behalf of the children), but it also has demanded the compulsory and quite literal sacrifice of Indigenous and enslaved persons. The contemporary rhetoric of whether college is a good investment is in this regard of a piece with the principles of social mobility central to U.S. democracy; as a value, it disavows but is nevertheless contingent on the violence foundational to the nation. As Craig Steven Wilder has compellingly documented, U.S. universities are founded in the histories of conquest and dispossession, enslaved labor and global capital, that underlie the history of the United States. From the impact of the economies of slavery to the specific kinds of labor borne by people of color, and from the civilizing mission of colleges in their engagements with native peoples to the production

of race through racist knowledge, "American colleges were not innocent or passive beneficiaries of conquest and colonial slavery," but instead "stood beside church and state as the third pillar of a civilization build on bondage."[26] Neither have they been institutions built upon gender and sex equality; the struggles of women to gain access to higher education unfold alongside the structurally supported social and cultural emphasis on the achievement of cis-heteronormative men of a certain class.[27] The contemporary resurgence of focus on racism and on violence against women on U.S. campuses reflects this long history and broad social context and exemplifies the inadequacy of access as a remedy for inequality organized by racial, colonial, and heteropatriarchal ideologies foundational to the U.S. nation-state. The oppositional social and political movements that transformed higher education in the late middle of the twentieth century built upon ideas and practices of dissent that were equally a part of the nation's foundation, and contested anew the ongoingness of these histories of subjugation and exclusion and of the accumulation of wealth for a few by the impoverishment of many. The contributions of higher education to such processes of social hierarchization along intersecting axes of sociopolitical identity were called to task in ways that reflect the embeddedness of education in the fabric of the social.

Contemporary forms of activism call for renewed attention to that relationship in ways that acknowledge the long history of higher education's complicity in making race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, and other categories of sociopolitical identity in all their intersectionality matter to the possibilities of life and the distribution of death, both biological and social. In part, my concern in this book is to reflect on the work of what I will refer to as minoritized discourse formations given these grounds. Practitioners of politically engaged work, including those of feminist and queer theorizing, race and ethnic studies, disability and Indigenous studies—collectively, minoritized discourses—are explicitly aware of the structural conditions within which we work, an awareness that contextualizes and informs the ways we formulate and approach our objects of inquiry. As people whose scholarly genealogies are constitutively misaligned with, even as we are contextualized by, the university's role as an apparatus of the nation-state and of capital, scholars of minoritized discourses cannot and do not easily inhabit the academy—a situation that Lisa Lowe cogently formulated two decades ago as an "inevitable paradox" resulting from the institutionalization of fields like ethnic studies.[28] Such institutionalization provides

material resources and yet also submits critical inquiry "to the demands of the university and its educative function of socializing subjects into the state."[29] These institutionalized formations remain important sites for oppositional critique, and/but it is also the case that now, as Roderick Ferguson has shown, difference is contemporarily "managed" by universities in ways that attest to the effectiveness of liberal and neoliberal articulations of race, gender, and sexuality, ones that evacuate the historical materiality giving them meaning and displace the questions of power and legitimacy that drove their emergence as key terms of academic discourse.[30] Within this climate, urgency attaches to the work of creating and sustaining efforts to further the epistemological and institutional transformations of which the establishment of ethnic and women's and gender studies programs was an important part, but was not the only or end goal. By emphasizing as a key part of such an agenda the wholesale and radical rethinking of our received humanist traditions of thought, we may, I believe, better position ourselves to remember that the establishment and protection of programs is but one facet of a much bigger project oriented toward the transformation of the social field.

I offer this book also as a contribution and response to the cogent critiques of identitarian politics and paradigms that have prompted critical reflection on identity as an organizing principle for institutionalized forms of politically engaged discourse. Relatedly, my aim is to contribute to efforts to address the (neo)liberal academy, characterized by an intense compartmentalization of knowledge that registers not only in disciplinarity, but also within disciplines as well. Criticism of the politics of identity has emerged along with the institutionalization of a variety of minority discourse formations, many of which are constitutively interdisciplinary. The institutional establishment of such fields as Asian American studies, women's studies, LGBT studies, and so on has meant that existing disciplines could remain, at least at a radical level, relatively untouched by difference. Moreover, strikingly, the albeit uneven success of institutionalization correlates with increasing and multifaceted material inequality characterizing the present. What is the responsibility of politically engaged intellectual work in and to the present context?

In the present, characterized by the nonequivalent, thoroughly entangled phenomena of war, environmental disaster, new and continuing forms of settler colonialism, poverty, racism, gendered violence, and ongoing battles

over the legislation of desires and intimacies by which sexuality is publicly materialized, it is imperative to think hard about how the academy can proliferate alternatives to and critiques of the ideologies that would have us accept the inevitability of the status quo—which is to say, how it can proliferate pedagogies and practices of alterity through criticism and research and practices of imagination that originate from other(ed) grounds. Along these lines, I hope this book will encourage and invigorate the kind of work that is determined to collaborate across institutional boundaries, to challenge the stultifying consequences of (neo)liberal multiculturalism both within and outside of the academy, from standpoints that attempt in a variety of ways, all important and all delimited, to speak the condition of injustice and induce more livable worlds into being. This is not to posit the academy, academic work, or certainly this book as a remedy to neoliberal culture and politics, but instead to ask whether and how these conditions enjoin critical attention to our role in the reproduction of hegemonic social formations.

Accordingly, we might ask anew, how do and might the knowledge and teaching principles and practices we elaborate, occupy, and employ be recruited toward the broadly ethicopolitical aims of something like greater justice? Of lessening the determinative effects of the circumstances of the accidents of birth? Of illuminating the ways that the nonequivalent accidents of geography, class structure, racialization, gender relations, sexuality, indigeneity, and so on organize the material conditions of existence in aggressively hierarchical ways? These "accidents" are of course anything but random or neutral. Instead, they are structurally and culturally conditioned, coordinated by political and social relations unfolding in multiple scales. Naturalized narratives of the willful and rationally intentional liberal and neoliberal subject responsible for securing her or his own good life (the liberal-ethical subject), or the continuing stronghold of a developmental notion of civilization (dependent on the liberal-political subject), that asserts and assumes the privileged destiny of humanity, disavow that overdetermination. In concert with the abundance of meticulous studies that endeavor to suss out the purposeful grounds of these accidents, my hope is that this book will suggest ways that aesthetic inquiry has something distinctive to contribute to this work. This book unfolds by attending to particularities, to incommensurabilities, to incomparability, each as made available by aesthetics, in hopes of—with the hope of—suggesting the difference aesthetics makes.

The chapters that follow elaborate the characteristics introduced here. In the remainder of this introduction, I focus on explaining the importance of aesthetics to the project of bringing to bear illiberal humanisms. As I discuss in what follows, the history of the aesthetic gives it distinctive purchase in the critique of bourgeois liberalism and its corollary structures of knowledge, and makes aesthetics signally important to the project of thinking, working, and living after Man. Aesthetic inquiry as mobilized in this book orients critical focus on the conditions of possibility that subtend the dominant order, to the production and sustenance of the sensus communis—of common sense—and insists upon the double valence of sensibility as a reference to both what is held to be reasonable and what is viscerally experienced. Derived from subjugated and/or otherwise minoritized art and writings, aesthetic inquiry indexes the difference aesthetics has made and continues to make in the service of the Order of Man, and simultaneously gives texture and specificity to illiberal humanism.

On Aesthetic Inquiry

In the register of academic discourse, this book recalibrates the ways in which aesthetic inquiry and cultural studies appear to be oriented toward quite different and even fundamentally oppositional ends. Such an understanding is evident in the familiar story of the culture wars of the later twentieth century. In the context of literary studies in the United States, this story tells of the shift to cultural studies approaches underwritten by Marxist, post-structural, and postmodern theories: "works" become "texts," and the definition of literary value and the politics of canonicity come to the fore as flashpoints of critical debate. Catalyzed by activists and critics (sometimes one and the same) of the post–civil rights era, that shift resulted from their illumination of the interrelation of education, acculturation, and social stratification.[31] A variety of scholars taking ethnic studies and feminist approaches denounced divisions between "high" and "low" culture and undermined the idea of a bias-free subject as the arbiter of universal value. Aesthetics, strongly associated with such conservative formalist movements as New Criticism and aestheticism—movements working in the service of deeply entrenched hierarchized notions of culture—receded from prominence, and textual and curricular diversification increased quite substantially. In brief, where established modes of literary study aimed to advance a

putatively disinterested practice of evaluating greatness based on objectively neutral formal properties, feminist critics and scholars of ethnic literatures, among others, argued the nonneutrality and ideological underpinnings of objectivity and disinterestedness.

One consequence of the culture wars was the yoking of studies of ethnic and women's literatures to the institution of U.S. literary studies as a corrective to the erasure of minoritized subjects from the naturalized scene of the curriculum. In effect, the scholars/activists of that era were recognizing and responding to the racialization, class ordering, and gendering of literary studies by means of aestheticization, or in other words the production and hierarchization of difference according to a process of (e)valuation that disavowed its own historicity. The interrelated politics of canonicity and representation that organized the culture wars in the U.S. academy converged in such a way as to inaugurate cultural studies as an approach critically aware of such materialities and politics. For those working with canonical texts and writers, this shift to a cultural studies approach entailed acknowledging the ideological work and material specificity of cultural expression and practices of classification, including aesthetic inquiry. Curricular diversification and the ongoing and unevenly successful efforts to establish institutional formations (programs, institutes, departments) that take as their primary objects of study minoritized cultures, histories, and so on, describe this chapter of the culture wars.

Another and parallel story accompanies this one and takes as its protagonists those working with minoritized literatures, for whom the consequences of this shift from "literature" to "culture" and "work" to "text" were quite different. For one, that academic practices are ideological was a founding premise of minoritized discourses, meaning that its critics had a different point of departure for negotiating the role of aesthetics in critical practice. Even as minoritized literatures were being institutionalized by challenges to the idea of universality, the paradigm shift to cultural studies also complicated minoritized discourses' relationship to aesthetic inquiry by bringing with it what in hindsight has been understood as an overemphasis on minoritized writings as political or anthropological documents rather than artistic creations. Coupled with the institutional validation of minoritized literary studies as a sign of a commitment to diversity, such literatures have in the main been framed and studied in terms of authenticity, racism, and resistance rather than literariness per se. In other words, "greatness" and

"difference," aesthetics and politics, were made to diverge, with the former tacitly if not explicitly associated with politically conservative scholarship, and the latter connoting various forms of minoritized discourse. Ethnic and women's literatures have in this respect been conceptualized as important to study *because* of politics.[32] Critically discussed and institutionally valued through standards of authenticity and bureaucratic investments in diversity, the distinctively aesthetic qualities of such work and the metacritical questions of whether or to what ends it is important to study those distinctive qualities has been underaddressed.[33] My point is not to argue the greatness of minoritized literatures per se; rather, it is to observe that in the segregation of aesthetics and politics, the aesthetics of minoritized literatures—the sensibilities and the genre of the human and cognate rationalities brought forward by them—have remained covered over.

I am among a number of critics who have taken up some version of these matters in the field of literary-cultural studies. This contemporary turn toward aesthetics finds broad traction in part because of the fatigue in such fields as Asian American studies with the kind of political critique that is somewhat predictable in its rendering of resistance, agency, and subjectivity. Some have emphasized formalist modes of criticism while others have centered affect as a critical approach alternative to rationalist political critique, and this latter work has enabled us to ask about our affiliative attachments to our objects of inquiry, as well as highlighting the limitations of rationalist critique in accounting for the complexities of lives and histories, subjectivities and politics.[34] The aesthetic turn and the affective turn are closely aligned moves in this sense—that is, in the ways that both are bracketing politics (as in, "the politics *of*") to allow for other kinds of knowledge and other modes of apprehension to emerge. The historicity of the aesthetic and its relationship to the humanities—to aesthetic education in particular—underwrite its thematization in this book.

The aesthetic is perhaps most familiar as a term used to describe a set of characteristics (as in "the aesthetics *of*") and judgments thereof, or precisely in contradistinction to politics (or, in other words, as without immediate material consequences and distant from the poles of power). Associated strongly in common critical discourse with the critical faculty of judgment and bearing conflicting legacies of deployment, the aesthetic can seem simultaneously so overdetermined and expansive a term as to be analytically meaningless. These uses belie its importance. Embraced or disavowed, its

persistent presence in the intellectual traditions that ground the epistemologies organizing our received knowledge practices is indicative of the ways in which the aesthetic is deeply embedded in the history and structures of modern thought.[35] Its persistence is thus suggestive of the promise that aesthetic inquiry holds as a method of illuminating the historicities and particular shape that dominant humanism and its corollary institutions take.

More specifically, the aesthetic's history as an axis along which the kinds of persons idealized as the modern liberal subject have been distinguished from those incapable of achieving such subjectivity speaks to the long-lived ways that it has operated as a limit test in the articulation of liberal humanism and underwrites its analytic and poetic power.[36] The turn away from theological explanations of human ontology and toward scientific rationalism that crystallizes in the eighteenth century posed as a central philosophical task the need for Reason to prove itself the secure ground out of which Truth would emerge.[37] How can we come to know ourselves? How do we achieve self-consciousness in ways alternative to deistic, theological understandings of the human's relation to the natural world? If all selves are sovereign—individual and unique—upon what basis are they (should they be) connected? Upon what basis does humanity cohere? The aesthetic experience—understood in this Enlightenment context as the pleasure experienced in the encounter with the beautiful and the sublime in especially the natural world—highlighted the limits of scientific rationalism to account fully for the aspirational humanity posited through the debates out of which Enlightenment emerged.[38]

We can in light of this history understand critical recognition of the nonneutrality of standards of evaluation as registering a first-order distribution that occurs at the *proto*-political level to define and classify humanity according to the capacity for aesthetic judgment. The ability to make proper aesthetic judgments—to be capable of achieving proper awareness of the truthful beauty of something—is a fundamental characteristic of the idealized modern subject, that enlightened representative of human potentiality central to Western modernity.[39] This mythic subject, Man, stabilized through the nineteenth-century Western European consolidation and expansion of nation and empire and the concomitant subordination of a host of dissenting ideas and philosophies.[40] This history—and this is broadly Jacques Rancière's point—registers the ways that politics are constitutively aesthetic. In other words, this radical, constitutive comparison that sorts

humans into different kinds based on their abilities to reason through aesthetic experience may be understood as itself aesthetic.[41] In short, aestheticization produces racial difference as sensible in both valences—as reasonable (common sense) and as affectively available to apprehension.

What I am rehearsing in this summary form is how the problem of human ontology—What is the nature of human beingness in the absence of a deistic explanation?—is answered in the aftermath of Enlightenment by suppressing the contradiction between positing sovereign, distinct individuality and establishing the general properties of humanity. Kant's anthropological writings especially register the taxonomic production of racial difference as organized by geography and especially biology.[42] Such "biocentricity," Wynter has shown, narrowly casts the definition of the human as primarily biological rather than social, with the effect of consolidating the ascription of fundamental differences among capacities to the seemingly irreducible register of the natural.[43] Considerable uncertainty as to the grounds and boundaries of human subjectivity characterized the Western European eighteenth century, and the scientific racism of the era reflects a drive to order captured in the taxonomic imperative.[44] In broad strokes, we may observe that post-Enlightenment, such uncertainty is managed by an appeal to universal humanity in the form of identity, buttressed by the coextensive emergence of the nation-state as the dominant geopolitical form of modernity. The philosophical subordination of difference to identity that ensues inaugurates representational and identity politics.[45] Backed by the policing authority of the nation-state, the liberal citizen-subject acts as the formal category of such a politics, which effaces and abstracts the very material conditions of its emergence, namely, those of empire and capitalism.[46] Corporealized into sub- or unhuman bodies by the materializing processes of capital, empire, and the imposition of the nation-state as the naturalized and dominant geopolitical formation, the incapacity for proper aesthetic judgment signaled the difference between those who would and would not realize human potential by achieving full self-consciousness.[47]

Given this history, it is no wonder that aesthetics has been met with wariness if not complete dismissal. This history also raises the question, however, as to what might come of bringing into the foreground the possibilities that are suppressed or occluded by the effacement of the potentiality of aesthetic encounter. In other words, if modernity is understood to be characterized by a compulsory aesthetic othering, mining the

radical unpredictability of art and being—before its designation as "art" and "human"—bears promise for reconceiving otherness itself.[48]

Historicize in this long view the contemporary—the age of Derridean deconstruction and the radical challenges to the naturalness and inevitability of such a definition of humanity—and consider in these terms the postmodern assertion of the manufacturedness and violence of the modern narrative of a coherent, universal humanity. Moreover, put the ontological and epistemological uncertainty elaborated by postmodern critique in conversation with the dominant discourses on contemporary globalization that herald the abrogation of national sovereignty concomitant with the rise of transnational capitalism, and the urgency of attending to the antinomy of the universal and the particular emerges with renewed force. For, what we are living in now is a condition in which the economic, hyperrational, and deeply individualist subject has displaced the sociopolitical (civic) subject as the avatar of the universal.[49] Accumulation serves as the pathway to, if not self-consciousness, then self-fulfillment, and purchase power is the defining feature of civic life. The economic, of course, no more exhaustively captures the textures and complexities of life than does the political fully account for the operations of power. The arguments that insist on the paranational movements of capital that characterize contemporary history push us to consider the consequences and possibilities inaugurated by recognizing this time as a time of massive historical and onto-epistemological change akin to and animated by the intensity and scope of transformation associated retrospectively with the age of Enlightenment. This is to observe that we live and operate with the dense, unified temporality of "crumpled time" wherein the presentness of the past is acutely apprehensible.[50] This means reckoning with the conquest and colonialism, racism and cis-heteropatriarchy, upon which bourgeois liberalism is not only founded but also continues to operate; it means, following Jodi Byrd, displacing the lamentability of the production and dispossession of Indians with the grievability of Indigenous peoples continuing to claim sovereignty within the concretized structures of settler colonialism.[51] It means, following Lisa Lowe, understanding the "intimacies of four continents" as the deep foundations upon which the contemporary world has been built.[52] It means, following Christina Sharpe, sinking into the wake of slavery and the ways that its dehumanization pervades the very material substrate out of which the contemporary takes shape.[53] It means, following José Muñoz, sussing out the desires, the erotics, queer to

and queerly persistent despite the powerful ideologies and institutions that would eradicate them.[54] These are the orientations of illiberal humanisms.

The distinctive contribution of minoritized discourses to matters like these rests in their general and persistent reminder that modernity and its cognates largely fail to produce peace or proliferate freedom or stability for the majority of the world.[55] The translation of Sovereign power (the power of the Sovereign) to sovereignty (the power of the citizenry to self-regulate) that modernity narrates has been coextensive with a variety of historical and ongoing violence, executed regularly in the name of the national sovereignty. Ongoing Indigenous struggles and ex-colonial nationalisms speak to the power of sovereignty—literally, understood as bearing power over life and death, and conceptually, as a compelling aspiration that registers the sovereign nation's fantastic (or perhaps phantasmatic) ability to distribute hope.[56] Self-knowledge and intentionality go hand in hand to enliven a mimetic relationship between political and individual sovereignty—or so the story goes according to liberalism. That state of identification is not only grossly unevenly distributed (this is what minoritized discourses have shown over and over again), but is also dependent on a willfulness difficult if not impossible to sustain. Contrary to the pedagogies of (neo)liberalism, individuals cannot overcome the accidents of birth simply by dint of sheer will. Challenging those pedagogies is especially vital in the U.S. context, characterized as it is by its exceptionalist and meritocratic ideologies.[57]

In this light, what Bruno Latour provocatively declares of the classification of knowledge practices resonates strongly: we have never been modern.[58] That is, history belies the inevitability of progressive Enlightenment as a mode of securing the future and full realization of humanity. It is, then, for all these reasons that we might turn to aesthetics. For, like modernity's others, the aesthetic inhabits the suppressed contradictions of modernity. The subjective experience of art, of difference, as a realm that has been subordinated to general Reason names modernity's alterity. The aesthetic is, categorically, the particular that is subsumed by the universal.

Jacques Rancière helps to clarify the political stakes of aesthetic inquiry. Aesthetics for Rancière refers in a broad sense to what he calls the "distribution of the sensible"—the modes by which activities and objects are associated with certain perceptions and ideas, resulting in the identification of art as such. In his view, aesthetics "refers to a specific regime of identifying and reflecting on the arts: [it is] a mode of articulation between ways of doing

and making, [and of] thinking about their relationships."[59] This distribution manifests historically as distinct but overlapping regimes, which are various orders that serve as the grounds of a common social experience and to organize that experience by delimiting the roles that individuals may play in civic life. Analogous to the ways that for Kant, a priori concepts translate experience into understanding,[60] aesthetics for Rancière condition "what presents itself to sense experience"—they are structures that proffer and frame what can be heard and seen.[61] Understood in this way, aesthetics may be recognized as simultaneously political (that is, conditioned by relations of power and their material manifestations) and the grounds upon which the political is constituted and perceived. The material conditions of history may not only be indexed by aesthetics (the regulation and distribution of sensibility and artistic capacity), but are also themselves fundamentally aesthetic in that they are brought forward to be sensed by (historiographic, archival, methodological) practices that (re)shape the sensibilities held in common. This returns us to asking again after the terms by which the ideal (neo)liberal subject is naturalized by and enters the domain of common sense. By keying us into the sensus communis, aesthetic inquiry affords critical recognition of the terms and aspirations of the dominant social order of which common sense is both a product and a facet. It allows us to specify how corporeality and cognition interact within the bounds of and through the parameters of a specific regime of sensibility.

In classical, Aristotelian terms, sensus communis actively referred to corporeality—to that which enables the specific senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell) to coordinate syncretically what each distinctively perceives.[62] This corporeal common sense leaves the specificity of each sense intact, and understands each as equally but incommensurably contributing to the ability of the body to apprehend the world it traverses. In contrast to the primacy of sight, of the privileged economy of the visual in the apparatuses of modernity, which subtends the privileging and double meaning of representation as referring to both political standing and reflective image, this nonmodern understanding gives rise to a human subjectivity formed in fuller, embodied relation to the world. As used in this book, aesthetic inquiry reactivates this fuller meaning, suppressed by the long-dominant Kantian tradition in the prioritization of a narrow understanding of cognition. Kant uses "sensus communis" to refer to the a priori accounting for the

possible judgment of others that is a part of the act of the judgment of taste; it is a necessary condition for specifically aesthetic judgment: "it is only under the presupposition that there is a common sense . . . I say, that the judgment of taste can be laid down."[63] This sense-in-common is a requirement to judge something beautiful, for we must presuppose the possible agreement of others, the possible correspondence by and communicability of our experience of the beautiful to others, in order for aesthetic judgment to be understood as partially objective, that is, as in relation to the characteristics of a specific object. The judgment of taste is thus for Kant a "subjective universal," a construct that intersects the subjectivity of aesthetic experience with the objectivity of cognition.[64] In short, the sensus communis refers to common sense as an invocation of what is presumed to be reasonable. A series of questions follow, ones with which this book is concerned: How is the sensus communis that is the condition and measure of reasonability formed? What are its governing structures, its sources of authority? How is that knowledge made to stand as a product of reason? By what legitimating authorities? By what right and what understanding of reason?

Within these questions lies the overtly political edge of aesthetic inquiry. As Rancière explains, community is a condition of politics, and community is itself cohered by sensibilities held in common, that is, the sensus communis. These sensibilities are understood to be partitioned in that they organize intelligibility: it is an "order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise."[65] This partitioning of the sensible, which is the common sense, determines the boundaries of the community (who belongs) and who may speak in and for it (who is authorized). Political engagement thus requires aesthetics, which means the apprehension of the ordering of sensibility by the sensus communis.[66] Corporeal, cognitive, and political, the sensus communis links the phenomena of sensation to the operations of reason and the subtending orders and ideologies of a time and place. It is in this regard a way of understanding the aesthetic as emergent from and affording critical attention to the forms in and by which body, mind, and sociality are related and take shape within a whole way of life.

Propositions

The chapters that follow sink into ideas introduced here. Chapters 1 and 2 together explain why and how it is that liberalism organizes the humanities in ways that continue to racialize and hierarchize people, contrary to its abstract values but very much in accordance with its historical formation and uses. These chapters work in tandem to promote deliberate disidentification from the practices, horizons, and the human and humanism of the liberal order. Lan Samantha Chang, Allan deSouza, Carrie Mae Weems, Langston Hughes, and Toni Morrison precipitate heightened sensitivity to the promise of foregoing attachment to the received humanities. They help us apprehend and overtly politicize the sense and sensibility of disidentification, toward the ends of disarticulating humanism and the humanities from liberalism.

The latter half of the book, then, turns to considering how, from this disarticulated, disidentified state, alternative humanisms and humanities are unconcealed. Illiberal in their incommensurability with liberalism's dictates and parameters, and amplified in writings by Leslie Marmon Silko, Ruth Ozeki, and Monique Truong, these alternatives generate models of organizing a humanities grounded in aesthetic rationality. These latter chapters, in other words, sketch a praxis of an illiberal humanities.

Through their discussions, these chapters forward a series of propositions that it is my intent to offer. In summary form, they are as follows:

1. Given the function of the contemporary/liberal humanities as an apparatus of modern U.S. nationalism, and given the long history of the contribution of the liberal humanism that subtends the humanities to the decimation of peoples, cultures, and lands, it is necessary to disidentify deliberately and organizationally from them.
2. By remembering that the visual is cathected to liberal representational politics within the dominant regime and, especially, to secure the racist common sense of the human of liberalism through the production and disciplinary regulation of the beautiful, the urgency of the project of bringing this current order (of Man) to closure through aesthetic inquiry unconfident in the primacy of the visual is brought to bear.
3. The disarticulation of humanism and the humanities from liberalism involves the delegitimation of the rationalism that secures the

authority of liberal ideology. This process elucidates an illiberal understanding of the human and corollary rationality based in the historically grounded, embodied knowledge subordinated within the liberal regime, which may provisionally be referred to as an *aesthetic rationality.*

4. Among the effects of disidentification and disarticulation in these contexts is the reclamation not only of the grounds of what constitutes reasonability but also of the constitution and meaning of the universal. The realization of a university that correlates with this reclaimed universal emerges as a project for the illiberal humanities.

With these propositions, with this book, I mean to issue invitations, to elicit interest and engagement with the ideas that come of the work and worlds that the dominant order works so hard to suppress, eradicate, and dismiss. They bring to bear sensibilities—feeling, thinking, knowing, and being—that are of the thickness of history and life, that orient us toward neither hope nor despair, but simply to work that is under way and that needs doing in order to proliferate the humanities after Man.

Notes

Introduction

1. Briefly, we may recall that the Renaissance-era renovation of education from the practical scholasticism of the medieval era to the cultivation of intellectual capacity marks a sea change in the constitution and orientation of higher education, especially with regard to the place and position of the human as object of study and politics. Across this shift, *studia humanitatis* became established as a (perhaps *the*) measure of cultivation and the erudition necessary to fulfill the promise of humanity. This held true in and through the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western European bourgeois revolutions that ushered in the constellation of the structures and social formations of Modernity, as humanities education was tasked with refining the liberal subject established and naturalized through the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment eras. Rehearsals of this history are found in Wynter, “On Disenchanting Discourse”; Graff, *Professing Literature*; Harpham, *The Humanities and the Dream of America*; Marcus, “Humanities from Classics to Culture Studies”; Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas*; Oakley, *Community of Learning*; Mignolo, “Geopolitics of Knowledge”; Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience.” On the medieval university, see Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*.

2. Wynter, “On Disenchanting Discourse,” 434.

3. Wynter, “On Disenchanting Discourse,” 433.

4. Wynter, “On Disenchanting Discourse,” 433 (emphasis original).

5. This project in this regard aligns with Gayatri Spivak’s effort in *Death of a Discipline* to articulate a form of collectivity that embraces difference—what she calls “planetarity”—through “*telepoiesis*,” Jacques Derrida’s term for the bringing into being of what remains at a distance (tele-). It may also be seen in Armstrong’s terms as taking the deconstructive critique of aesthetic inquiry as a point of departure rather than as conclusion (*The Radical Aesthetic*, 2).

6. Ferguson and Hong, *Strange Affinities*.

7. Hall, “Cultural Studies,” 60.

8. Hall, “Cultural Studies,” 60. As Williams describes in *Marxism and Literature*, his position at that time “can be briefly described as *cultural materialism*: a theory of the specificities of material cultural and literary production within historical materialism” (5).

9. Strathern, "'Improving Ratings,'" quoted in de Bary, "Introduction," 7.

10. Quoted in de Bary, "Introduction," 7.

11. See Harney and Moten, *Undercommons*; Goh, "A Presentiment of the Death of Intellectuals"; and Ko, "How an 'Intellectual Commune' Organizes Movement."

12. The special issue of *Traces: A Multilingual Series of Cultural Theory and Translation*, "Universities in Translation: The Mental Labor of Globalization," edited by Brett de Bary, provides clarifying analyses of the relationship of the Knowledge Economy to both the contemporary situation of the university on a global scale and the particular forms of mental labor elicited within it. In that volume, see especially de Bary, "Introduction"; Lii, "Articulation, Not Translation"; Morris, "On English as a Chinese Language"; and Boutang, "Cognitive Capitalism." See also the essays collected in Douglass, King, and Feller, *Globalization's Muse*; and Altbach and Umakoshi, *Asian Universities*. Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie provide a book-length study of the impact of global economic policies on higher education in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada (*Academic Capitalism*).

13. See Altbach and Umakoshi, *Asian Universities*, on "massification."

14. More than forty schools now have branches outside of the United States. See Institute for International Education, *Open Doors*.

15. For example, Baruch College, one of the institutions in the City University of New York system in which I work, in its *Global Strategic Plan 2015–2019* explains, "As the world becomes increasingly globalized, we want to build on our intrinsic diversity . . . so our graduates may be more international and inclusive, and better prepared for the world that awaits them" (https://www.baruch.cuny.edu/globalinitiatives/).

16. See Bourdieu, *Distinction*, for an elaboration of these dynamics.

17. Some forty-eight land grant colleges and universities were established by the 1862 Act, and seventeen HBCUs by the 1890 iteration. Staley, "Democratizing American Higher Education."

18. Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History*, 142. Dunbar-Ortiz explains that the Homestead Act, the Morrill Act, and the Pacific Railroad Act were not only illegal in breaking treaties with Indigenous nations, but also vital to the consolidation of national territory: "Most of the western territories, including Colorado, North and South Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona, were delayed in achieving statehood, because Indigenous nations resisted appropriation of their lands and outnumbered settlers. So the colonization plan for the West established during the Civil War was carried out over the following decades of war and land grabs" (141).

19. Berlant, "Affect and the Politics of Austerity."

20. Berlant, "Affect and the Politics of Austerity."

21. These include Great Britain's 1988 Education Reform Act, Japan's University Incorporation Bill of 2003, and Korea's 2005 "Basic Plan for Developing National Universities." As Brett de Bary summarizes, "the adoption of New Management Reforms in higher education by governments around the world must be seen as continuous with the epochal reorganization of social and economic life inaugurated by the emergence of neoliberalism in 1979–80" ("Introduction," 5).

22. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, in 2015, there were some 4,627 "Title IV–eligible" (federal financial aid eligible) colleges and universities in the United States, a decline of some one hundred such institutions since 2010. Of this total, 3,011 are four-year schools and 1,616 are two-year schools (Digest of Education Statistics, Table 317.10, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_317.10.asp). In 2010, about 5.7 percent of the total U.S. population, or 21 million students, were enrolled in tertiary education. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that in 2016, 59 percent of adults in the U.S. had completed some college or more, while only a third held a bachelor's degree. Some 12 percent, according to its figures, had earned post-baccalaureate degrees (see Ryan and Bauman, *Educational Attainment in the United States*). There are some 1.6 million professors in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, with slightly more than half (52 percent) full-time and the rest part-time faculty members (National Center for Educational Statistics, "Fast Facts," 2017, https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61).

23. See Newfield, *Ivy and Industry*; and Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University*, for extensive analyses of these processes.

24. See Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*; and Ferguson, *We Demand*.

25. See Berlant, "Affect and the Politics of Austerity."

26. Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy*, 11.

27. See Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*; Jacobs, "Gender Inequality and Higher Education"; Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*.

28. Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 41.

29. Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 41.

30. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*.

31. See Chow, "Theory, Area Studies, Cultural Studies"; and Lee, *Life and Times of Cultural Studies* for helpful critical histories of the emergence of cultural studies. Womack, "A Single Decade," rehearses the relationship between Native literary studies and cultural studies in ways that punctuate the affordances and challenges of the latter in relation to the establishment of the former. See also Carby, *Cultures in Babylon*, for multifaceted discussions of the particular form cultural studies takes in the U.S.

context, namely, largely without strong engagement with class relations and social structures.

32. As Sue-Im Lee concisely captures, "As with scholarship in many other minority literatures, the emergence and growth of Asian American literary criticism in the larger sphere of American literary studies has depended upon its ability to represent the material realities of its marginalized constituents" ("Introduction," 1). Lee is one of the editors of *Literary Gestures*, the first collection of essays to engage aesthetics per se in Asian American literary studies. Dorothy Wang's *Thinking Its Presence* insightfully examines such matters contemporarily in relation specifically to poetry; see also Palumbo-Liu, "The Occupation of Form"; and Chiang, "Capitalizing Form," for more on the question of literature and literary history's meaningfulness in the contemporary era. For a sampling of other critical works since the 1990s that are similarly engaged with such issues, see, e.g., Elliott, Caton, and Rhyne, *Aesthetics in a Multicultural Age*; Levine, *Aesthetics and Ideology*; Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*; Hein and Korsmeyer, *Aesthetics in Feminist Perspective*; and the 2004 special issue of *American Literature*, Castiglia and Castronovo, "Aesthetics and the End(s) of Cultural Studies."

33. On this point, see the essays collected in and especially the introduction to Palumbo-Liu, *The Ethnic Canon*; Wall, "On Freedom and the Will to Adorn"; as well as Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic*; and Redfield, *The Politics of Aesthetics*.

34. See Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, on the link between aesthetics and our ability to live within as well as to apprehend the present and its material and affective demands and conditions.

35. As Terry Eagleton puts it, "Anyone who inspects the history of European philosophy since the Enlightenment must be struck by the curiously high priority assigned by it to aesthetic questions" (*The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 1). The centrality of the aesthetic to such intellectual traditions makes it difficult to summarize its position in the disparate kinds of work in which it finds expression. But a representative sampling is suggestive of its range and historical potency. One could start with Kant, for example, who is arguably at the center of the eighteenth-century European—and more specifically, German—efforts to address the problem of human subjectivity; *Critique of Judgment* (1790) is commonly held to be the text foundational to modern philosophical aesthetics. The pleasure associated with aesthetic encounter, and conceptualized as thoroughly subjective and thus inapposite as a principle upon which philosophical inquiry could be based, could be neither ignored nor subsumed into metaphysics or ethics, the branches of philosophy respectively announced in Kant's earlier treatises, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). If these prior critiques had posited the principles—the a priori conditions—for making what for Kant were universally valid, objective, and moral judgments, the third *Critique* investigated what a priori conditions exist that make possible judgments of taste, specified as the ability to recognize beauty. (*Critique of Judgment* begins with a section titled "The Analytic of the Beautiful.") Eagleton provides an overview of, especially, the significance

of the aesthetic to the German idealist tradition in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. See also Levine's introduction to *Aesthetics and Ideology* for a discussion of the English and specifically literary genealogy of aesthetics; and Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, for consideration of major schema from the classical period to the contemporary, by which art has been philosophically defined.

36. See Eze, "The Color of Reason"; and Brown, *The Primitive, the Aesthetic, and the Savage*, for overview of this history; see Lloyd, "Race under Representation," for discussion of the irremediably racial quality of modern aesthetic subjectivity. Jon M. Mikkelsen has collected and translated into English Kant's writings that more explicitly produce racial difference in *Kant and the Concept of Race*. See also Asad, "On Torture"; Asad, "What Do Human Rights Do?"; Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*; and the various works of Mignolo and Wynter, for expansive critical engagement with humanism and its relationship to racial colonial modernity. The essays collected in Nuttall, *Beautiful Ugly*, illuminate the stakes of aesthetic philosophy from a specifically African-centered ground.

37. Andrew Bowie notes that Descartes's seventeenth-century "ego cogito ergo sum" prepares the way for this new philosophy to take hold in the eighteenth century; the distinction between Descartes and Kant, as exemplary eighteenth-century philosopher, lies in the latter's turn away from the former's reliance "upon God to guarantee the connection of ourselves to the order of the universe" (*Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, 1–2). Perhaps most immediately, see Spivak's *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* for an extended and extensive consideration of the role of reason in the production of the colonial world order; and Wynter, various.

38. See Schmidt, *What Is Enlightenment?*, for discussion of eighteenth-century debates and current responses to them. See also Baker and Reill, *What's Left of Enlightenment?*

39. For Friedrich Schiller, the "aesthetic education of man" was necessary for the elevation of mankind. Writing in 1794, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, Schiller, who was dismayed by the violence and the forms of governance that followed the revolution, submitted that it was only through the arts (through engagement with beauty) that man could encounter true knowledge. In *Eros and Civilization*, Herbert Marcuse takes up Schiller's concept of the *Spieltrieb*, or "play-drive," that is a utopic space of freedom.

40. Foucault, *The Order of Things*.

41. Marc Redfield provides an incisive summary:

> Without question, a utopian sublimation of historical contingency into form constitutes the telos of aesthetic discourse, but much of the political force of aesthetics resides in its historicism, in its projection of a temporal line running from the primitive to the modern, and then onward to a futurity, an ever-deferred end of history, that aesthetic experience prefigures. Acculturated subjects, actualizing

> their human potential in aesthetic judgment, become capable of representing the less acculturated both in an aesthetic and political sense precisely because the difference between representative and represented has a temporal dimension. Someday, humanity will achieve itself as a national, and in the end, global subject; in the meantime, an acculturated minority speaks for the collective. (*The Politics of Aesthetics*, 12)

42. See, as prime example, Kant's 1775 "On the Different Races of Man." For extensive contemporary commentary on racism in Kantian thought, see Eze, "The Color of Reason."

43. "Biocentricity" is a term Wynter uses across her work. For an exemplary discussion, see David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism."

44. As Srinivas Aravamudan's *Enlightenment Orientalism* shows, for example, a study of the figure of the Orient in the expressive cultural media of the era suggests both the pervasive presence of Asian figurations and a corollary uncertainty as to the geographic and cultural boundaries of Western subjectivity. See also Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire*.

45. Lloyd, "Race under Representation."

46. This obviously condenses large swaths of history. I refer interested readers to work from a variety of intellectual traditions, including that by Giovanni Arrighi, Wendy Brown, Susan Buck-Morss, Judith Butler, Lisa Duggan, Michel Foucault, Simon Gikandi, David Harvey, Lisa Lowe, Uday Singh Mehta, Walter Mignolo, Cedric Robinson, Gayatri Spivak, and Sylvia Wynter.

47. As George Lipsitz observes in *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, Kant, for instance, believed in "fundamental differences in the rational capacities of blacks and whites" (177), a belief that animates the constative properties of aesthetic philosophy in instituting racial difference as part of the modern project. For more of this history, see the works cited in note 36 above.

48. Claire Colebrook points out that Nietzsche's privileging of youth bespeaks his emphasis on becoming ("Queer Aesthetics"). Becoming in this tradition is closely linked to becoming-beautiful, that is, the connotative meaning of what it means to be becoming. There is little room or concern for the possibility of becoming unbeautiful, or distasteful. I take up these issues more fully in chapter 1.

49. The literature on globalization and neoliberalism is vast. For broad-scoping analyses of globalization and neoliberalism as capitalist modalities, see, e.g., Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?*; Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*; Brown, *Undoing the Demos*; Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*; Sen, *Development as Freedom*; Harvey, *A Brief History*; and Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital*. Anna Tsing's *Friction* generatively questions how we might study something called "the global."

50. Serres, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, 60, 61. Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia*; and Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, offer rich theorizations and studies of temporality along these lines.

51. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*.

52. Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*.

53. Sharpe, *In the Wake*.

54. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.

55. Indeed, works like Chandan Reddy's *Freedom with Violence* and Jodi Byrd's *The Transit of Empire* powerfully demonstrate precisely the reverse effects of modernity—that is, the devastating effects it has had and continues to have. See also the essays collected in Goldstein, *Formations of United States Colonialism*, which collectively analyze the "colonial present" (Goldstein's phrase)—that is, how "the current moment is shaped by the fraught historical accumulation and shifting disposition of colonial processes, relations, and practices" (7).

56. See Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism*.

57. See Hong, *The Ruptures of American Capital*, for concise discussion of U.S. exceptionalism.

58. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*.

59. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 10.

60. For Kant, judgment results from the ordering of experience under or through concepts; judgment is the thought that results from the interaction of Sensibility and Understanding, respectively, the passive capacity to be affected sensorily by things, and the active work of producing thoughts by submitting sensation to the general concepts available to the mind. Sensibility is an individual, subjective phenomenon, while Understanding involves concepts that are generally present. Thus, judgment refers to the generalization of the individual phenomenon of sensation, and takes place regularly and in quotidian settings: I see the screen in front of me and I am aware it is a computer; this is a computer. Aesthetic judgment—or what he calls the judgment of taste, which means for him the thought that something is beautiful—is a distinctive form of judgment. In the *Critique of Judgment*, in his characteristic fashion, Kant systematizes his analysis of "what is required in order to call an object beautiful" (section 1n). Aesthetic judgments differ from cognitive judgments insofar as the latter routes individual experience through a general concept (my seeing the computer screen results in my judgment that this thing is a computer), while the former redirects the experience "back to the subject and to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure" (section 1). It is in this sense that aesthetic judgments are subjective rather than objective.

61. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 2. Thus in what he calls the "ethical regime," art is evaluated for its utilitarian effects on communal and individual ethos and is seen, in a platonic sense, as mere craft; in the "representative regime," the arts operate in a semiautonomous sphere derived through the affiliation of certain practices with artistic endeavor—the arts and artists become professionalized in the representational regime. And what Rancière calls the "aesthetic regime" is coextensive with the rise of modernity according to this schema; modernity is conceived as fundamentally aesthetic in its coordination of who and what may be seen and heard in ways that make it possible, ideally, for any individual to create work that has the potential for recognition as art (24). Rancière makes the important point that while these regimes are historically emergent, they do not wholly displace one another and function instead palimpsestically.

I don't wish to claim the validity of Rancière's periodization of these regimes. What I do find useful is that he demarcates these distinguishable ways that aesthetics, understood as structuring the condition of sense experience (of what can be apprehended as art) and thus as a condition of community (of who has the capacity to experience that experience) has continued to be fundamental to the socialities and institutions that we have commonly referred to in political or ideological terms. What I emphasize for present purposes are the ways that, in effect, the culture wars of the latter decades of the twentieth century to varying degrees of explicitness were motivated by the aesthetics of politics.

62. Aristotle, *De Anima*, book 3, sections 1–2.

63. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, section 20. Kant explains further,

> Cognitions and judgments must, along with the conviction that accompanies them, admit of universal communicability; for otherwise there would be no harmony between them and the Object, and they would be collectively a mere subjective play of the representative powers, exactly as skepticism would have it. But if cognitions are to admit of communicability, so must also the state of mind,—*i.e.* the accordance of the cognitive powers with a cognition generally, and that proportion of them which is suitable for a representation (by which an object is given to us) in order that a cognition may be made out of it—admit of universal communicability. For without this as the subjective condition of cognition, knowledge as an effect could not arise. This actually always takes place when a given object by means of Sense excites the Imagination to collect the manifold, and the Imagination in its turn excites the Understanding to bring about a unity of this collective process in concepts. But this accordance of the cognitive powers has a different proportion according to the variety of the Objects which are given. However, it must be such that this internal relation, by which one mental faculty is excited by another, shall be generally the most beneficial for both faculties in respect of cognition (of given objects); and this accordance can only be determined by feeling (not according to concepts). Since now this accordance itself must admit of universal communicability, and consequently also our feeling of it (in a given representation), and since

> the universal communicability of a feeling presupposes a common sense, we have grounds for assuming this latter. And this common sense is assumed without relying on psychological observations, but simply as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our knowledge, which is presupposed in every Logic and in every principle of knowledge that is not sceptical. (section 21)

64. Kant's elaboration on common sense:

> In all judgements by which we describe anything as beautiful, we allow no one to be of another opinion; without however grounding our judgement on concepts but only on our feeling, which we therefore place at its basis not as a private, but as a communal feeling. Now this common sense cannot be grounded on experience; for it aims at justifying judgements which contain an *ought*. It does not say that every one *will* agree with my judgement, but that he *ought*. And so common sense, as an example of whose judgement I here put forward my judgement of taste and on account of which I attribute to the latter an *exemplary* validity, is a mere ideal norm, under the supposition of which I have a right to make into a rule for every one a judgement that accords therewith, as well as the satisfaction in an Object expressed in such judgement. For the principle, which concerns the agreement of different judging persons, although only subjective, is yet assumed as subjectively universal (an Idea necessary for every one); and thus can claim universal assent (as if it were objective) provided we are sure that we have correctly subsumed [the particulars] under it. (*Critique of Judgment*, section 22)

65. Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, 29.

66. See Hinderliter et al., *Communities of Sense*, for an array of essays engaging various facets of the implications of Rancière's theorization.

1. Knowledge under Cover

1. I mean to invoke José Muñoz's theorization of disidentification. For Muñoz, disidentification eschews the options of both identification with and counteridentification against the identities imposed by normative structures. Disidentification, instead, acknowledges the inadequacy of any identity category to capture complexity, and thus marks a position and practice of at once playing with and inhabiting that which exceeds and thus reworks an individual's relationship to identity. Likewise, I use disidentification as a means of signaling the need and possibility of playing with so as to transform the received legacies of the humanities, which are at once ours and yet inexhaustively so.

2. Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*.

3. These contemporary conditions echo the formation of higher education in its early days in the United States. Then, private colleges for privileged classes were the accepted norm. Not until the Morrill Act of 1862 did the U.S. nation associate higher education

with a public good necessary to the future well-being of its citizens, and broader access to college is largely a twentieth-century phenomenon. The data on defunding of public universities and colleges is widely available; sources include Mortensen, "State Funding"; and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "State-by-State Fact Sheets."

4. See Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy*.

5. Andrew Jewett reminds us of this history: "The freedoms enjoyed by American scholars today are a direct result of the political quiescence of their Cold War–era predecessors, who tempered public fears about the radicalism of academic 'eggheads' by vigorously constructing new weapons technologies and new ideological defenses of 'the West'" ("Academic Freedom and Political Change," 265). See also Oparah, "Challenging Complicity," for analysis of the intimate link between the contemporary university and the prison-industrial complex.

6. This division is inherited as part of the Humboldtian legacy, the philosophy of which—with its emphases on public duty and nationalist interest in the development of individuals into Enlightened subjects—continues to organize the ideal if not always the practical life of universities in the United States.

7. American Council of Learned Societies, *Report of the Commission on the Humanities*, 4, 5.

8. American Council of Learned Societies, *Report of the Commission on the Humanities*, 4, 5.

9. American Council of Learned Societies, *Report of the Commission on the Humanities*, 4, 5. The report explains further of the national interest in the humanities: "Upon the humanities depend the national ethic and morality, the national aesthetic and beauty or the lack of it, the national use of our environment and our material accomplishments—each of these areas directly affects each of us as individuals. On our knowledge of men, their past and their present, depends our ability to make judgments—not least those involving our control of nature, of ourselves, and of our destiny. Is it not in the national interest that these judgments be strong and good?" (7).

10. The report takes this quotation from John Adams as its epigraph: "I must study politics and war that my son may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture."

11. See Chatterjee and Maira's coedited *The Imperial University* for discussion of the production of the "liberal class" necessary to U.S. imperial conduct in and through the university.

12. See Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, which establishes long-lived and irrevocable links among settler colonialism, liberalism, and racial capitalism.

13. See, e.g., Canaday, *Straight State*; Reddy, *Freedom with Violence*; Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*.

14. See, especially, Harpham, *The Humanities and the Dream of America*; and Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy*. See also Readings, *University in Ruins*.

15. Readers will perhaps recognize Eve Sedgwick's theorization of ignorance (*Epistemology of the Closet*) and Lauren Berlant's theorization of cruel optimism (*Cruel Optimism*) in the language and critical sensibility of this chapter. I've offered a somewhat more extended discussion of Sedgwick's theory in Chuh, "It's Not about Anything."

16. Chang, *Hunger*, 11.

17. Chang, *Hunger*, 11–12.

18. Chang, *Hunger*, 12.

19. In "Transgressions of a Model Minority," Freedman argues suggestively that Chang's narrative choices link her work genealogically to the work of such Jewish writers as Bernard Malamud.

20. Chang, *Hunger*, 106.

21. Chang, *Hunger*, 114.

22. Officially the Republic of China, founded in mainland China in 1912 and by a government that relocated to the island of Taiwan in 1949, Taiwan is a country that has witnessed serial occupation over centuries—by the Dutch, the Portuguese, the Japanese—and its relationship to the People's Republic of China remains fraught. In 1971, Taiwan ceased to be the recognized representative of China to the United Nations, replaced at that time by the People's Republic of China. Part of what Chang's story imagines is the flight of people from the mainland to the island as well as the violence of the military rule that characterized Taiwan in the post–World War II era. See Ching, *Becoming Japanese*; Chen, *Asia as Method*; see also Hillenbrand, "The National Allegory Revisited."

23. Lisa Lowe's incisive critique of the ways that generational differences between mothers and daughters in Asian American cultural work are read as matters of culture rather than an effect of narrow definitions of what constitutes authentic American culture is usefully remembered here. See Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*; Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity."

24. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*.

25. Wynter, "On Disenchanting Discourse"; Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*.

26. Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., *Presumed Incompetent*.

27. Lloyd, "Race under Representation," 64.

28. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*.

29. As Lloyd explains, "although it is possible to conceive formally of an equable process of assimilation in which the original elements are entirely equivalent, the product of assimilation will always necessarily be in an hierarchical relation to the residual, whether this be defined as, variously, the primitive, the local, or the merely contingent" ("Race under Representation," 73).

30. Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*. There is an obvious resemblance between the organization of knowledge within English and the general reliance on the field-coverage model characterizing the arrangement of knowledge in the university. Disciplinary differences realized in the administrative units of departments attest to the university as an institution organized by liberal representational politics. Indeed, even a passing familiarity with the establishment and histories of interdisciplinary fields like Asian American studies enables recognition of the mobilizing force of representational politics in the student and scholar-activist movements of the 1960s and '70s. Like the globally distributed student protests erupting currently, those earlier movements argued for access and curricular equality as part of a broad-reaching agenda for social justice. The institutionalization of the interdisciplines, to borrow Roderick Ferguson's usage, was one way in which such goals were pursued. Over the decades since, women's and gender and ethnic studies programs have emerged, albeit erratically and unevenly across the academic landscape. Increasingly and at the same time, interdisciplinarity has gained a too-facile traction within departments as well as universities such that now an institutional commitment to interdisciplinarity sometimes is nearly as hollow as the ever-popular commitment to excellence. See Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things*. See also Readings, *University in Ruins*.

31. Castiglia and Castronovo, "Aesthetics and the End(s)," 424.

32. Castiglia and Castronovo, "Aesthetics and the End(s)," 424.

33. Castiglia and Castronovo, "Aesthetics and the End(s)," 425.

34. Castiglia and Castronovo, "Aesthetics and the End(s)," 426.

35. Castiglia and Castronovo, "Aesthetics and the End(s)," 426.

36. Pease, "Doing Justice," 159. Specifically, Pease identifies *Moby-Dick* as having "provided the field itself with a frame narrative that included the norms and assumptions out of which the field was organized" (159).

37. Melville's rise to canonical status, according to David Shumway, dates to the 1930s, a period during which the positivism of literary history dominated the still institutionalizing field of American Literature (*Creating American Civilization*).

38. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 187, 188.

39. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 187.

40. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 188.

41. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 188. In the course of her rich reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, which is also a call to identify the ways that the "sociological imagination" can reproduce racist epistemologies, Gordon explains in a way worth quoting at length:

> Few teachers, especially sociology teachers, reading *Beloved* today would identify with schoolteacher, the educated master. . . . The repudiation of schoolteacher registers a desire to be included in one of the very crucial political questions *Beloved* poses: How can we be accountable to people who seemingly have not counted in the historical and public record? "'*But how will you know me? How will you know me?*'" After all, the question—how can we be accountable to people who have seemingly not counted?—has been a major impetus for a range of collectively organized efforts in critical scholarship. The rejection of the master and the concomitant identification with the slaves and their descendants produce a sense of inclusivity that such a question invites. "'*Mark me, too,' I said. 'Mark the mark on me too.*'" But this desire for inclusion, which is the essential quality of sympathetic identification, is a treacherous mistake. (187; emphasis original)

Gordon continues,

> In a text as evocative and successful in creating a sociological and mythical reality as *Beloved*, it is perhaps too easy to distance ourselves from the ones who count, to disclaim this onerous inheritance by sympathetically identifying with the others or by denying any identification whatsoever. (This book is not about me.) *Yet Morrison's call for accountability suggests that it is our responsibility to recognize just where we are in this story, even if we do not want to be there.* She also suggests that we cannot decline to identify as if such an (albeit worthy) act can erase or transcend the sedimented power relations in which we lived then and live now. Thus we will have to contend not only with those who do not count but are counted; we will also have to contend with those who have the right to count and account for things. (188; emphasis added)

My thanks to Jack Halberstam for his timely reminder of Gordon's work on this point.

42. I have commented on such debates in Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise*.

43. Kang, "Late (Global) Capital."

44. Kang, "Late (Global) Capital," 307.

45. Kang, "Late (Global) Capital," 312. See also Lye, "Unmarked Character."

46. Incommensurability is far from a new construct. We may remember, for example, Homi Bhabha's theorization of a "third space," Dipesh Chakrabarty's emphasis on singularity, and José Muñoz's articulation of queerness and/as a critical utopia: what I have been referring to as the linked concepts of the aesthetic state, radical difference, and incommensurate subjectivity find kinship in these works. See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Wiegman, "Introduction"; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.

47. Melas, "Versions of Incommensurability."

48. Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," 208.

49. The "aesthetic state" is a term often associated with Schiller, and specifically with Schiller's take on Kant. My own definition of the aesthetic state rejects the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere that is foundational to Schiller's view. The debates regarding the putative autonomy of the aesthetic sphere in fact function as part of an aesthetic regime insofar as they regulate the determination of art and artists.

50. Gayatri Gopinath's acute insights into Allan deSouza's work inform my considerations ("Archive, Affect"). See also Shimakawa, *National Abjection*, for theorization of abjection and racialization, to think through the implications of deSouza's use of bodily detritus.

51. Eve Oishi has described this series of deSouza's work as "depicting physical space as empty of people yet entirely sculpted by human desire" ("Painting with an Eraser," 4).

52. Cohen summarizes further:

> Responses to this question are traditionally articulated in two different registers: the physical and the spiritual. The skin is the integument that encloses the visceral interior of the body, yet it is also the membrane within which, mysteriously and ethereally, the human essence is supposed to reside. The outside surface of the body and its first line of defense against the external world, the skin is also the psychically projected shield that contains the self within. Both tactile membrane and enclosure, the skin is a permeable boundary that permits congress between inside and outside, whether that interior is conceived in material or metaphysical terms. The skin thus forms the border not only between bodily interior and exterior but also between psychical and physical conceptions of the self. As a social signifier, moreover, the color, texture, and appearance of the skin have often been presumed to testify to what resides within or beneath it. (*Embodied*, 65)

53. "Vestibularity" here evokes Hortense Spillers's disarticulation of "flesh" and "body" in the context of thinking through Blackness and chattel slavery in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe."

54. Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, 34.

55. Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, 34.

56. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, section 1.

57. Pleasure in the beautiful is distinctive because it is "a disinterested and free satisfaction; for no interest, either of sense or of reason, here forces our assent" (Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, section 2).

58. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, section 6.

59. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, section 8.

60. See Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Butler, *Bodies That Matter*; Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe"; and Salamon, *Assuming a Body*. See also Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, for an extended discussion of Spillers's theorization.

61. Performance studies scholars working with gender and sex and racial difference are perhaps foremost among those who have put the body in the foreground. Scholarship under the rubric of disability studies provides salient attention to normative ideas of corporeality and embodiment subtending and reproduced by critical discourse.

62. Images of this piece are widely available. See, for example, Carrie Mae Weems, *Ain't Jokin', 1987–1988*, http://carriemaeweems.net/galleries/aint-jokin.html; and Artnet, http://www.artnet.com/artists/carrie-mae-weems/mirror-mirror-from-the-aint-jokin-series-v5mNygRTHypuqoIPGPqkxg2.

63. I think here also of Glenn Ligon's paintings, especially his *Ain't I a Man*. See Ligon, *Yourself in the World*. These works resonate with Fanon's primal scene of mis/recognition; Darby English's *How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness* takes up such matters in specific relation to art; see also Jorge Cortiñas's short play, *Look, a Latino!* for his dramatic treatment of visual mis/recognition with respect to Latino racialization; and Tina Campt's work with archival photography in *Image Matters* ("The materiality of the photo secures neither its indexical accuracy nor transparency; it leads us to question it instead. It exposes our own investments in the visual as evidence and indication of such attributions [as race and affiliation]," 127). Campt suggestively also proposes that we extend the "affective sensorium [of the materiality of the photographic image] . . . to include the sonic and musical registers" (128). Xu Bing's graphic crafting of the English alphabet into Chinese character form also comes to mind as work that challenges the truth function of the visual (see Tsao and Ames, *Xu Bing and Contemporary Chinese Art*). Miriam Thaggert provides contextualization in the Harlem Renaissance (*Images of Black Modernism*). See also Judith Butler on the racist episteme ("Endangered/Endangering"); and Susan Buck-Morss on the long reach of visuality in the execution of empire ("Visual Empire"). In brief, across a wide terrain of work and focuses, artists and scholars have continued to interrogate the epistemic reliance on the visual, especially with regard to its relationship to the production of racial knowledge.

64. I understand difference not as the opposite of identity but instead as the radical condition upon which the dialectic of identity and difference assumes form:

$$\frac{\text{dialectic of identity/difference (political)}}{\text{difference (proto-political)}}$$

65. The literature on the coemergence of literary forms and national politics is immense. See, for example, Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*; Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*; Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*; Doyle, *Freedom's Empire*; Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*; Lowe, *Intimacies*; and Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc*. Recall, also, the connection between the rise in print culture and the formation of the imagined community that is the nation, posited by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*.

2. Pedagogies of Liberal Humanism

1. See Wynter, "1492: A New World View"; Wynter, "On Disenchanting Discourse"; Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality"; Wynter, "The Ceremony Must Be Found"; Scott, "The Re-enchantment of Humanism"; and Wynter and McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe."

2. Wynter, "On Disenchanting Discourse," 208.

3. I am reminded of Alexandra T. Vazquez's consideration of the work of anthologies, especially as to their preoccupation with documentation. Referring to their deployment and uses in Cuba and the United States, Vazquez explains that "the anthology has been an enormously effective tool in the formal and informal education of a nation's population. The form was and is a way for an editor or small consensus to make nation a cohesive entity with an agreed-upon past, a fixed present, and an imposed future. National anthologies continue to traffic in the possibilities and dangers of this is who you are and who you will become" (*Listening in Detail*, 58–59, citations omitted). Importantly, Vazquez also notes: "it would be a mistake . . . to assume that its compilers were always driven by some version of: to exist means to be read. This would reduce too many labors of love into the failed fodder of representation. Rather, some corners of the anthological enterprise were raising difficult questions about black futurity: how can reading publics be nurtured? How can little sisters be taught? How can a book offer company? What happens when survival strategies are put together in print?" (59).

4. Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 28.

5. Cedric Robinson's theorization of Black Studies as a critique of modernity translates to the understanding of Black Literature as a critique of liberal humanism. See Sharpe, *In the Wake*, on the depth of anti-Blackness to the constitution of U.S. modern life.

6. See Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe"; see also Weheliye's enrichment of her work in *Habeas Viscus*.

7. See, e.g., Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain."

8. Jacqueline Goldsby's *A Spectacular Secret* establishes the centrality of both the practice and the aesthetic of lynching to the production of U.S. national culture and politics.

9. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*.

10. See Reddy, *Freedom with Violence*; and Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom*, for analyses of the constitutive centrality of violence to modern concepts and practices of freedom.

11. Moten, *In the Break*, 5.

12. As David Lloyd puts it,

> the domain of aesthetic culture provides a site of reconciliation which transcends continuing political differences and accordingly furnishes the domain of human

> freedom promised in theory by bourgeois states but belied in all but form by their practices. The aesthetic domain performs this function by virtue of the fact that, while bourgeois political theory postulates the essential identity of man, aesthetic works are held to furnish the representative instances of reconciliation which at once prefigure and produce an ethical subjectivity restored to identity with this universal human essence. ("Race under Representation," 379–80)

13. See Lloyd, "Race under Representation," for an extended consideration of the relationship between canon formation and this version of humanism.

14. Moten, *In the Break*, 5.

15. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*.

16. Hughes, *Ways of White Folks*, 3. Subsequent citations appear as page numbers in the text.

17. Attali, *Noise*, 6.

18. The scholarship that addresses sound, both as a sensory experience and as the experience of music, similarly recognizes the distinctive potency of the sonic. See Stadler, "Never Heard Such a Thing," for analysis of the relationships among sound, racial violence, and mediation. Other astute work attending to the sonic or aural include Redmond, *Anthem*; Nancy, *Listening*; Mendieta, "The Sound of Race"; Tongson, *Relocations*; Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence*; and, again, Vazquez, *Listening in Detail*; and Moten, *In the Break*.

19. Attali, *Noise*, 6.

20. See Kadosh, Henik, and Walsh, "Synaesthesia"; and Spector and Maurer, "Synesthesia."

21. See Derrida, Porter, and Morris, "The Principle of Reason," for discussion of the centrality of the eye/vision to modern epistemology.

22. Nancy summarizes helpfully: "What truly betrays music and diverts or perverts the movement of its modern history is the extent to which it is indexed to a mode of signification and not to a mode of sensibility. Or else the extent to which a signification overlays and captures a sensibility" (*Listening*, 57). See also Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*.

23. Rancière, "Politics of Literature," 12.

24. Schematically and chronologically, this includes Plato's interest in the relationship of music to emotion (*Republic*, book 3 in particular) and Aristotle's suggestion that music is an expression of human emotion (*Politics*, book 8); Arthur Schopenhauer's assertion that music is rightly conceived of as a copy of human "will" (*The World as Will and Idea*); Eduard Hanslick's effort to isolate the purpose of music against the fashion of ascribing to it the evocation of emotion (*On the Musically Beautiful*); Adorno's

dialectical treatment of music (*Essays on Music*); and Susan K. Langer's insistence that music is "isomorphic" with emotion (*Philosophy in a New Key*).

25. Hughes, *Ways of White Folks*, 46.

26. As Jean-Luc Nancy writes, the sonorous "enlarges [form]; it gives it an amplitude, a density, and a vibration or an undulation whose outline never does anything but approach. The visual persists until its disappearance; the sonorous appears and fades away into its permanence" (*Listening*, 2).

27. If Foucault reminds us that Man is a fabricated subject of knowledge, crafted within the changing schema of academic professionalization, contemporary interest in objects and things collectively restages philosophy's pervasive concern with their specificity and foundation.

28. Moten, *In the Break*, 180.

29. Rancière, "The Politics of Literature," 12, 13.

30. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 24.

31. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 25.

32. Wynter, "On Disenchanting Discourse," 467.

33. Morrison, "Recitatif," 243.

34. Quiroga, *Tropics of Desire*, 2. Derived in part from his participatory observation of a 1993 gay pride march in Buenos Aires, for Quiroga, open masking afforded the possibility of "manifesting solidarity with the cause of civil rights for a disenfranchised minority" regardless of the particular situation of the participant (1).

35. Quiroga, *Tropics of Desire*, 80.

36. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 189.

37. Morrison, "Recitatif," 249, 250.

38. Redfield concisely encapsulates: "Acculturated subjects, actualizing their human potential in aesthetic judgment, become capable of representing the less acculturated both in an aesthetic and political sense precisely because the difference between representative and represented has a temporal dimension. Someday, humanity will achieve itself as a national, and in the end, global subject; in the meantime, an acculturated minority speaks for the collective" (*The Politics of Aesthetics*, 12).

39. Goldsby, *A Spectacular Secret*, 24.

40. In *A Spectacular Secret*, Goldsby compellingly documents and analyzes the ways that newspapers and postcards, as well as the affordability and availability of photographic technologies circulated and consolidated lynching in the U.S. imagination.

3. Making Sense Otherwise

1. Lowe and Lloyd, *The Politics of Culture*; Prakash, *Another Reason*; Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education*.

2. See Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, especially chapter 3, “Slow Death (Obesity, Sovereignty, Lateral Agency).”

3. We may recognize in this constellation of issues the effects of the will to knowledge, the assumption of mastery and privileged place of expertise as subtending the continuing hold of the logic of compartmentalized knowledge. As Judith Halberstam submits, “terms like *serious* and *rigorous* tend to be code words, in academia as well as other contexts, for disciplinary correctness; they signal a form of training and learning that confirms what is already known according to approved methods of knowing” (*The Queer Art of Failure*, 6). Arguing the embrace of failure as a mode of operating in radical distinction from these disciplinary norms and demands, Halberstam reminds us that compartmentalized knowledge is a form of policing whereby compliant subjects are compulsorily interpellated. Radically disidentified from normative demands and desires, scholarship may proceed as a “project of learning and thinking altogether” (7). I want here to turn to (to take seriously!) the “altogether” that Halberstam identifies as the plural subjectivity afforded by letting go of our attachments to the received Order of Knowledge. For it identifies and reiterates what I think of and have been describing as illiberal humanist onto-epistemologies. Or in other words, it keys us into the potentiality of bringing to bear on and in the academy a different rationality. See also Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*.

4. See introduction.

5. We may remember in the context of the liberal mandate Kant’s seminal influence on the idea of the modern university as one in which individual subjectivity could be transcended to the plane of pure Reason ungrounded by or in history. The truths of the university were to be ahistorical, and autonomy is a condition necessary for such transcendence. Kant transformed the primacy of classical Reason (the supreme faculty, following Plato and Aristotle, that would guarantee the rightness of thought and behavior) into that of rationality (*Verstand*), the terrain of Logos upon which the structures of meaning and categories of condition through which self and society could be understood and measured. Lured by the promise of emancipation through self-consciousness, this individual is utterly constrained by and within this rationality, which becomes rationalism—a doctrinaire rationality—to think himself free.

6. See Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, on lateral sovereignty.

7. On sovereignty, see Barker, *Native Acts*; the essays collected in Barker, *Sovereignty Matters*; and Coulthard, *Red Skins, White Masks*; on colonialism’s relationship to gender and sexuality, see Lugones, “Toward a Decolonial Feminism”; and Lugones, “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System”; as well as Rifkin, *The Erotics of Sovereignty*.

8. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*.

9. See, e.g., Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*; Coulthard, *Red Skins, White Masks*. The essays collected in *Theorizing Native Studies*, edited by Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith, address the relationship of Native studies to theory and collectively argue the transformation of subjects and object(ive)s of knowledge effected by Native studies scholarship—that is, the constitution of the domain of theory is itself transformed. Alyosha Goldstein's edited volume, *Formations of United States Colonialism*, offers a range of analyses of the ongoingness of coloniality; in that volume, see especially Barker, "The Specters of Recognition."

10. Criticized for publicizing through this novel rituals and stories sacred to the Laguna peoples represented in it, *Ceremony* and the critical discourse around it reminds us of how the production of knowledge vis-à-vis dominant onto-epistemologies is inextricably coupled with the violence necessary to the establishment and maintenance of modernity. See especially Gunn, "Special Problems." A substantial number of essays analyzing *Ceremony* are oriented toward showing the extent to which it accurately reflects Laguna Pueblo lifeways. It is part of the grounds and argument of this book that it is necessary to delink from such positivist modes of producing knowledge and to interrogate the will to knowledge that subtends that modality. The instrumental objectification of subjugated peoples is a problem expressed through a variety of practices, from tokenization to the spectacular exoticization and dehumanization of people exhibited for anthropological or entertainment purposes. While this ethical problem is perhaps most obvious across identity formations, it is also a general problem of research. For the production of institutionalized knowledge always already takes place within structures organized to reproduce rather than unravel social hierarchies; it takes place in the very sites that buttress the bio- and necropolitics and material inequalities that give meaning to race, gender, and indigeneity. The academic as such is never selfsame with the subject-object of inquiry, even while that subject-object cannot be understood as having an autonomous existence as a subject-object of study, that is, in nonrelation to the researcher. See Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other*; and Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, for analyses of the problem of research in relation to racial and colonial otherness. This is not to suggest that there is a universal identity as an academic that enjoys an unsocial existence. It is all too apparent that differential capacities for intellectual work are assigned within the academy in ways that register the hierarchies of the social totality broadly. My point, instead, is to note that this is not a problem of identity politics, narrowly construed—a problem of who may speak for whom, or of the authenticity of representation. Rather, it is one that requires the analysis and theorization of the rationalization of knowledge.

11. See Matsunaga, "Leslie Marmon Silko and Nuclear Dissent in the American Southwest," for an extended discussion of this novel's rendering of "nuclear colonialism." On the history of nuclear toxification of Indigenous lands, see LaDuke, *All Our Relations*, ch. 5.

12. See Vizenor, *Survivance*; see also Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*; Byrd, *Transit of Empire*; Coulthard, *Red Skins, White Masks*; and Goeman, *Mark My Words*, for capacious discussions of that vibrancy in literature, politics, and theory. Goeman specifically attends to writings by Native women including Silko (focused particularly on *Almanac of the Dead*) and offers in her analysis of the "manifest acts" that decimated Native peoples an understanding of how Silko registers the ways that they are "never complete or final, rather they are ongoing, and even as they continue to affirm patterns of dominance, they also engender resistance and complicity, thus producing and productive of socialities" (*Mark My Words*, 158).

13. Silko, *Ceremony*, 7–8.

14. Silko, *Ceremony*, 8.

15. I mean "mutuality" in the sense Sandy Grande theorizes it in *Red Pedagogy* in her call to remake critical education in ways attentive to settler colonialism and indigeneity.

16. On debates regarding blood genealogy in Indigenous politics, see Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*; and Barker, *Native Acts*.

17. Silko, *Ceremony*, 126.

18. Wynter, "The Ceremony Must Be Found," 29.

19. In the thick history she provides of the coming to dominance of the ethnoclass-specific humanism of bourgeois liberalism, Wynter remembers how *studia humanitatis* shifted from its Christian medieval worldview, with its center of gravity located in God, to the "de-godded" activities of the human. In the process, the ceremonies that yoked the human to the divine had to be rewritten such that the ordering of chaos that had been the purview of the divine but now fell to mere humans could "constitute itself as a new *ordo* or *studium*" ("The Ceremony Must Be Found," 28). The human thus rebirthed appears thoroughly natural (biological) and autochthonous: "the common thrust was directed toward the valorization of the new emerging sense of self, of that which defined itself no longer as Spirit but as Natural Reason carefully cultivated" (29). Wynter explains further, "Even more, a new higher sanction system, one based on the self-correcting processes of human knowledge was here being proposed and put in place, in the context of a normative knowledge whose axiom . . . had been that God had ordered the world according to certain principles, and the role of fallen man was merely to decipher these principles and abide by them, but not seek to question and have knowledge of things celestial which, unaided, his corrupted human knowledge could not encompass" (28). In contrast, the humanists drew upon the "non-Christian legacy of the Graeco-Roman tradition of thought and literature to project an alternative mode of life and being" (29).

20. Silko, *Ceremony*, 124.

21. See Chen, *Animacies*, for consideration of the ways in which toxicity keys us into the racialized and imperial flows of capital, bodies, and objects in the contemporary world. See also Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, regarding the ways in which Japanese Americans were recruited into service of the U.S. nation's settler colonialism as a facet of internment.

22. Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* brings to bear similar aesthetic-theoretical insights; I am reminded also of LeAnne Howe's writings and their emphases on connections across given boundaries, spatial and otherwise. See also Robert Warrior's discussions in *Tribal Secrets*.

23. The stakes in and urgency of fostering the onto-epistemologies of relationality announce themselves in the ongoing struggles to forestall the toxification of land, water, and people, driven by the primacy of the rationalism that accompanies the petroleum economy. Native Americans and First Nations peoples have led in standing against the machinery of capitalism on this continent—the explosives, heavy land-shifting machines, fracking tools, and pipelines, but also the unsustainable logics and corollary economies that justify the continuing and renewed abrogation of tribal sovereignty. Despite clear evidence of the unsustainability of its effects, capitalist rationalism (itself justified by the liberal ideology of freedom) retains state support and, in turn, affirms the necessity of state police authority to protect the marketplace. A recent, highly publicized example of such resistance efforts is the Standing Rock Sioux nation's protest of the North Dakota Access Pipeline. Honor the Earth is an organization, cofounded by Winona LaDuke and led by Native peoples, that advances understanding of sustainability and tracks and supports struggles to forestall damage to planet and people, understood in their mutuality. See www.honorearth.org.

24. Here echo the insights of another Native writer and critic, Gerald Vizenor, who has elucidated a link between Zen Buddhism and Anishinaabe (Chippewa or Ojibwe) dream songs, a link he experienced as an "introduction to haiku, by chance of the military" (*Native Liberty*, 265). "Haiku," Vizenor explains, "in a sense, caught me out on the road as a soldier in another culture and gently turned me back to the seasons, back to the tease and native memories. The turns and imagistic scenes of haiku were neither exotic nor obscure, because nature is a sense of presence, not a tenure of experience, or pretense of discovery" (258). He need not identify as or even with, so much as find resonant in this other culture the inseparability of philosophy, religion, and literature that reorients him toward nature and delinked from the expectations of the categorical, the identity as a soldier. "Haiku created a sense of presence, and, at the same time, reminded me of a nature that was already wounded, desecrated, removed, and an absence in many places on the earth. Nature is a presence not a permanence, and a *haiku moment* is an aesthetic survivance," Vizenor explains (261). For him, this moment induces the literary: "My very first literary creations were haiku scenes, and since then, that imagistic sense of nature has always been present in my writing" (260). This, too, is being with; not an erasure of difference but rather being sensate to

it; allowing difference to resonate through and in the relationality of self to place and other. Vizenor, like Ozeki, like Silko, iterates a geography in which Japan and Native America remain distinctive but are not held apart. Deployed to do harm by and as part of the U.S. Army, aesthetic encounter provokes a turn toward Relation.

25. I mean to invoke Édouard Glissant's theorization of Relation, a state of "interactive totality," a condition that poetics is uniquely capable of and necessary to bringing forth (*Poetics of Relation*); see also Fred Moten's poetic-theoretical offering of the "blur" that names the ineradicable connectedness of people and histories (*Black and Blur*, 2017).

26. Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, 3.

27. See, all by Muñoz, "The Brown Commons"; "Wildness and the Brown Commons"; "Feeling Brown"; "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down"; and "'Gimme Gimme This.'" Muñoz's book project on this topic was as yet incomplete when he died in December 2013. I draw from published related pieces, including lectures given, in crafting this discussion. Vazquez and Quiroga identified Hialeah, Florida, as a ground of Muñoz's theorization of Brownness in the remarks they delivered at the 2014 American Studies Association Annual Meeting.

28. Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, 415.

29. Womack, "A Single Decade," 5.

30. Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, 413.

31. Ozeki weaves this sensibility in other ways, too, which I summarize briefly here and/but for purposes of space will leave to other occasions for further discussion: through the novel's insights into gender performativity as a fixing of position and the erotics and pleasures to be found in disidentifying from normative gender scripts; its invocation of scale and the entanglement of all beings across the human, natural, animal, object, and even literary worlds; its attention to geopolitics and historical events like the dispossession of First Nations, 9/11, and the tsunami and aftereffects on the Fukushima nuclear power plant and decimation of surrounding areas; its attention to social media and the virtuality of the internet as characterizing the historical present; the violence of Japanese imperialism as well as its prominent engagement with Marcel Proust's magnum opus *In Search of Lost Time* (or *Remembrance of Things Past*), the seven-volume work characterized by a multiplicity of perspectives and the thematization of life as accumulated time. In this wide-ranging way, Ozeki produces an aesthetic of attunement, of deep engagement with the entanglement of all beings and beingness.

32. As a small detour through the history of color, remember that, in the tradition of Western civilization aesthetics and especially art history, color has been held to be far subordinate to form. From the classical age until, really, the twentieth century, color was understood to be superficial rather than substantive, unruly and even defiant: it could not be classified easily and thus troubled the scientific rationalist–driven efforts to taxonomize everything taking hold in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and

remaining strongly influential today, of course. Color needed to be disciplined—it had to be carefully framed—an understanding that, of course, lent itself to defiance by figures who refused to frame, to use color not to refer to something or anything, but as meaningful in and of itself. What would it mean to experience color not as metaphoric but in and for itself? I think that's also what Muñoz is asking through and with his sense of brown—that is, that brownness is not metaphoric, referential, or propositional but, again, *is*.

33. Quiroga, *Tropics of Desire*, 3.

34. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*.

35. Hall and O'Shea, "Common-Sense Neoliberalism," 1.

36. Hall and O'Shea, "Common-Sense Neoliberalism," 3. See Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 323–26 and 348–51, for focused consideration of "good" and "common sense."

4. Mis/Taken Universals

1. Spivak, *Aesthetic Education*; see especially the introduction.

2. Spivak distinguishes between globalization and globalizability to emphasize the point that "the globe" is given to us only in "capital and data"—that is, to emphasize its virtual, abstract nature. See "Introduction," 21.

3. Spivak, "Introduction," 21.

4. Spivak, "Introduction," 34.

5. See Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience," on "eurocentered epistemology's conceal [ment of] its own geo-historical and bio-graphical locations," a procedure necessary to "succeed in creating the idea of universal knowledge as if the knowing subjects were also universal" (160). A matter at the heart of the decolonial thinking Mignolo has elaborated across his oeuvre, he points in this essay quite precisely to the onto-epistemology of the colonial matrix of power—"a racial system of social classification that invented Occidentalism . . . , that created the conditions for Orientalism; distinguished the South of Europe from its center . . . and, on that long history, remapped the world as first, second and third during the Cold War" (161). This is and was the fantasy that continues to pervade knowledge production in the academy: "Once upon a time," Mignolo narrates, "scholars assumed that the knowing subject in the disciplines is transparent, disincorporated from the known and untouched by the geo-political configuration of the world in which people are racially ranked and regions are racially configured" (160). Condensing the vast history whereby modernity's darker side is occluded in favor of the idealization of Enlightenment, Mignolo re-sounds the need to delink from the illusions of the universal knowing subject and universal knowledge.

6. Tsing, *Friction*, 7.

7. Tsing, *Friction*, 7. The approach Tsing takes in *Friction* is a practical one, which is to say that she investigates the life of universals in their practiced forms. Through her analyses of especially environmental politics in Indonesia, Tsing establishes globalization as naming and having heterogeneous effects through the encounters it provokes between or among universals.

8. Tsing, *Friction*, 2. As Tsing demonstrates, tracing the animating force of the universal is a method of apprehending the specificity of entanglement—the friction, in her terms—that is, the sticky encounters in and through which ideas are materialized and the materiality of ideas is made apparent (6). Tsing's project shows how paradigms and analyses of globalization tell an incomplete story when they neglect to attend to the ways that "congeries of local/global interaction" constitute "global forces" (3). Narrated as an unstoppable force of homogenization driven by the insatiable engine of capitalism, globalization appears undifferentiated such that "all cultural developments [are packaged] into a single program: the emergence of the global era" (3). Such theories have limited explanatory power, not least because they substitute naming for analysis. In their stead, in Tsing's view, we may take up globalization as a genuine object of knowledge by formulating it as a question rather than an answer: "how does one study the global?" (2). For Tsing, undertaking such a study means repeated encounters with universals which, in cultural anthropology, the field to which she in part addresses herself, has been met with "curmudgeonly suspicion" (7), steeped as it is in a belief in the cultural specificity of universals.

9. For example, Nana Oishi summarizes that the "forces of globalization are increasing the demand for cheap and docile migrant female labor in all regions. Between 1960 and 2000, the number of migrant women around the world increased more than twofold, from 35 million to 85 million; by 2000, women constituted 48.6 percent of the world's migrants" (*Women in Motion*, 2); Rachel Parreñas attends to migrant Filipina domestic workers and what she identifies as the "international division of reproductive labor" ("Migrant Filipina Domestic Workers"); Robyn M. Rodriguez attends to the ways that the Philippine state has made "national heroes" of Filipino migrants ("Migrant Heroes"); and Alejandro Portes studies the formation of transnational communities as a result of migration for work ("Globalization from Below"). While the story of capitalist expansion is familiar, the modality of global capital bears the potential of "turning globalization into the final apotheosis of capital against its adversaries, be they state managers or organized workers" ("Globalization from Below," 254). See also Douglass, "The Race for Human Capital," which is concerned with people employed in caregiving and other low-wage service industries, who for a variety of reasons are recruited as "human resources" and developed as "human capital" for and find jobs abroad, and who may have little interest in permanent relocation. Strikingly, Douglass uses the phrase "human capital" without comment on its transformation of humanity into the abstractions of capitalism.

10. As Alejandro Portes succinctly puts it, the "success of these [migratory] initiatives [that crisscross the earth in search of accumulation] is generally correlated inversely with the economic autonomy achieved by national states and the social and economic prerogatives earned by local labor. For the most part . . . the momentum acquired by global capitalist expansion is such as to sweep away everything in its path, confining past dreams of equality and autonomous national development to the dustbin of history" ("Globalization from Below," 253).

11. Truong, *The Book of Salt*, 1. Subsequent citations appear as page numbers in the text.

12. See Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other*; and Barker, "The Specters of Recognition," for consideration of the problem and appeal of recognition and authenticity in relation to colonial and Indigenous politics and aesthetics.

13. Truong, *The Book of Salt*, 18.

14. Troeung, "'A Gift or a Theft,'" 130.

15. See Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, on crisis ordinariness.

16. Eng, "The End(s) of Race," 1483.

17. I draw the phrase from Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*. See also Freeman on "erotohistoriography" in *Time Binds*.

18. Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 252.

19. On this point, see Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*; Reddy, *Freedom with Violence*; and Nguyen, *Gift of Freedom*.

20. See Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.*, for a rich consideration of the career of Robinson Crusoe in the establishment of human rights discourse and law, for example.

21. Doyle, *Freedom's Empire*, 188. In her reading, Doyle remembers that the relationship with Xury, also enslaved to the Moors along with Crusoe, prefigures the ways that Friday is necessary to Crusoe's freedom. These relationships, she incisively observes, "unveil[] the faithless and profiteering logic of the Anglo-Saxons' relation to Africans on the Atlantic" (188).

22. Attar, *Vital Roots*, 19.

23. See Attar, *Vital Roots*; Baeshen, "'Robinson Crusoe' and 'Ḥayy Bin Yaqzan'"; and Kugler, *Representations of Race and Romance*. For discussion and analysis of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓan*, including its cultural and historic contexts, philosophical sources, and relationships to gender and nature, see the essays in Conrad, ed. *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl*.

24. Goodman (trans.), *Ḥayy Ibn Yazqan*, 95.

25. The medieval Islamic philosopher Abū Ali Al-Husayn Ibn Sinā lived 980–1037.

26. Goodman (trans.), *Ḥayy Ibn Yazqan*, 95.

27. Goodman (trans.), *Ḥayy Ibn Yazqan*, 97.

28. See "Introduction," in Goodman (trans.), *Ḥayy Ibn Yazqan.*

29. There is substantial critical literature on the merits and purposes of Ṭufayl's tale. See, e.g., Gutas, "Ibn Ṭufayl on Ibn Sina's Eastern Philosophy"; Hourani, "The Principal Subject of Ibn Ṭufayl's Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓan". On Ibn Sinā's philosophy, see Butterworth, "Medieval Islamic Philosophy and the Virtue of Ethics."

30. See Garcia, *Islam and the English Enlightenment*, for more on the compresence of Islamic and Enlightenment thought.

31. That Crusoe "rescues" Friday from the cannibalistic Natives on the Island of Despair is notable for the ways that it pits the enslaved against the Indigenous and, by doing so, affirms Crusoe's heroism.

32. Derrida, *Eyes of the University*; Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other*; Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*.

33. Radhakrishnan, "Why Compare?," 16.

34. Shih, "Comparison as Relation," 80.

35. Shih, "Comparison as Relation," 79.

36. Shih, "Comparison as Relation," 79.

37. Glissant, *Poetics*, 117.

38. Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience," 174.

39. Truong, *The Book of Salt*, 248.

Conclusion

1. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 190.

Postscript

1. *Triple Point* is the title Sze used for her massive and multiaspect United States Pavilion installation at the 2013 Venice Biennale. See Sze, *Sarah Sze* for commentary and images.

2. Insightful analyses of the histories, processes, and impact of migration from Asia to the United States may be found in Lubhéīd and Cantú, *Queer Migrations*; Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America*; and Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American*.

3. This discussion echoes ideas in my essay, "Asians Are the New . . . What?" collected in *Flashpoints for Asian American Studies*, edited by Cathy Schlund-Vials. There, I am especially interested in analyzing the significance of Asian American efforts to contest affirmative action policies in higher education.