UNDER CONTROL

THEOLOGY, MASTERY, AND THE AUTOPOIESIS OF MASCULINE IDENTITIES

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation seeks to introduce a new approach to the analysis of men's violence and masculinities in the context of the United States. I focus on the concept of control—understood here as a spectrum of interrelated modes of violence that assert mastery over the self and others—in an effort to interrogate the role of power and violence in the historical enactment of masculine identities. Tracing what Caribbean anticolonial theorist Sylvia Wynter names "the politics of being," I examine significant moments in the theological, philosophical, and cultural production of the human subject in order to demonstrate how the violence of control becomes essential to a dominant understanding of what it means to be human. Particular attention is payed to the gendered, racial, and economic categorization of the human that first enabled and continues to serve the ongoing global devastation of colonialism upon which the "progress" of so-called Modernity was built.

This account of control and its functions in the production of a dominant understanding of what it means to be human tasks the examination of men's violence and masculinities with a deeper and more historically attentive mode of analysis than the therapeutic assessment of "healthy" and "harmful" masculinities. It accomplishes this by revealing the power and violence inherent in the ideological and material production of the Western humanist vision of the individual subject—a vision that has always been explicitly masculinized. A challenge is thus presented to the theorization of masculinities

that invites us to reckon with the philosophical, theological, racial, political, and economic logics of masculine inviolability and mastery that come to be essential to the legible performance of humanity in the wake of Modernity.

For Jake,

and for Jesse, Michael, and Hannah

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INTRODUCTION

TENDING GRIEF, CONFRONTING VIOLENCE

As if by some surreal manifestation of eternal return, the question of manhood has emerged once more as a subject of intense and multivalent concern in American society. Among conservative Christian groups, popular social media figures, and scholars of gender, sex, and sexuality, attention has refocused on the issue of masculinities following a boom in the last two decades of the 20th century and a subsequent decline in the years that followed. The myriad voices currently raising the question of manhood and masculinities generally share a sense of urgency, but whether masculinity itself *is* the crisis or masculinity is *in* crisis becomes a matter of perspective. As I hope to make clear, either position could obscure a more in-depth analysis of gender, power, and violence. We can observe this by briefly examining each position in turn.

Several efforts at critically engaging masculinity as a social issue have emerged from popular discourse in the United States—benefitting from decades of feminist and queer activism and consciousness raising efforts. Many of them either draw directly on or are significantly influenced by scholarship in gender studies, feminist studies, and psychology and loosely employ these resources to help interrogate the normative operations of masculine gender identities and uncover healthier, alternative modes of manhood. These efforts are exemplified by socially progressive organizations and media campaigns targeting the harmful effects of 'toxic masculinity.' One good example of an organization running an ongoing campaign to raise awareness around the influence of patriarchy on media depictions of masculinity and femininity is The Representation Project. Focused on education and intervention on multiple scales, The Representation

Project has released films and documentaries, hosted programs and resourced workgroups, and maintains an active social media presence and partnerships with influencers.[1]

Another characteristic example is actor, director, public speaker, and now author Justin Baldoni's Man Enough campaign. Aside from his starring roles in television and film, Baldoni has a TED talk with 6.6 million views,[2] hosts a "candid dinner conversation series where a diverse group of men open up and reveal how they are affected by societal expectations of what it is to be a man in America,"[3] maintains an active social media presence in which he frequently addresses masculinity, and has recently written a semi-autobiographical self-help book titled *Man Enough*.[4] Baldoni's work exemplifies popular arguments against toxic masculinity, which typically suggest that the brooding, volatile, emotionally stunted, and fiercely independent vision of traditional manhood be subverted by a push for empathetic, emotionally intelligent, socially conscious, self-controlled, and diverse masculinities.[5] A consistent thread running through these discussions is the assurance that manhood and masculinity are not inherently problematic—the issue is rather with antiquated and exaggerated forms of masculinity that adhere to harmful normative scripts. This popular narrative—championed by celebrities such as Terry

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[1] Their mission and work are well documented on their website, "About," *The Representation Project*, Accessed April 16, 2021, http://therepresentationproject.org/about-us/.

[2] Justin Baldoni, "Why I'm done trying to be 'man enough,'" *TED*, November 3, 2017, https://www.ted.com/talks/justin_baldoni_why_i_m_done_trying_to_be_man_enough.

[3] "Watch," *Man Enough*, Accessed April 2, 2021, https://manenough.com/watch.

[4] "Books," *Man Enough*, Accessed April 2, 2021, https://manenough.com/books.

[5] See http://www.wearemanenough.com/ and http://therepresentationproject.org/ for examples of more organized and visible campaigns. For a more expansive and in-depth exploration of the popular discourse consider a dive into #toxicmasculinity on Twitter.

Crews, John Cena, and Lin-Manuel Miranda—suggests that alternative, healthy forms of masculinities reflect "true" or "real" versions of manhood that have been suppressed by patriarchal gender-normativity.

In contrast to a more "secularized" popular framing of toxic masculinity as the issue, conservative evangelical Christian communities have sought to address the crisis of a culture determined to undermine traditional—often "Biblical"—definitions of masculinity and manhood. Paradigmatic of this movement to defend dominant gender norms in American society is the Promise Keepers organization. In constant decline after decades of stadium rallies, church programing, and organization geared towards shaping and empowering "godly men," the struggling Promise Keepers is intent on orchestrating a resurgence. Touting a "New Era" of transformative witness and unprecedented impact, Promise Keepers announced a major event for 2020, which they projected would be attended by over eighty thousand men and streamed live by an additional five million.[6] The impetus for bringing all of these men together? "Masculinity is in crisis. The soul of men is at stake."[7]

While the recurring crisis narrative so popular with Protestant Christian men's groups and various branches of the larger men's movement in the U.S. has been thoroughly treated by Critical Study of Men and Masculinities (CSMM) scholars, Promise Keepers' latest appeal to masculine precarity is timely given the critical attention

[6] "Events," *Promise Keepers*, Accessed April 8, 2021, https://promisekeepers.org/promise-keepers/events/. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic the event was hosted virtually and Promise Keepers reports that over 1 million men participated: "Promise Keepers Reaches 1 Million Men," *Promise Keepers*, August 21, 2020, https://promisekeepers.org/promise-keepers-reaches-1-million-men/.

[7] "About," *Promise Keepers*, Accessed April 8, 2021, https://promisekeepers.org/promise-keepers/about-us/.

to men and masculinity that is emerging in American social discourse. [8] Social media movements and organizing exemplified by the #MeToo Movement, TIME'S UP campaign, and #ChurchToo have brought increasing awareness to the epidemic of men's sexual violence against women. In the wake of the very public political and religious controversy of the Ford-Kavanaugh hearings, the Southern Baptist sexual abuse scandal, ongoing sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, and 4 years of Presidential endorsement and perpetuation of sexual assault and rape, collective outrage has emerged over what seems to be a long suppressed and *very real* issue with manhood and masculinity: men's violence.

Further examining the nature of this issue, it is important to point out that while Protestant men's groups like the Promise Keepers are warning of a "crisis of masculinity," what seems to be a crisis of men's violence is no less severe or suppressed in Christian communities than among other groups in the United States. Aside from the very public institutional scandal that continues to plague the Roman Catholic Church and has recently visited the Southern Baptist Convention, Mainline Protestant, Evangelical, and Fundamentalist Christians in the US are all struggling to confront—or attempting to altogether avoid confronting—the realities of men's violence in their communities.[9] The

[8] See Eric Magnuson, *Changing Men, Transforming Culture: Inside the Men's Movement* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2007); Joseph Gelfer, *Numen, Old Men: Contemporary Masculine Spiritualties and the Problem of Patriarchy* (London: Equinox Publishing, 2009); R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005); Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 4th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994).

[9] See A. Denise Starkey, "The Roman Catholic Church and Violence Against Women"; Ron Clark "Is There Peace Within Our Walls? Intimate Partner Violence and White Mainline Protestant Churches in North America"; Rachel L. Stephens and Donald F. Walker "Addressing Intimate Partner Violence in White Evangelical and Fundamentalist Churches," in *Religion and Men's Violence Against Women,* ed. Andy J. Johnson (New York: Springer, 2015).

widespread secrecy, denial, and disregard that were revealed by the #ChurchToo campaign[10] stand in sharp juxtaposition to the last three decades of Protestant men's groups working visibly, vocally, and tirelessly to return to "traditional," "Biblical," and "godly" forms of masculinity.[11] It might suggest that these "men of God" are either widely perpetrators of or complicit in the men's violence that plagues their communities of faith.

The popular desire to confront toxic masculinity and discover redemptive reconfigurations of manhood is not without its parallel in academic discourse. A sub-field of gender studies, the Critical Study of Men and Masculinities is the most recent configuration of a feminist-informed scholarly discourse that emerged in the late-eighties with the goal of "complet[ing] the radically redrawn portrait of gender that women's studies [had] begun."[12] Although CSMM scholars as a group are quick to cite feminist scholarship and activism as an inspiring point of departure for their work,[13] this has not always (or even frequently) led to sustained and ongoing engagement with feminist thought. Instead, this fairly small and homogenous (primarily white, cisgender men from the US and UK) group of scholars has frequently exhibited strongly self-referential

[10] Lauren Rearick, "#ChurchToo Shows Problem of Sexual Assault in Religious Settings," *Teen Vogue*, November 29, 2017, https://www.teenvogue.com/story/church-too-sexual-assault.

[11] Gelfer, *Numen, Old Men*, 48-61.

[12] Michael S. Kimmel, "Introduction," *Changing Men*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1987), 10-11.

[13] Stephen B. Boyd, W. Merle Longwood, and Mark W. Muesse, "Men, Masculinity, and the Study of Religion," *Redeeming Men: Religion and Masculinities*, eds. Boyd, Longwood, and Muesse (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), xiii.

tendencies in their theorizing,[14] gravitating in particular towards the critical concepts and terminology put forth in the work of one central figure: Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell. As a sociologist and a transgender woman, Connell is uniquely positioned outside of the primarily cisgender male group of CSMM scholars who rely so heavily upon her work.

Fellow sociologist (and Australian) Chris Beasely has argued that Connell's "contribution to the field of studies of men/masculinities is acknowledged as unparalleled by virtually every commentator on it,"[15] and that her work provides the "central reference point" for the majority of CSMM scholars. [16] Given her particular influence on the theorization of masculinities, perhaps it is unsurprising that Connell's writing is where we discover a profound resonance with popular discourse surrounding men and violence. Arguing that there is no such thing as a singular masculinity, Connell works to identify the violence inherent in a normative, "hegemonic" vision of masculinity that shapes a dominant, patriarchal gender identity and grants power to other masculinities—the subordinated, complicit, and marginalized—in accordance with their submission to and replication of the hegemonic.[17]

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[14] This is certainly due in part to the difficulty of establishing and stabilizing a new field of study. Still, I would argue that the level of insularity that can reasonably be observed in CSMM scholarship cannot be satisfactorily explained by the pragmatic necessities of forming a sustainable academic discourse.

[15] Chris Beasely, "Problematizing contemporary Men/Masculinities theorizing: the contribution of Raewyn Connell and conceptual-terminological tensions today," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Volume 63, Issue 4 (2012): 753.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Connell, *Masculinities*, 76-80.

Key to Connell's insight is her emphasis on the evolution of social norms and the mobility of hegemonic masculinity. That is, hegemonic masculinity is not a static and enduring set of norms, but can shift, change, and adapt according to different social contexts and structures of power.[18] What maintains patriarchal power in a given moment and context can be radically different in another. For Connell—and for most CSMM scholars—masculinities are not inherently problematic, it is the patriarchal configuration of power through gendered social norms that creates toxic, violent, or extreme forms of masculinities and lead to issues such as men's violence. Given this analysis, affirming masculinities that reject hegemonic norms and patriarchal power structures becomes a viable form of resistance to the power and violence that shape traditional visions of manhood.

Connell's critique of hegemonic masculinity was groundbreaking when it emerged in the 90's and has certainly provide helpful theoretical tools for both academic and popular discourse. Although a great deal more could be said concerning the critique of hegemonic masculinity and its many iterations, it does seem reasonable to say that the lingering question of men and violence within that frame can be summarized as one of identity and the way it is shaped by social structures and interpersonal socialization. More specifically, there is a sense that healthy socialization will engender healthy forms of masculinity, which will then empower men to combat the violent forms of masculinity that emerge in the context of violent socialization and harmful social structures. A deliberate simplification of complex theories, to be sure, but this focus on recuperating masculine identity and developing healthy masculinities is exemplified in the

[18] Ibid.

"therapeutic turn" that has profoundly influenced CSMM scholarship and has close parallels in popular discourse.

This "therapeutic turn" centers the traumatic experiences and suppressed emotions of men—predominately cis, white men—as an essential point of analysis in the deconstruction of patriarchal social structures. As the argument goes, men's violence does not begin with violence against others (women, children, and other men), rather it begins with the self-inflicted violence of hegemonic masculine identity—the suppression of emotion, the limitation of personhood, and the totalizing desire for domination—that is demanded by patriarchal gender norms. Thus, in order to solve the problem of men's violence against others we must simultaneously eradicate the violence that men inflict upon themselves. [19]

This intellectual development within CSMM scholarship resonates strongly with the emphasis placed on emotional healing and vulnerability in progressive social media campaigns like *The Representation Project* and *Man Enough,* and in the work of well-known authors and speakers like Brené Brown. While it is not an unhelpful topic for theorization, the therapeutic turn is often put forth as the only source of alternative practice—even among those who caution against its preeminence—to the violence in patriarchal societies and for transforming masculinities. Within academic discourse, Michael Messner, Bob Pease, and Jaleniewski Seidler—three scholars who have been very influential in building the CSMM field—each critiqued the therapeutic turn but have

[19] One of the earliest articulations of this position can be found in Michael Kaufman's "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence," *Men's Lives*, 2nd Edition, eds. Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 28-50. bell hooks also presents an immersive and compelling argument along these lines in *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: ATRIA Books, 2004).

had difficulty escaping a reliance on the appeal to emotional growth and treating self-inflicted violence when theorizing constructive strategies for rehabilitating masculinities.[20] In the continual return to and privileging of the treatment of men's self-inflicted violence and stunted emotional intelligence—and I am in emphatic support of people who are navigating masculine identities engaging their emotions and examining their gendered trauma—CSMM scholars and popular figures alike avoid a deeper interrogation of the supposed necessity of masculine identities and their connections to power and violence.

Feminist scholarship on patriarchal social structures and the influence of male supremacy on interpersonal relations has characteristically focused more closely on issues of power and violence, particularly in relation to questions of identity formation. A longstanding focus of feminist scholarship and activism in the United States, the issue of men's violence against women and children (and in more recent work, other men, queer, trans and nonbinary people) is a challenging subject of analysis. Empirical data suggests that criminalized violence such as human trafficking, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and rape are committed at extremely high rates but by a relatively small group of men.[21] These statistics produce the rather paradoxical assertions that "most males are not violent, and that most violent people are males."[22] The dissonance of these summary

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[20] See Michael A. Messner's "'Changing Men' and Feminist Politics in the United States," *The Politics of Manhood*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Jeleniewski Seidler, *Transforming Masculinities* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Bob Pease, *Recreating Men* (London: SAGE Publications, 2000).

[21] Christopher Kilmartin, "Men's Violence Against Women: An Overview," *Religion and Men's Violence Against Women*, ed. Andy J. Johnson (New York: Springer, 2015), 15.

[22] Ibid.

statements is exemplified by research suggesting that 98% of the people who rape women and 93% of the people who rape men are men,[23] that 84% of people who commit intimate partner violence are men,[24] and that 96% of people who sexually abuse children are men,[25] despite the seeming fact that most men have not committed rape or intimate partner violence, or sexually abused a child.[26] Further complicating this statistical paradox, men's violence is often presented as being undetermined by any commonly cited social factors such as socioeconomic location, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, or religious affiliation. [27] Rather, men's violence is thought to be ubiquitous across these social categories and connected by only one (seemingly obvious) factor—gender.

Yet, if we examine violence more broadly does the picture remain so one-dimensional? For example, if we look to the issue of mass shootings—the troubling frequency of which is unique to the United States—we can observe that this form of

[23] M.C. Black, K.C. Basile, M.J. Breiding, S.G. Smith, M.L. Walters, M.T. Merrick, J. Chen, & M.R. Stevens, The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report (Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011), 24.

[24] Jillian E.H. Damron and Andy J. Johnson, "Violence Against Women in Religious Communities: An Introduction," in Religion and Men's Violence Against Women, ed. Andy J. Johnson (New York: Springer, 2015), 3.

[25] Emily Dworkin and Hallie Martynuik, "Child Sexual Abuse Prevention: Overview," Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Information Packet (Harrisburg, PA: National Sexual Violence Resource Center, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011), 2.

[26] There is, of course, the issues of pervasive underreporting, what is and is not recognized by the law and the criminal justice system as "violence," and how violence is rendered visible or invisible in relation to a host of intersecting factors including, race, class, sexuality, geopolitical location, and gender. I intend to explore these complications in the body of this text, as I hope will become clear in the ensuing pages of the introduction.

[27] Damron and Johnson, "Violence Against Women in Religious Communities: An Introduction," 3. See also, Kilmartin "Men's Violence Against Women: An Overview," 15.

violence is overwhelmingly carried out by white men.[28] In this instance, then, we can immediately identify one mode of violence that is almost entirely exclusive to men where both nationality and race play a significant role. Another example that further complicates our assessment of the issue of men's violence is the high rates of violence committed against transgender and gender non-conforming people. Despite an appalling lack of research, the information available indicates that Black transgender women are targeted at disproportionally high rates[29] and suggests that cisgender, heterosexual men are very likely the majority of perpetrators of violence against transgender and gender non-conforming people.[30] These instances of violent and often-fatal transphobia call into question the operating assumptions concerning sexuality, race, and the gender-binary in the approach to and formulation of the issue of men's violence. It would seem that the issue of men's violence, while being definitionally concerned with gender, needs to be theorized from multiple vantage points that include and extend beyond the question of manhood and masculinities. In order to engage this multivalence, I suggest that we shift

[28] Mark Follman, Gavin Aronsen, and Deanna Pan, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2019," *Mother Jones*. Accessed August 23, 2019. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. This analysis is based on the criteria employed by the authors in their sweeping "Guide the Mass Shootings in America" project and includes the requirement that four or more people must be killed to warrant the designation "mass shooting." This is a conservative metric and is in line with the FBI's guidelines for designating mass shootings. See also, J. Pete Blair and Katherine W. Schweit, "A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000-2013," Texas State University and Federal Bureau of Investigation (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2014).

[29] "An Epidemic of Violence: Fatal Violence Against Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People in the United States in 2020," *hrc.org*, Accessed 3/31/2021. https://reports.hrc.org/an-epidemic-of-violence-fatal-violence-against-transgender-and-gender-non-confirming-people-in-the-united-states-in-2020. See also, Andrea L. Wirtz, Tonia C. Poteat, Mannat Malik, and Nancy Glass, "Gender-Based Violence Against Transgender People in the United States: A Call for Research and Programming," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, Volume 21, No. 2 (April 2020): 227–241.

[30] Rebecca L. Stotzer, "Violence Against Transgender People: A Review of United States Data," *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, Volume 14, No. 3 (2009): 170-179. See also, Wirtz, Poteat, Malik, and Glass, "Gender-Based Violence Against Transgender People in the United States," 227-241.

focus from the narrow analysis of gendered behavior to a more expansive interrogation of the manner in which masculine identities are produced through the interdependent exercise of multiple modes of power and violence.

Power, Violence, and Identity

Taking into account the popular and academic discourses addressing masculinities while facing the pervasive and ongoing reality of violent men, the task of determining how to approach the interconnectedness of masculinities, men, and violence lies before us. Perhaps a return to an earlier question about the seemingly paradoxical relation between men and violence will help: what makes it possible for scholars to say that most men are not violent yet most violent people are men? A perspective informed by theories of hegemonic masculinity and a therapeutic emphasis on men's trauma and emotion—like those we have addressed above—would likely offer an analysis along the following lines: dominant patriarchal gender norms socialize men-in-particular into violence, but most men are either unable or unwilling to conform entirely to the violence of hegemonic masculinity and are simultaneously either unable or unwilling to confront or divest from the violent demands of hegemonic masculinity. Further, seeing that a diverse spectrum of masculinities exists—a minority of which engender overt and visible violence—an appropriate response would be to deconstruct hegemonic patriarchal gender norms, empower men to confront the violence they have internalized, and promote the emotional growth and intelligence that is likely to give rise to healthy masculine identities rather than harmful ones.

To be certain, the position outlined above offers its fair share of insightful analysis and constructive strategies—far less concerningly encumbered than the appeal to

"traditional," "Biblical," or "godly" masculinity so popular with Protestant men's groups.[31] But, as we will soon see, any momentum generated by this approach should be tempered by evidence of a conserving investment in masculine identities and unnecessarily narrow parameters for the interrogation of violence and power. More specifically, there may well be hegemonic operations at work in the enforcement of patriarchal gender norms, and therapeutic strategies could prove helpful in recuperating marginalized and subjugated masculinities. But these approaches depend upon the assumption that masculinities *can* and *should* be variously recuperated, transformed, and disentangled from patriarchal power and violence.[32] Such an assumption enables the evasion of a thorough interrogation of the function and necessity of masculine identities and the gendered operations of power and violence, relying on modern presumptions concerning the nature of individual identity and its formation in relation to social structures. Masculinity is assured its preservation as the issue of power and violence becomes one of healthy masculine identities and unhealthy ones—the question of whether or not masculinities are anything *other* than configurations of power and violence or need preserving in the first place is easily dismissed.

Along these same lines, Beasely has noted CSMM scholarship's "relatively unqualified and central investment in gender identities,"[33] suggesting that this

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[31] Gelfer, *Numen, Old Men*, 48-61.

[32] There are those within the CSMM discourse who call for the thorough eradication of masculinity, but they are few and far between. See John Stoltenberg "Toward Gender Justice," in *Feminism & Masculinities*, ed. Peter F. Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Timothy Benekey "A Woman for Every Wild Man: Robert Bly and His Reaffirmation of Masculinity," in *The Politics of Manhood*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

[33] Beasely, "Problematizing contemporary Men/Masculinities theorizing," 751.

commitment stems from a resistance to the postmodern critique and theory that have been so widely influential in the study of gender and sexuality.[34] An openness to engaging postmodern gender theory, starting with Judith Butler's ongoing work on the social and discursive power to posit sex in the construction of gender and the performative and precarious nature of identities, would invite some of the necessary modes of inquiry that I initiate above. As I hope to demonstrate over the course of this work, the popular and academic models of toxic and hegemonic masculinity discussed up until this point are severely limited by notions of gender identity that presuppose a stable and pre-discursive self that can possess and wield power and violence in an attributive manner. Moving away from more modern theorizations of identity and "the self" allows for an interrogation of masculinities, power, and violence that is not automatically impeded by anxiety over preserving or recuperating masculine identities, manhood, or a model of the self that is dependent upon stable categories of identity. This shift also provides space for moving our focus away from a subtly-essentialist categorization of "men" as sole possessors of masculinities and towards the more fluid and adaptive operations of gender performance in relation to power and violence—as Eve Sedgwick reminds us, "when something is about masculinity, it is not always 'about men.'"[35]

Moving beyond therapeutic discourse and the transformation of masculine gender identities, numerous theoretical trajectories become available to those interested in the entanglement of masculinities, power, and violence. Of particular note is the growing

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[34] Ibid., 750.

[35] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Gosh, Boy George, You Must Be Awfully Secure in Your Masculinity!" *Constructing Masculinity*, eds. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), 12.

number of queer thinkers, especially queer-of-color scholars and activists, engaging the critical study of masculinities and exploring subversive practices of embodiment and disidentification.[36] I would argue that such work is already doing a great deal to push scholarship on masculinities, theorizing identities beyond the dominant subject positions of (mostly straight) white, cisgender American males. But participation in otherwise imaginings and practices is not just a matter of intellectual interest or good intentions, it requires the accompaniment of a critical consciousness and historical memory—an attentiveness to the material relations of power and violence that is often lacking in communities that have been complicit in domination and are eager to turn to transformation. What possibility is there of dancing in the capaciousness of being if we do not have a sense for the ground we stand on—whose bones are interned deep in the land, whose blood has fed the soil, and who in turn has tended to its domination and overseen its devastation? There remains a need for further and more critical interrogation of masculinities at their most violent and power-laden points of contact, especially if those so deeply entrenched in these folds of mastery are to have any hope of confronting control and helping to create freedom, not simply co-opting liberation for their own gratification, the assuagement of their own guilt. Just such an examination is what I intend to carry out in the pages that follow. To that end, this project seeks to unsettle the narratives that shape our operative understandings of identity, through an interrogation of gendered power and violence in the form of *control*.

[36] Two very helpful collections being John Landreau and Nelson Rodriguez's *Queer Masculinities: A Critical Reader in Education* (New York: Springer, 2012) and Paul Baker and Giuseppe Balirano's *Queering Masculinities in Language and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). See also Morgan Mann Willis' anthology *Outside the XY: Queer, Black and Brown Masculinity, A Bklyn Boihood Anthology* (New York: Riverdale Avenue Books, 2016).

As a term with both general and technical usages, "control" is widely employed by scholars and activists working to theorize the ways that gender, power, and violence are connected. Distilling five years of fieldwork with male abusers in rehabilitation programs, sociologists Nancy Nason-Clark and Barbara Fisher-Townsend discovered that asserting, maintaining, and regaining control was *the* central motivation for violence articulated by the men they studied.[37] With a focus on Intimate Partner Violence, Evan Stark has examined the "experimental and interactive" technologies of coercive control employed by violent men in order to constantly destabilize those they abuse and strip them of their agency.[38] Seeking to better understand the larger societal pattern of male violence in the United States, social theorist Allan Johnson has identified a "masculine obsession with control."[39] Johnson suggests that this obsession "shapes every major social institution" and dictates a social imagination centered on the masculine domination exemplified in patriarchy.[40] Drawing on the wide array of often-overlapping meanings and functions assigned to the term "control" in the theorization of men's violence, I intend to carry out an interrogation of control with the following definition in mind: a spectrum of direct and indirect violences that are deployed in order to assert mastery over oneself and others. Used in this sense, mastery indicates the performative formation of

[37] Nancy Nason-Clark and Barbara Fisher-Townsend, *Men Who Batter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 7, 45-46.

[38] Evan Stark, *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 206-207.

[39] Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 212.

[40] Ibid., 224.

authoritative relations amidst subjectivities—the co-constitutive enactment of domination and subjection in the materialization of identities, oftentimes masculinities.

As an exercise of power that is enacted through diverse and adaptive modes of violence—and is thus historically tied to geopolitical patterns of violent conquest and domination as well as intimate acts of abuse and manipulation—I argue that control is the central mechanism of the performative formation of masculinities. As I hope to make clear, the self-instituting functions of mastery extend well beyond the individual enactment of identity, with control authoritatively shaping diverse understandings and practices of masculinity in and through ideological formulations and enduring material relations. This focus on the exercise of power and violence will allow us to examine the performative enactment of masculinities beyond the modern conception of individual identity that characterizes what Caribbean theorist Sylvia Wynter names a "liberal monohumanist conception of the human."[41] Within such an overly generalized vision of humanity masculinity might be addressed *as such*, but we will seek to avoid that monolithic conception of being by observing how specific forms of identity have historically been produced by and reciprocally reproduced mastery as an exercise of power and violence. Wynter's account of different genres of the human will guide us in our attempt to parse the multivalent nature of the performative enactment of identity. Illuminating gender and its intersections she writes:

> I am suggesting that the enactment of such gender roles are always a function of the enacting of a specific *genre* of being hybridly human. Butler's illuminating redefinition of gender as a praxis rather than a noun, therefore, set off bells ringing everywhere! Why not, then, the performative enactment of *all of our*

[41] Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations," *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 21.

> *roles*, of all our *role allocations* as, in our contemporary Western/Westernized case, in terms of, inter alia, gender, race, class/underclass, and across them all, sexual orientation? All as praxes, therefore, rather than *nouns*.[42]

As we will see, Wynter's sense of human *being* as practice enables a much more nuanced assessment of the multiple, interdependent functions of power and violence in the formation of identity, while also unsettling the static metaphysical and material categorizations of being that the performance of mastery has historically relied upon. To see being as a practice rather than a status is to resist that enduring ontological assumption so succinctly named by Zygmunt Bauman: "[m]an *is* before he *acts*."[43]

My hope is that a focus on how identities are produced and reproduced through control, rather than on the presumption of naturalized identities and their effects, will allow us to trace the adaptive mechanisms of power and violence that enact mastery and reveal the performance of masculinities as always operative in the intersection of race, class, culture, ecology, *and* gender. In as much as it is concerned with the construction of masculinity, our analysis of control is inescapably concerned with the construction of whiteness, the construction of markets, of nations, and of nature. Thus, control is not meant to function as an ur-critique that grounds all other attempts to get at these issues, but as an analytic register that is able to interrogate gendered power and violence through its inherent entanglements with race, class, culture, ecology, and multiple other modes of the practice of human being—a supple stance to aid balance in an ever-shifting landscape.

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Relevant to our historical examination, Bauman also describes this axiom as "roughly, the philosophical essence of racism." Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 60.

While there are a number of different ways to contextualize a project as sprawling as an interrogation of the masculinity of control might prove to be, a pertinent point of focus is readily found in the seeming paradox of American Evangelical Protestants' persistent campaigns for godly manhood and the ongoing crisis of men's violence in the Protestant church. Such a paradox is brought into stark relief by Pamela Cooper-White's suggestion that,

> Perhaps one of the reasons the church has been slow to take up the issue of violence against women as an issue of power is precisely because it has not yet come to terms with—even recognized—the extent and limits of its own power, nor has it yet entered fully into the theological and ethical questions pertaining to a nonabusive understanding of power, both human and divine, in the world.[44]

This contemporary context provides necessary grounding for a more expansive inquiry into the operations of control in Christianity history, thought, and practice. More than just a historical tether, a theological lens is central to the explication of control's multivalence—its architectural importance to and deployment within scholarly theological discourse, Christian theological imagination, individual belief and practice, and thus the lived experience of peoples who have been situated on either side of the conversion, conquest, enslavement, colonization, imperialism, and state-craft that has manifested the pervasive influence of Christianity as a global historic force.

In light of this history, an immediate concern emerges that motivates my broader interrogation of control: in as far as they fail to recognize and resist control across its manifold imbrications, Christian theologies will fail to address men's violence and continue to enable the enactment of mastery through the exercise of power and violence in Christian communities in the U.S., American society more broadly, and the many

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[44] Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar*, 2nd edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 41.

nations and peoples enduring affected by the operations of Christian supremacy and its manifestations in U.S. imperialism. What's more, Christian theologies will fail to cultivate adequate critical consciousness, alternative imaginations, and accountable practice for the work of confronting control for those whose lived experiences and subjectivities are bound up in the violence and power of mastery. In short, Christian theologies are not equipped to confront gendered violence and power on an ecclesial level nor help Christians individually and communally resist the desire for mastery and foster alternative practices of being human, unless they are prepared to confront the pervasive influence of control.

It is important to make clear that this confrontation with control is not set in inherent opposition to all modes of violence. Resisting mastery and dismantling technologies of control do not require a strictly pacifist ethic. While I would condemn most—perhaps nearly all—forms of interpersonal violence, I suggest in the conclusion that a certain critical consciousness and revolutionary imagination make room for the demand for violence against the state, violence against property, violence that disrupts and tears down networks of power that operate locally and globally. To my mind, a commitment to resisting control should not quickly dismiss the potential of revolutionary practice simply because of its violent edge. Let us keep an open question, then, of whether revolution can shape a re-articulation of power and violence beyond mastery.

Tending and Confronting

The intention behind this work is to draw the narrowly construed discourse surrounding men's violence, men, and masculinities into more expansive conversations that address power, violence, and identity from vastly different geographical, historical,

and theoretical perspectives. Towards that end, I am attempting to stage a series of encounters with different histories of power, violence, and identity that exemplify various elements of control at work in the self-institution of dominant masculinities. Each chapter and the histories they engage are meant to illuminate power and violence differently, so that perhaps all together these chapters demonstrate a more thorough sense of control's multiplicity without constituting a linear argument about or a single story of control. In following Walter Benjamin's theorization of materialistic historiography, I am working to gather together a "constellation" of moments and figures that share important connections despite their lack of chronological proximity or traditional discursive relation.[45] These histories may cohere and conflict in equal measure, but taken all together—with those sparks of friction and strands of continuity—it is my hope that we will better observe how different technologies of control emerge, operate, and adapt in ways that are both enduring and transitory.[46]

This discursive encounter between different histories, disciplines, theories, figures, and areas of study, is also a playing out of my own encounter with each of these disparate points of focus and all of them together. As I hope comes through in the work that follows, I am learning from these texts and thinkers, and my attempts to write are as much a practice of teaching-myself-out-loud as trying to communicate what I've learned. Part of that learning and teaching is a confrontation with control that is carried out across many different arenas and in multiple registers, including my own attachments to the

[45] Walter Benjamin, "Thesis on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 262-264.

[46] Inspired by Keguro Macharia's "histories rubbing along and against histories." Keguro Macharia, *Frottage: Frictions of Intimacy across the Black Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 19.

desire for and performance of mastery. It is my hope, then, that these encounters and confrontations invite readers into ongoing learning and teaching as much as they convey a set of arguments and present a select few accounts of control.

A certain practice of grieving also attends these confrontations with control. I cannot learn how to challenge the power and violence of mastery if I am not also learning how to grieve the power and violence that have shaped my own acts of self-institution, practices of mastery performed in the production and reproduction of a dominant politics of being. In this grief I find not shame but the recognition that my desire for mastery has enabled a willful self-deception—the lie that these histories of violence, these stories of power materialized in and through technologies of control, could reveal to me the truth and purpose of being human. The fantastical totality of mastery demands a willing denial of uncertainty and imperfection, instilling a particular fear of difference which cannot be subsumed by unity and change that cannot be bound to teleology. It is my hope, that in grieving the ways we have been harnessed by violence in our fantasies of control—and the histories that we therein reproduce and are produced by—we might be able to recognize and resist the desire for mastery. Counter to control, in resisting the certainty and fear of mastery we might be able to help create conditions for transformation—developing the kind of practices that find joy and life and power in irreducible and unrepeatable difference.

There is no doubt that this approach is also informed by close engagement with the work of Sylvia Wynter. More than any other thinker up this point in my life, Wynter has challenged, shaped, and inspired my learning. Katherine McKittrick describes Wynter's work as "consist[ing] of knots of ideas and histories and narratives that can

only be legible in relation to one another."[47] The knotted intensity of Wynter's thought continues to enliven my own thinking and learning in profoundly formative ways—as I am learning from Wynter and others, and teaching myself along the way. So, with knots, constellations, and other forms of clustered encounters of difference and connectivity on the mind, take each chapter of this book as a distinct point of contact—driven by unique questions and desires—that remains in touch with and might rub unexpectedly against the more expansive process of learning, questioning, desiring, and being that constitutes this work.[48]

Chapter 1 seeks to establish the theoretical framework that will then help to guide the critical, historical analysis of the subsequent chapters. While the analytic of control and its specific attention to mastery-as-masculinity does extend through each chapter, tracing a development of sorts in the violences at work in the performative enactment of knowledge, power, and masculine identities, this is not an attempt at charting a linear history or a clear progression of causal linkages. I first draw on Johan Galtung's expansive definition of violence and the ensuing discourse surrounding invisible, banal, and foundational modes of violence. I then incorporate Michel Foucault's understanding of power as productive and Judith Butler's theory of performativity to help establish the interdependent functions of violence and power in the formation of identity. Turning to the historical operations of this complex (violence, power, and identity) I engage Sylvia Wynter's concept of autopoiesis. Wynter's theorization of the autopoietic offers an

[47] Katherine McKittrick, "Yours in the Intellectual Struggle," Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 2.

[48] Macharia, *Frottage*, 19.

account of how humans unknowingly reproduce collective forms of identity (what she calls "genres of the human") through shared cosmogonies and narrative coding. Her study of the historical development of dominant genres of the human, the broader "politics of being," guides my specific analysis of the different ways in which the performative enactment of masculinities via control worked to define a historically dominant mode of being human.

Chapter 2 begins the historical and ideological examination of masculine performativity in Ancient Greece. Among the many highly regarded minds of Greek philosophy we focus in on Aristotle and his metaphysical formulations of substance and causality. I pair this close reading of Aristotelian philosophy with Craig A. Williams' cultural analysis of gender and sexuality—specifically the importance of masculine inviolability—in the Greco-Roman world in order to demonstrate the significance of mastery over the self and over others in the dominant sociopolitical and metaphysical hierarches. As we will see, the ideological, social, and economic technologies of control operative in the Greco-Roman world are dependent upon the profoundly gendered material relations of the natural slave and inviolable master.

Tracing what Wynter calls a "continuous cultural field,"[49] we move through Ancient Greece into the Constantinian era as we turn in Chapter 3 to Colleen Conway and Stephen Moore's writings on masculinity in early Christianity and the Greco-Roman world. Commentary on the Gospels and other New Testament texts help to draw out

[49] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (fall 2003): 318.

connections between the metaphysics of mastery established in Aristotelian philosophy and its influence on Christian metaphysics. These connections inform a turn to the work of Thomas Aquinas, who rearticulates the continuous cultural field of control through his decidedly masculine formulation of divine activity and creaturely existence in 13th century Latin-Christian Europe.

Chapter 4 takes up Wynter's account of Renaissance humanism's production of a new political subject in response to the primarily theological subject of the Middle Ages. Working with Aníbal Quijano, I demonstrate how reason becomes the seat of masculine identities and primary technology of control within the broader narrative of Western European humanism. This new mechanism of mastery comes to function with devastating effect through Western European conquest and colonialism. I argue that the categorization and domination of supposedly "savage" and "irrational" peoples finds further justification and invigoration in Protestant reformers' assertions of providence, election, and divine violence. A close reading of John Calvin's sermons, commentaries, and theological treatise reveals his reliance on the ontologies put forth by Aristotle, the New Testament writers, and Aquinas, and his incorporation of that broader "continuous cultural field"[50] into the humanist vision of the rational, political subject.

Chapter 5 traces how the Christian claims of providence and election that extend from Calvin serve to bolster the white supremacist, hyper-masculine figure of the plantation owner and slave master, providing key logics for the market classification, commodification, and domination (i.e. conquest, enslavement, and genocide) of indigenous lands and peoples in Africa and the Americas. The life and work of Jonathan

[50] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 318.

Edwards provides the central focus for the intensification of religious control and its enabling function of a broader order of domination through economic and biological categorization of the human. Wynter's account of the evolutionary understanding of selected and deselected peoples is key here, as it provides the ground for understanding the simultaneously racialized and economic formulation of the capitalistic Enlightenment subject. The work of Cedric Robinson and Walter Johnson help us to locate those racialized and economic formulations of the human amidst the historical emergence of racial capitalism and the dominant operations of the plantation economy that together shaped the enduring, dominant social order of the United States.

It is my hope that analyzing the diverse modes of mastery-as-masculinity at work in the ideological and material production of these different historical moments will help to clarify the enduring operations of power and violence in the enactment of masculine identities and reveal the different technologies of control that together shape the contemporary issues of men's violence and masculinities. The concluding movement of this project returns us to the present moment and the lasting effects of these technologies of control that we have worked to uncovered. Seeking strategies for confronting control and refusing the desire for mastery-as-masculinity, I tentatively engage the possibility of a series of interwoven postures of resistance. Far from exhaustive, this inchoate imagining begins by appealing to the need for a commitment to decolonial political action invoked throughout the work of Rinaldo Walcott. Within this broader decolonial frame, I engage Ashon Crawley's epistolary meditations on blackqueer life in an effort to

envision the potential of cultivating softness as an anti-mastery practice and the possibility of learning to seek "otherwise worlds" beyond the dominion of Man.[51]

[51] Ashon T. Crawley, *The Lonely Letters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 27-28.

CHAPTER 1

AUTOPOIETIC IDENTITY: VIOLENCE AND POWER IN THE PERFORMANCE OF MASCULINITIES

> To speak of masculinity in general, sui generis, must be avoided at all costs. It is as a discourse of self-generation, reproduced over the generations in patrilineal perpetuity, that masculinity seeks to make a name for itself.
>
> —Homi K. Bhabha, *Are You a Man or a Mouse?*

> Perhaps one day, masculinity might become so myriad, so malleable, it no longer needs a fixed border to recognize itself. It might not need to be itself at all.
>
> —Ocean Vuong, *Reimagining Masculinity*

Introduction

How do we think and write critically about men's violence and masculinities in the United States? Can it be done without reinforcing the perceived necessity of those very categories and thus enacting a naturalized and essentialist frame? Should we address the deadly history of mass shootings almost exclusively carried out by white men?[1] Do we begin with the rape, molestation, and other forms of sexual violence overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women, children, genderqueer, nonbinary, and transgender people, and other men?[2] What lines of connection do we draw between the public

[1] Mark Follman, Gavin Aronsen, and Deanna Pan, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2019," *Mother Jones*. Accessed August 23, 2019. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/. See also, J. Pete Blair and Katherine W. Schweit, "A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000-2013," Texas State University and Federal Bureau of Investigation (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2014), 12.

[2] Jillian E.H. Damron and Andy J. Johnson, "Violence Against Women in Religious Communities: An Introduction," *Religion and Men's Violence Against Women*, ed. Andy J. Johnson (New York: Springer, 2016), 3-4. See also, "Statistics" *National Sexual Violence Resource Center*. Accessed February 16, 2021. https://www.nsvrc.org/statistics. And M.C. Black, K.C. Basile, M.J. Breiding, S.G. Smith, M.L. Walters, M.T. Merrick, J. Chen, and M.R. Stevens, "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report," *National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease*

violence of men in white supremacist paramilitary groups and less visible issues such as domestic violence, emotional and psychological abuse, economic exploitation, and religious coercion? And—with no finality but perhaps as an end to this particular list of questions—is it possible to connect the immediate, seemingly ubiquitous reality of violence carried out by men with the amorphous theorization of masculinities and masculine identity formation?

As we seek to examine the issue of men's violence in relation to the question of masculine identity formation it can prove very difficult to move conversation beyond the perceived disparity between men who commit acts of violence that are recognized as such in our society and men who do not see themselves as violent in any way. There is often a deep sense of risk that is felt when examining the relationship between legibly violent actions and everyday forms of normative, "masculine" aggression, authority, and assertion. For example, one study found that men who have been convicted of intimate partner violence will frequently seek to distance themselves and their sense of manhood from men they believe to be *truly* violent, revealing a profound ambivalence concerning the interplay between violence and masculine identities.[3] I would argue that this ambivalence reveals an inadequacy in our language and concepts concerning violence and masculinities, one that is reflected in the statistical fact that "most men are not are violent but most violent people are men."[4] There is an apparent slippage that occurs when

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Control and Prevention (Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011).

[3] Nancy Nason-Clark and Barbara Fisher-Townsend, *Men Who Batter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 5-6.

[4] Christopher Kilmartin, "Men's Violence Against Women: An Overview," in *Religion and Men's Violence Against Women*, ed. Andy J. Johnson (New York: Springer, 2015), 15.

we try to analyze these connections between violence and identity, one that invites a closer interrogation of the kind of personal, communal, and political investments we bring to the examination of men's violence and masculine identities.

The critique of hegemonic masculinities—pioneered by Raewyn Connell and definitive of Critical Study of Men and Masculinities (CSMM) theorization[5]—engages the issue of men's violence in a manner that has gained considerable traction in both academic and popular discourse.[6] What I would categorize as a social constructivist model,[7] the "hegemonic critique" works to map the process of development and configuration of diverse masculine identities within hierarchical and repressive networks of power.[8] Pinpointing a dominant form of masculine identity that orders other modes of masculinity, Connell's approach examines distributions of power in relation to normative social scripts, structural and institutional authority, and patriarchal ideology.[9]

In order to carry out an interrogation of power as it is attached to particular masculine identities, CSMM scholars who have followed Connell's lead tend to maintain that "the self" is grounded in the pre-discursive material body and thus a stable,

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[5] Chris Beasely, "Problematizing contemporary Men/Masculinities theorizing: the contribution of Raewyn Connell and conceptual-terminological tensions today," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Volume 63, Issue 4: 2012. pg. 753.

[6] Two popular social media campaigns that draw on CSMM scholarship to critique hegemonic masculinities are the *Man Enough* video series and *The Representation Project.*

[7] Connell would resist this categorization, but only because she conflates social constructivism with poststructuralist theory in the vein of Michel Foucault (see *Masculinities*, 50). Connell sees poststructuralist thought as purely concerned with discourse and the way that the signifier determines the signified (*Masculinities*, 50-51), which she identifies as a social constructionist position. I would argue that this is not an accurate assessment of either poststructuralist theory or of the sociological model of social constructivism.

[8] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 35-36.

[9] Ibid., 76-81.

independent, and originary fact of personhood.[10] In putting forth her theory of "body-reflexive practice," Connell suggests that a person's identity emerges in their particular bodily engagement with complex networks of social structures—while it is shaped by and shapes the social, the embodied self preexists the social and carries inherent and enduring meaning in its materiality.[11] Given this still quite modern ontology of the self, the hegemonic critique is able to map patterns of social configurations and analyze how certain masculine identities take possession of power and the degree to which others lack it, as determined by hierarchical structures of male authority. In this sense, Connell's work and the subsequent work of CSMM scholars focuses on the functions of established identities, the social operations of masculinities in normative systems and hierarchical configurations. Very simply put, they examine how identities operate as relatively fixed expressions of independent human selves—traceable actors in identifiable networks of repressive power structures.

What Connell's theorization brings to the conversation on men's violence is a persuasive explanation of why men as-a-group uphold structures of violence while not all carrying out violent acts themselves. As the theory goes, hegemonic masculine norms in the United States demand the exercise of power and violence as tools of domination. While the diverse masculine identities of most men make them variously complicit in the supremacy of hegemonic masculinity, they are not willing to resort to the extremity of overtly violent acts. It is a relatively small number of men whose understanding of

[10] Michael S. Kimmel, "Rethinking 'Masculinity': *New Directions in Research*," *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinities*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel (Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, 1987), 9-24.

[11] Connell, *Masculinities*, 64-66.

manhood aligns them so closely with hegemonic norms that they resort to overt violence in order to assert, preserve, or regain their masculinity. Thus, a straightforward approach to combating men's violence involves eliminating hegemonic masculine norms and fostering non-normative, non-violent, and egalitarian masculinities.[12]

I would argue that what makes the critique of hegemonic masculinity so appealing is the tripartite exoneration that it offers: 1) that while complicit, not all men are violent or dominating, 2) masculine identities in and of themselves are not an issue, it is the hegemonic or "toxic" masculine norms that are a problem, 3) power exists as an underlying structure in society—certain people possess it while others do not. This work of absolution limits the question of men's violence to a primary focus on dominant forms of masculinities and the particular groups of men who possess power and wield violence in service of those hegemonic gender norms. While most are considered complicit in perpetuating these harmful norms, their involvement is not definitive of their own identities, rather it indicates their bondage to an underlying power structure. Effectively, the problem becomes contained and workable in a manner that names the complicity of men as-a-group but does not question the power and violence at work in the formation of masculine identities.

It is certainly not my goal to demonize men and masculine identities as doing so could alienate many of the people that I hope might engage with this work in liberative ways. But I am hesitant to accept the narrow parameters that the hegemonic critique establishes. More specifically, I am wary of any theorization of masculinities that neatly categorizes constructed modes of identity (e.g. hegemonic, normative, non-normative

[12] Connell, *Masculinities*, 241-243.

masculinities), attributes the possession of power to particular identities and persons (as in hyper-masculine men), and maps violence and oppressive behaviors onto underlying determinative structures and norms. These elements of analysis engender what Chris Beasely describes as "a relatively unqualified and central investment in gender identities."[13] That is, masculinities and the men tied to them are taken as given parts arranged in hierarchical configurations along set structures of power. Sorting through those structures and identifying who holds power, and who is complicit in the maintenance of that power, provides the metric for categorizing masculinities as hegemonic or otherwise. Gender identity *must* remain relatively stable and enduring for this theorization to be effective, as a more fluid conception of identity might become untraceable amidst set power structures and even threaten to destabilize the integrity of underlying structures themselves.

This apparent investment in gender identity leads us to further question what other assumptions surrounding conceptions of the self are operative in the hegemonic critique of masculinity. Taking a broader historical approach, it could be argued that Connell's theorization and subsequent CSMM scholarship on masculine identities depend on a particularly Eurocentric, post-Enlightenment understanding of the rational, individual subject. This sense of the individual is what Caribbean anticolonial theorist Sylvia Wynter refers to as a "liberal monohumanist conception of the human."[14] With this naming she invokes a long history of Western European humanist thought that sought to

[13]Beasely, "Problematizing contemporary Men/Masculinities theorizing," 751.

[14] Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations," *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 21.

prove the inherently exceptional nature of human beings through the assertion of unique capacities for reasoning—an effort that eventually elevated one provincial understanding of what it means to be human far above all others. More specifically and as Aníbal Quijano argues, the Cartesian model of rationality creates a severe limitation (and racialization) of knowledge production to the supposedly autonomous thought and self-reflection of the individual that is assumed to be instituted as an individual by those very same rational functions.[15] This would suggest that there are multiple histories, enduring material relations, and persistent ideological systems that we need to reckon with if we are attempting to uncover the shared investments that shape our analysis of masculine identity formation and men's violence.

While resonance remains between CSMM scholarship and the current work, I have taken the time to clarify the hegemonic critique precisely because I intend to avoid the investment in gender identity and the liberal monohumanism upon which it hinges. Such investments can too easily lead to a *prima facie* reading of the issue of men's violence that 1) bypasses the violent histories behind so-called modern conceptions of the self which shape contemporary masculinities, 2) identifies a majority of men's complicity in maintaining overtly harmful power structures while simultaneously exonerating them from direct involvement in violence. In what follows, I attempt to interrogate the theorization of violence in its relation to power and identity: not as implicit structures and stable configurations but as fluid and performative networks of embodiment.

[15] Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, Nos. 2-3 (March-May 2007): 171-173.

We begin by examining contemporary attempts at defining violence, many of which draw on the early work of peace studies scholar, Johan Galtung. A clearer understanding of different modes of violence will help us in defining our own central focus, the concept of *control*. In order to further delineate the operations of control, we first turn to Michel Foucault's theorization of power, and then to the examination of identity in the work of Judith Butler. From there, we return to the work of Sylvia Wynter, who draws together insights from Foucault and Butler in her own theorization of identity as a practice of narrative self-institution. Working alongside Wynter's account of the narrative development and enactment of dominant conceptions of the human, I propose that a specific critical focus be directed towards the operations of control within Christian theological imagination. Taking cues from the work of Willie Jennings, I hone in on theological imagination (rather than a more specific and formal source such as doctrine, ritual, or theology) in an effort to more broadly conceive of theological discourse and everyday Christian belief and practice as interdependent mechanisms of knowledge production that enact shared networks of power.

Reconceiving Violence

Responding to a discursive emphasis on mundane and repetitive forms of violence, sociologist Michel Wieviorka has argued that "it is the most extreme forms of violence that lie at the heart of the phenomena," and allow theorists to "come to terms with its essential features, if not its essence."[16] Such an approach departs from the everydayness of violence to seek out the most abhorrent of atrocities, wherein the nature

[16] Michel Wieviorka, *Violence: A New Approach*, trans. David Macey (London: SAGE Publications, 2009), 96.

of violence awaits discovery. Fellow social theorist Jane Kilby has suggested that Wieviorka's "provocation" may serve to engender attempts at complexifying notions of violence within a growing discourse—a positive effect, to be sure.[17] But I am wary of the assumption that there are discernibly "essential features" (much less an "essence") to violence and that severity is then the key to their disclosure. In particular, a search for fundamental insights into the phenomena of violence will not suffice for a nuanced interrogation of men's violence. As I intend to demonstrate, the complexity that is required cannot not be found in a totalizing depth or extremity, but in an expansive network of interrelations.

The call for an "expansive" theorization of violence is often traced back to the theoretical interventions of Norwegian sociologist and founding peace studies scholar, Johan Galtung. With a pair of articles published over twenty years apart—"Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," and "Cultural Violence"—Galtung introduced significant breadth and depth into the scholarly work of defining and analyzing violence. Challenging a narrow understanding of violence as limited to acts of physical force, Galtung first sought a concept of violence that balanced expansive theorization and the precision necessary for particular application.[18] The definition that Galtung offered focused on the relationship of the potential to the actual, specifically the ways in which human potential is directly and indirectly limited in its actualization.[19] For instance, when

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[17] Jane Kilby, "Introduction to Special Issue: Theorizing Violence," *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2013): 268.

[18] Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research,* Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969): 168.

[19] Ibid.

millions of people go hungry in the United States because of unjust distribution of resources—an altogether unnecessary limitation of human potential—the high level of potential in relation to an avoidably low level of actualization indicates violence.

While admittedly imperfect, Galtung's metric of actualized potential allowed him to deeply nuance how he analyzed different modes of violence. [20] Breaking with centuries of moral emphasis on the intention of an act, Galtung insisted that violence could be *both* intended or unintentional.[21] Galtung also argued that violence is not exclusively physical but can also be psychological in nature;[22] he pushed this line of thinking further in asserting that both physical and psychological violence do not necessitate the infliction of bodily or mental harm, as human potential can be limited through the *threat* of violence.[23]

Already broadening his theorization well beyond physical harm, Galtung brought into question the necessity of an acting subject where the limitation of actualized potential is concerned. He suggested that while violence is typically understood as a direct act by a subject on an object, it was necessary to acknowledge the presence of indirect violence that lacked a responsible agent.[24] Galtung referred to this indirect form of constrained actualization as "structural violence" (coining this significant term) and understood it as the kind of diffusive privation that is woven so thoroughly into social

[20] Ibid., 169

[21] Ibid., 171.

[22] Ibid., 169.

[23] Ibid., 170.

[24] Ibid.

structures as to make the manifestations of its harm seemingly unrelated to their source.[25] In his later work, Galtung would further nuance this notion of structural violence—also called "social injustice"[26]—by theorizing an increasingly imperceptible mode of violence he dually named "cultural" and "symbolic."[27] Galtung explained that,

> by 'cultural violence' we mean those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics)—that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence.[28]

This sense of the symbolic helped Galtung to further substantiate the interrelatedness of diverse modes of violence—particularly the relationship between direct, structural, and cultural forms.[29]

The expansive interrogation of violence initiated in Galtung's work has only grown broader and increasingly complex in recent years. There is a mounting push to "speak of 'violence' in the plural"—as violences—in an effort to resist the totalizing effects of overly abstract and tidy theorization.[30] Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, for example, have raised questions concerning the temporality of violence,

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 171.

[27] Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1990): 291.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 294.

[30] Kilby, "Introduction," 263, referencing Ivan Strenski, "Change only for the benefit of society as a whole: pragmatism, knowledge and regimes of violence," in *Durkheim and Violence*, ed. R.S. Mukherjee (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

envisioning the enduring self-reproductive cycle of violence as a continuum.[31] Examining how violence is made intelligible and recognizable, Yves Winter has suggested that "it is not invisibility that allows violence to be repeated and reproduced but that repetition and reproduction make violence invisible."[32] Effectively dissolving the discursive boundaries that limit conceptions of violence to physical acts of harm carried out by an individual agent, the ongoing work of crafting an expansive definition of violence provides us with vital resources for further interrogating the issue of men's violence.

Tracing Control

Engaging the extensive network of theories on violence while drawing on a specific thematic that runs through the study of men's violence, I want to focus our attention on the concept of *control*. As a term with both general and technical usages, "control" is widely employed by scholars and activists working to theorize the ways that gender, power, and violence are connected. Distilling five years of fieldwork with male abusers in rehabilitation programs, sociologists Nancy Nason-Clark and Barbara Fisher-Townsend discovered that asserting, maintaining, and regaining control was *the* central motivation for violence articulated by the men they studied.[33] With a focus on Intimate Partner Violence, Evan Stark has examined the "experimental and interactive" technologies of coercive control employed by violent men in order to constantly

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[31] Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, "Introduction: Making Sense of Violence," in *Violence in War and Peace*, eds. Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 1.

[32] Yves Winter, "Violence and Visibility," *New Political Science*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (June 2012): 202.

[33] Nancy Nason-Clark and Barbara Fisher-Townsend, *Men Who Batter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 7, 45-46.

destabilize those they abuse and strip them of their agency.[34] Seeking to better understand the larger societal pattern of male violence in the United States, social theorist Allan Johnson has identified a "masculine obsession with control."[35] Johnson suggests that this obsession "shapes every major social institution" and dictates a social imagination centered on the masculine domination exemplified in patriarchy.[36]

Clearly, control is a significant conceptual thread that runs and splits and spins its way through the gender-based violence discourse, traversing the boundaries of its many diverse dimensions. It is this near-ubiquity, made all the more interesting by the flux of radical disparity and close continuity characterizing the term's employment, that makes control a simultaneously noteworthy and challengingly capacious notion. Given the enormous range of particular material realities that are often born by different critical treatments of control—as a technology of abuse, as a gendered motivation for violence, as a mechanism of social hierarchy—we must eschew any temptation to pull all of the threads together in order to weave one mighty, sweeping critique of "control" writ large. Avoiding a totalizing conception of control requires a clear delineation of how the term is meant to communicate a new formulation, but it does not demand the kind of terminological foreclosure that would eliminate broad resonances and an open-ended field of application. Towards that end, balancing a concern for precision with the need for

[34] Evan Stark, *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 206-207.

[35] Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 212.

[36] Ibid., 224.

adaptability, let us seek to construct a notion of control that is capable of fluctuation amidst the expansive and the particular.

I want to start off by framing a more specific sense of control that names a spectrum of distinct but interrelated violences (adopting Ivan Strenski's pluralization).[37] The spectrum of control ranges from overt to invisible violence, from the threat of emotional violence to the act of physical assault, from structural diffusion to symbolic subtlety: control runs the gamut, so to speak. What connects these modes of violence and delimits the potentially all-encompassing gesture above is their shared function in the self-instituting exercise of power. While the term 'control' can be used to indicate a restrictive or limiting force, our interest lies in the productive operations of control and how they serve to materialize particular forms of identity through the violence of mastery.

For our specific purposes, control—whether a direct and intentional act of force or a diffuse effect of ideology—*names violences that are deployed in the formation of identity through the production and reproduction of mastery*. Whether mastery over the self, mastery over others, or the mastery of one group by another, our use of the term indicates the performative formation of authoritative material relations amidst subjectivities—the co-constitutive enactment of domination and subjection in the materialization of identities, specifically masculinities. Put very simply, our interest is in examining mastery as the primary performative mechanism of masculinities. While the exercise of control is not limited to men and masculinities, the chapters that follow seek

[37] Ivan Strenski, "Change only for the benefit of society as a whole: pragmatism, knowledge and regimes of violence," in *Durkheim and Violence*, ed. R.S. Mukherjee (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 101.

to reveal a profound historical interdependence between mastery and the performative enactment of masculine identities. This theorization of control is meant to help us move beyond parsing out helpful and harmful masculinities, to examining the central functions of power and violence in the historical productions of identities and how the formation of masculinities relates to those processes of production.

Despite our attempts at specificity, this notion of control remains enormous in scope. Rather than indicating a theoretical overreach, I hope that the chapters that follow demonstrate that what is revealed by the breadth of control are the severe limitations at work in common understandings of violence and how those narrow understandings have shaped both the scholarly treatment of men's violence and the juridical responses to this issue. Given the historic reticence to legislate against certain modes of men's violence (such as domestic violence and marital rape) coupled with the disturbing urgency of criminalizing other perceived threats of violence (such as the danger of sexual violence that Black men have historically and unjustly been said to pose to white women) the need for an open-ended theorization of violences is clear but is also clearly not enough. Expanding our definition of violence provides helpful resources while revealing the need for further interrogation of the concepts framing the question of men's violence. Our formulation of control certainly relies upon a broader approach to how harm is done, but it also requires us to more closely examine the concepts of *power and identity*. A failure to engage the entangled nature of these concepts effectively preserves the very same limitations we took issue with in relation to violence, it simply relocates the constriction in theorization to a different juncture—it grants the illusion that we are asking better questions yet keeps the most incisive and important challenges at bay.

Reproducing Power

The interdependent enactments of authoritative power and masculine identities that characterize control evoke a form of gendered domination that Pamela Cooper-White refers to as "power-over."[38] Cooper-White suggests that power-over is a force of social domination that works to reify gendered hierarchies through violent misrelation.[39] That is, patriarchal ideologies are materialized and solidified in any masculine exercise of power that eschews equality in favor of authority. Tracing feminist theorizing of power-over, Cooper-White finds relative consensus in the discourse that this particular mode of power has historically defined the norms of maleness and the construction of diverse masculinities.[40] While this notion of power-over has immediate and useful resonance with the operations of control, its typical usage in feminist theory may too readily convey a sense of power as possessed by certain individuals and accruing to particular identities. While power-over may speak to specific, and even enduring, relations of power, I suggest that we shy away from an understanding of the term that leads us back to the over-simplified question of "who has power and who does not?"

As we work to more closely examine the constitutive entanglement of violence, power, and identity, naming the masculinizing exercise of power-over as characteristic of control gives entrée to the vast and complex network of interrelations linking the performance of gender with the materialization of power through the deployment of violence. In an effort to further expand our conceptions of both power and identity, we

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[38] Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response.* 2nd Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 53.

[39] Ibid., 53-54.

[40] Ibid., 54-55.

will turn first to the writings of French cultural theorist Michel Foucault. Concerned with the formulation of questions and concepts of power, Foucault's genealogical method of analysis hinges on the recognition of power as productive, rather than purely repressive.[41] Thinking with specific elements of Foucault's work on the exercise of power and its productive operations will help to clarify how acts of control can function as co-constitutive enactments of violence, power, and identity. As Galtung's formulation helped us to expand our conception of violence, Foucault will aid us in analyzing power beyond its repressive functions as we seek to construct a more fully functional theory of control.

From the onset, it must be noted that Foucault's celebrated treatment of power extends across his scholarship, shifting and developing along with the different phases of his writing and thinking. Thus, for the purpose of further detailing our concept of control, certain insights found in Foucault's thinking on power serve to enhance our conceptualization but his broader theorization of power—and the way he connects this to violence[42]—will not to define and delimit the nature and direction of our work. Across his body of work, Foucault has a great deal to say about power—and, indeed, about particular formulations of control—but we will limit our primary focus to his sense of the

[41] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 59.

[42] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer, 1982): 777-795. Here Foucault presents violence as purely repressive: "it forces, it bends, it breaks on the wheel, it destroys, or it closes the door on all possibilities. Its opposite can only be passivity, and if it comes up against any resistance, it has no other option but to try to minimize it" (789). It would seem that this narrow theorization of violence is meant to prevent the conflation of violence with power (the latter being Foucault's focus), but the effort results in a definition that runs counter to the expansive definition of violence that we have constructed following Galtung and the work he inspired. This constitutes one of several of our limitations in working with Foucault.

productive nature of power that emerged alongside his early genealogical work and how that conceptualization helps us to conceive of the broader functions of power at work in the theory of control that we are constructing.[43] Foucault begins by examining the nature of power, insisting that it is "above all a relation of force," that "only exists in action."[44] He is clear in denying any notion of power as a substantive commodity, as something that can be possessed, exchanged, or withheld.[45] This does not make power untraceable or immaterial for Foucault, rather, it is visible in its exercise and concrete in its effects. In fact, Foucault suggests that we should be concerned first and foremost with the mechanisms of power that affect bodies on the most local and everyday level.[46] What we must avoid, he argues, is the illusion that power itself is to be had, to be maintained, to be regained—a fantasy that would engender a historical struggle for the possession of power, rather than inspire the everyday struggle to always answer the exercise of power, to practice resistance in response to oppression.[47]

Foucault goes on to explain that the exercise of power is typically dependent upon the function of right (both moral and juridical), which is solidified through relations of

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[43] See the following two volumes that address the broad range of Foucault's work on power and control: *Biopower: Foucault and Beyond*, eds. Vernon W. Cisney and Nicolae Morar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); *Control Culture: Foucault and Deleuze after Discipline*, ed. Frida Beckman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018). See also, Jeffrey T. Nealon, *Foucault Beyond Foucault: Power and Its Intensifications since 1984*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).

[44] Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 89. This primary assertion is repeated in Foucault's discussions of power in both *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 92-93, and "The Subject and Power," 788.

[45] Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 88-89.

[46] Ibid., 57-58, 99.

[47] Ibid., 98.

power that are established in the production of knowledge/truth.[48] But the exercise of power is initially the discursive production of truth that assembles relations of power and establishes the "rules of right," revealing the exercise of power as always enabling the reproduction of that power.[49] Further reinforcement of rules of right, of relations of power, and production of truth gives rise to what Foucault names "regimes of truth": enacted in the demarcation of acceptable truths, the legitimatization of processes for evaluating truth and falsehood, the political and social authority granted by the truth and those who tell it.[50] Yet power does not move in just one direction according to Foucault, it is at once a force of subjugation *and* struggle, of domination and resistance.[51] The assertion of truth, the legitimation of right, the materialization of relations of power are not immutable mechanisms that cannot be jammed—the normative exercise of power creates the conditions for a subversive response.

Further examining the productive mechanisms of power, Foucault writes that individuals "are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power," both in their actions and in the construction of their identities.[52] More specifically, he suggests that it is "one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted

[48] Ibid., 52, 93.

[49] Ibid., 93.

[50] Ibid., 131

[51] Ibid., 98.

[52] Ibid.

as individuals."[53] It is here that Foucault really pushes us to see how power functions not merely as a repressive dynamic or a fixed system, but as a generative force through which identities and subjectivities are constituted amidst complex, contextual, and many times contentious webs of relation. Rather than supposing that power works as an influence on pre-established human subjectivities, Foucault is suggesting that the individual comes-to-be, is constituted in and through, the exercise of power, the rules of right, the discourse of truth.[54] The reproductive networks of power relations "which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body" form a kind of matrix of actualization and embodiment, within which the exercise of power is always giving shape to and being shaped by the emergence of identity.[55] Foucault comes to understand identity and the individual as constitutive effects of power and as the vehicles for its exercise—as "the element of its articulation."[56]

Foucault's examination of power, right, and truth help to clarify how we might understand more precisely acts of control and their effects. Naming the exercise of power-over through the deployment of violences as definitive of control is not simply an attempt to more thoroughly examine the harmful behaviors of men, but to recognize how the enactment of specific violences and the exercise of particular modes of power actually constitute masculine identities. Thus, control is not a reifying effect or manifestation of hyper-masculine identities or hegemonic masculinity; rather—in

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 58.

[55] Ibid., 93.

[56] Ibid., 98.

following with Foucault—masculinities are the *effects* and the *vehicles* of control. Men do not commit acts of violence given their possession of power, it is in the exercise of violence and power that manhood is constructed and relations of domination are materialized. Precisely how control's technologies of violence are integrated into mechanisms of power, right, and truth is what we will examine in the chapters that follow. For the moment, let us move with the work of Judith Butler into a more exacting application of Foucault's theory of power to the construction of gender and identity.

Performing Masculinities

Two of Butler's earliest works, *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*, feature close and sustained engagement with Foucault's analysis of power. In putting forth and further developing her defining theory of performativity in *Gender Trouble*, Butler utilizes the Foucaultian premise of the discursive productivity of power in order to examine the regulatory regimes of gender and sex. To this end, Butler counters modernist assumptions of individual interiority and the naturalized sexed and gendered identities that are bolstered by such a conception of the self as given.[57] Her initial formulation of performativity can be summarized as follows: "That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality."[58] Applying the theory, Butler would likely argue that masculinities and manhood have no existence outside of cultural and historical construction prior to the actual exercise of masculinities and manhood. Even then, any such performance must be

[57] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 184-185.

[58] Ibid., 185.

intelligible as masculinity and manhood within the "heterosexual matrix"—the networks of normative discourse, right, and meaning that reproduce the "legitimate" and reject the "subversive."[59]

Butler's notion of performativity has been subject to critique concerning her perceived erasure of the materiality of the body.[60] In *Bodies That Matter*, she returns to the contested concept of performativity with particular attention to the material realities of power, discourse, and identity. Butler first addresses the development of a more nuanced understanding of social construction, arguing that construction be engaged as "*a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter.*"[61] This is not to say that the materializing effects of power as producing discourse *cause* bodies to come into being in some efficient or formal sense, but that attention to materiality is always a shaping of matter—appeals to "the body," whether abstract or concrete, are always-already working to constitute the body as intelligible and "real."[62] For example, appeals to the "human body" or the ways that masculinities are diversely embodied (as is key in Connell's work) are often seen as bridging between the immediacy of physiology and the abstraction of various discursive formulations—a "necessary" intervention to bring us back to material "reality." Following Butler, appeals to "the body" as a more foundational or concrete source of knowledge in relation to gender are, in and of themselves, citational practices that

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[59] Ibid., 97.

[60] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: on the discursive limits of "sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), viii.

[61] Ibid., xix. Emphasis by author.

[62] Ibid.

produce, legitimize, and "fix"[63] particular modes of embodiment and certain bodies. As compelling as it may be, the attempt to think materiality before discourse is still caught up in the limitations and possibilities of our conceptions of matter.

Butler goes on to explain that there is both a "persistence and instability" to power, as the productive effects of power simultaneously engender repetition and depend upon that repetition to endure.[64] In this sense, power and performativity are understood as "citational" for Butler, exemplified in her insistence that "[w]here there is an 'I' who utters or speaks and thereby produces an effect in discourse, there is first a discourse which precedes and enables that 'I' and forms in language the constraining trajectory of its will."[65] The performative formation of identity, even in the simply self-assertion of "I", relies on citation and is thus caught up in the reproduction of discursive networks of power. Butler's use of citation exemplifies her earlier reformulation of construction, as the reiterative effects of performativity produce the *perception* of fixed materiality that renders the embodied subject intelligible.

In light of Butler's analysis of gender performativity and materialization—worked through Foucault's interrogation of power as productive—we can now more clearly examine the formative effects of control. Lest we forget, acts of control are most concretely acts of violence that directly and indirectly bring harm to others; in the specific conversation addressing men's violence, control names many of the ways that men harm women, children, and other men at alarming and unrelenting rates. Seeking to

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[63] Ibid., xix.

[64] Ibid., 171.

[65] Ibid.

further scrutinize the operating concepts that shape our understanding of men's violence, we have invoked an expansive definition of violence through the work of Johann Galtung, engaged Foucault's thinking on the productive effects of power, and now draw on Butler's theory of identity as performative. Our concept of control lies at a point of convergence where these three critical lenses—violence, power, and identity—overlap and provide a layered, magnifying optic that reveals simultaneous and interdependent mechanisms of violence, power, and identity.

Control, as we are now able to see with increasing clarity, attempts to name a spectrum of violences that are variously enacted through the exercise of a particular mode of power-over that constitutes intelligibly masculine subjects. But we need to be wary of arranging these elements—violence, power, and identities—in anything that slightly resembles a causal chain. The violence, power, and identity entangled in our concept of control are performative in the sense of a co-constitutive exercise that is both citational and iterative—the performance of control reproducing the relations of power that are drawn upon in its enactment. This is not to say that violence, power, and identity are subsumed into a singular act or effect. Rather, that they are interdependent acts and effects that reiterate one another in the materializing repetition of performativity (a la Butler) via production (as in Foucault). More simply put, in the violent exercise of power—whether it be structural, symbolic, psychological, or physical violence—masculine identities are materialized, rendering them intelligible and legitimate in their formative reference to and re-inscription of discursive norms of masculinity, which in turn reproduces the relations of power, intelligibility, and legitimacy that form the very same norms invoked in the performative construction of masculinities.

Mastery and the genre of Man

Utilizing the robust theoretical tools developed by Galtung, Foucault, and Butler allows us to reimagine the operations of violence, power, and identity in more dynamic terms, but the task of testing this expansive analytic of control in engagement with multiple entangled histories and material relations presents a different challenge. In her theorization of the narrative self-institution of human identity, Sylvia Wynter draws heavily on Foucault's insights concerning the productive relationship of truth/power and even finds resonance with Butler's conception of performativity.[66] Discussing the performative enactment of identity, she writes:

> I am suggesting that the enactment of such gender roles are always a function of the enacting of a specific *genre* of being hybridly human. Butler's illuminating redefinition of gender as a praxis rather than a noun, therefore, set off bells ringing everywhere! Why not, then, the performative enactment of *all of our roles*, of all our *role allocations* as, in our contemporary Western/Westernized case, in terms of, inter alia, gender, race, class/underclass, and across them all, sexual orientation? All as praxes, therefore, rather than *nouns*.[67]

Wynter's suggestion that we consider "being human as praxis" calls us to consider the many intersecting enactments of identity upon which the performative formation of masculinities depends.[68] As I hope to make clear, Wynter's theorization of genre offers us a path beyond the liberal monohumanist frame and helps examine the operations of control in relation not just to gender but to our shared conceptions of what it means to be human.

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[66] Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?", 33.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Katherine McKittrick, "Yours in the Intellectual Struggle," *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis,* ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 7.

Wynter does not theorize control, per se, but as our historical examination will demonstrate, her analysis of the "politics of being" and the autopoietic enactment of narrative coding brings the discursive emphasis of both the productive conception of power and the performative theory of identity into much closer contact with the histories of material relations of domination and practices of human embodiment. As Denise Ferreira da Silva points out, Wynter's account of coloniality centers "what remains illegible in Foucault's critique of Man: 'the idea of race.'"[69] Foucault focuses on the post-Enlightenment production of knowledge through transcendental reason as the thread binding together networks of power in the modern episteme.[70] Wynter begins much earlier in her examination of the juridical, economic, and political categorization of difference that shaped the Atlantic world from 15th century onward—connecting the co-

[69] Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Before Man: Sylvia Wynter's Rewriting of the Modern Episteme," *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 91.

[70] While he argues that "we have to know the historical conditions which motivate our conceptualization" ("The Subject and Power," 790), Foucault seems to have limited his nuanced analysis of power to particularly modern and European historical and social structures that he believes to break thoroughly with the previous "classical era." This is nowhere made clearer—and perhaps more relevant to his inability to grapple with the "idea of race"—than in the following argument: "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole, there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when a man is in chains. (In this case it is a question of a physical relationship of constraint.) Consequently, there is no face-to-face confrontation of power and freedom, which are mutually exclusive (freedom disappears everywhere power is exercised)…" ("The Subject and Power," 790).

Foucault's assertion that there is no possibility of "struggle," "will," and "agonism" ("The Subject and Power," 790)—the constitutive elements of a power relationship—for a man in chains, for a slave, suggests a lack of historical investigation into material relations, legacies of struggle, and the enduring networks of power that shape the modern episteme. As I read it, Foucault is so specifically attuned to the minute operations of power, freedom, struggle, and their determining effects in his contemporary context to be alert and attentive to the ways that his formulation might be rendered insufficient (perhaps even incoherent) were he to subject his genealogy to a serious consideration of the operations of the idea of race and the institution of slavery in relation to power, knowledge, discipline, production, and the subject previous to the Enlightenment and his dating of the invention of Man.

constitutive production of knowledge, power, material relations, and human identity to a series of naturalized ideologies that begin with the Scholastic formulation of the saved/damned and extends through the Renaissance humanist conception of rationality and the post-Enlightenment theory of evolutionary selection.[71]

Wynter's historical focus on the ontological question of what it means to be human and the political contest over which narrative codes and genres of the human are instituted in answer reorients the relationship between material production and ideological production—giving authority to the latter without imposing an absolute distinction or artificial abstraction to separate the two.[72] Da Silva points out that whereas Foucault privileges "the question of the body and the effects of power on it,"[73] Wynter sees the autopoietic act of narrative self-institution as an exercise of power that is dependent on and subsequently materializes the ideological. While Foucault's rather Eurocentric analysis of power revolves around *knowledge*—produced by the epistemological authority of pure, transcendental reason—Wynter's more globalized theorization of the process of enacting particular genres of the human begins with *desire*—specifically the desire for kinship identification and preservation at work in humans as a hybrid species synthesizing biological and narrative systems.[74]

As da Silva notes, this attention to desire also speaks to Wynter's focus on the self-institution of identity at "the *collective* level," in contrast to Foucault's interest in

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[71] da Silva, "Before Man." 91-98.

[72] Ibid., 95.

[73] Foucault as quoted in da Silva, "Before Man," 90.

[74] Ibid., 96. See also, Sylvia Wynter, "Columbus and the Poetics of the *Propter Nos*," *Annals of Scholarship*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1991): 261-263.

"the *singular* human being's self-refashioning."[75] In this way, Wynter's theorization of narrative autopoiesis as the ideological production of material relations provides us with tools for analyzing the collective violence of mastery, when mastery is so often meant to functions as an individuating act and status. This is not to say that Foucault's insights are unhelpful, but that Wynter's theorization offers us a more in-depth historical, geographical, and cultural analysis given her attention to the interpersonal and structural operations of desire at work in the processes of narrative autopoiesis. Following Wynter's approach affords us a much more intimate view of the collective practices of being human that enact mastery through the interpersonal exercise of power and violence.

As I hope to demonstrate, Wynter's account of the politics of being illuminates particular technologies of control that produce/reproduce the narrative coding of mastery on the ontological level and in direct relation to the historically co-constitutive relations of patriarchy, Christian supremacy, coloniality, white supremacy, and capital. While her tracing of codes and genres may not address the concept of control by name, her work illuminates mechanisms of mastery—of power and violence in the performative enactment of identity—that speak directly to the specific understand of control that we have theorized. In comparison to the more dedicated theorizing of "control," as a sociopolitical heir to the mechanisms of punishment and discipline, that is carried out by continental philosophers (starting with and working through Foucault and then Deleuze), Wynter's theorization of the praxis of being human and the politics of being is centered on how ideology is transformed by and transforms material relations and the material realities of embodiment, with specific concern for the role and formation of religion,

[75] da Silva, "Before Man," 99.

coloniality, and race. I certainly do not wish to suggest that significant thinkers in continental philosophy and poststructuralist theory have nothing useful to say about control, per se, they just do not share the same concerns and historical and geopolitical orientations of our particular theorization and account of control.

Genres of the Human

Speaking from long standing engagement with both Wynter and her work, Black studies and gender studies theorist Katherine McKittrick describes Wynter as an "anticolonial figure,"[76] and characterizes her overall project as a kind of "*counterhumanism.*"[77] This project emerges from Wynter's experiences as a Caribbean artist and intellectual in the throes of anticolonial political struggle, and her decades long process of thinking into "the possibility of undoing and unsettling—*not replacing or occupying*—Western conceptions of what it means to be human."[78] Part of what makes Wynter's innovative work of undoing and unsettling so compelling is, as McKittrick signals, the vast breadth of Wynter's interdisciplinary engagement.[79] But the force of Wynter's analysis has as much to do with the profound intricacy of her thought as it does with her extensive discursive reach. Introducing an interview with Wynter, anthropologist and decolonial theorist David Scott echoes McKittrick's praise of Wynter's intellectual range, adding that "perhaps one of the more striking features of [Wynter's] work is its *foundational* character, its restless quest for the most interconnected and totalizing

[76] Katherine McKittrick, "Yours in the Intellectual Struggle," 2

[77] McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 11.

[78] McKittrick, "Yours in the Intellectual Struggle," 2, 7

[79] Ibid., 3.

ground on which to secure the humanist ideal to which she aspires."[80] Central to the depth and generative "density" (to borrow Scott's phrase)[81] of Wynter's anticolonial critique and counterhumanist vision is the concept of *autopoiesis*.

Wynter has been thinking with an assemblage of concepts involving autopoiesis—which combines the Greek terms for "self" and "creation"—for several decades now. She first encountered the idea in the work of biologists Humberto R. Maturana and Franciso J. Varela, who coined the term in the 1970's in an effort to "think about the idea of biological organisms as *autonomously functioning, living* (i.e. autopoietic) systems."[82] More specifically, they were attempting to describe how an organism's--say, a frog's-- environment did not, as a complex of exterior influences, determine what a frog perceived. Rather, "the distinct living system that is the frog *specifies* what is to be known of the environment."[83] Moving beyond the case of the individual organism, Maturana and Varela suggested that the living systems of human sociality might also be enacted and sustained in a similarly self-instituting and self-replicating manner.[84] Verala would later argue that the notion of autopoiesis "expresses that the mechanisms of self-production are key to understanding both the diversity and

[80] David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe,* no. 8 (September 2000): 121.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Sylvia Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?", 28.

[83] Ibid., 27-28.

[84] Ibid.

the uniqueness of the living."[85] Maturana and Varela's question of difference and the production of the self is precisely what Wynter would take up and further develop in her analysis of Western European humanism and its devastating effects.

The autopoietic nature of humans as a species—and thus humans' self-understanding of their own species-level distinctions—becomes Wynter's starting point for her ongoing efforts to disrupt the dominant, Wester narrative of linear human progress as exemplified by the Modern Era. Wynter understands humanity to be a "hybrid-auto-instituting-language-storytelling species: *bios/mythoi*."[86] This means that the autopoietic nature of the human functions in terms of both biological evolution (e.g. genetic coding), and the development of language (specifically storytelling).[87] Wynter is thus lead to label the human as "*homo narrans*"—a species that emerges in/as a dynamic synthesis of biological and narrative systems[88] (as McKittrick puts it, in a nod to Wynter's thinking with Fanon, "skins *and* masks"[89]). The problem is, Wynter suggests, human beings are rarely awake to our own auto-instituting narratives—our identify forming origin stories—and the ease with which they simultaneously enact and naturalize species-level distinctions.[90]

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[85] Francisco J. Valera, "Autonomy and Autopoiesis," *Self-Organizing Systems: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, eds. Gerhard Roth and Helmut Schwegler (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1981), 14-23.

[86] Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe,"25.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 25.

[90] Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 28-29.

Wynter's account of autopoiesis as a historical and history-making process begins with the particular functions of knowledge production. As *homo narrans*, Wynter suggests, human beings form social bonds based off of the dynamic, self-instituting interplay of perceived biological kinship and shared narrative origins.[91] She refers to the diverse social bonds and attendant social structures of different groups of humans as "culture-specific programs."[92] These living systems of human sociality are ordered around a shared, autopoietic epistemic ground: what Wynter refers to as "genre-specific storytelling codes of *symbolic life/death*."[93] These subjective and culture-specific cosmogonies auto-institute—produce, naturalize, and enact— "descriptive statements" concerning the nature of reality and, more specifically, the nature of the human, according to Wynter.[94] She argues that from these codes and descriptive statements arise a multiplicity of "genres of the human."[95] Thus, genre-specific cosmogonies and descriptive statements come to determine the production of knowledge for the specific groups that they serve to pre-define—the autopoietic enactment of "order[s] of truth."[96]

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[91] Wynter, "Columbus and the Poetics of the *Propter Nos*," 261-263. The account I give here merely brushed the surface of Wynter's multiple modes of analysis concerning the autopoietic and the genre of the human. I suggest you read her essays closely and continuously in order to think more fully with her account.

[92] Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," *Race, Discourse, and the Origins of the Americas: a new world view*, eds. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex M. Nettleford (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1995), 7.

[93] Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 29.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Scott, "Re-Enchantment of Humanism," 183.

[96] Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 29.

What is of particular importance, Wynter suggests, is the formative nature of these descriptive statements of the genre of the human.[97] Further theorizing the interdependent functions of materiality and ideology grounded in the *bios/mythoi* hybridity of *homo narrans*, Wynter argues that the auto-instituting function of our storytelling codes, descriptive statements, and genres of the human should lead us to see that "*Being human is praxis.*"[98] That is, the hybridity of language and embodiment engenders the performative enactment of a specific genre of the human, of a specific self.[99] The function of self-creation—autopoiesis—is found in this performance of a specific genre of the human that simultaneously enacts the human and the now-naturalized descriptive statement from which it emerges. Thus, the formation and legible recognition of the human are bound to the genre-specific descriptive statement of the human, "in the terms of which we can alone *experience ourselves as human*."[100]

For Our Human Sake

Wynter's unsettling claim that we cannot experience ourselves as human outside of our performative enactment of a specific genre of the human—and are (mostly) unwitting participants in a continual, performative autopoietic practice—is made even more disruptive in its application. Cultural Anthropologist and decolonial theorist Walter Mignolo provides a concise and pertinent summation of the autopoietic in asserting that "Wynter's writings demonstrate that Western epistemology built itself on a concept of

[97] Scott, "Re-Enchantment of Humanism," 183.

[98] Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 23.

[99] Ibid., 33.

[100] Scott, "Re-Enchantment of Humanism," 183.

Human and Humanity that, in turn, served to legitimate the epistemic foundation that created it. That is, Human and Humanity were created as the enunciated *that projects and propels to universality the local image* of the enunciator."[101] Mignolo returns us to the issue stated above—that of the historic, unrecognized role of the autopoietic, its formative functions and naturalizing effects. Wynter demonstrates how this problem is particularly acute—read, globally catastrophic—in the case of Western Europe's specific genre of the human and what she refers to as its "overrepresentation."[102] She suggests that this overrepresentation occurs via "the human subject's forgetting of *itself as subject*," and thus auto-instituting a genre-specific descriptive statement that is retroactively assessed as simultaneously emerging from and constituting an objective, authoritative, and universally true perception of reality.[103] As Mignolo writes, "Human and Humanity were created as the enunciated *that projects and propels to universality the local image* of the enunciator."[104] Having established the epistemic problem of overrepresentation, Wynter invites us to consider how this dysfunctional mode of knowledge production led to what she has deemed "the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom."[105]

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[101] Walter D. Mignolo, "Sylvia Wynter: What Does It Mean to Be Human?", *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 109.

[102] Wynter, "Columbus and The *Propter Nos*," 253.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Mignolo, "What Does it Mean to Be Human?", 109.

[105] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (fall 2003): 260.

In her analysis of the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom, Wynter is thinking with—and well beyond—Foucault's assertion that the "invention of Man" occurred with the appeal to transcendental reason in post-Enlightenment Western Europe.[106] Wynter locates this invention of Man several centuries earlier, with the rise of Renaissance humanist thought in the 15th century. The basic idea being that humanist intellectuals outside of the Church were able to effectively re-imagine the ontological status of the human apart from the perfect heavens/fallen earth cosmology that propped up the spirit/flesh hierarchy of power separating a redeemed clergy and sinful laity in Latin-Christian Medieval Europe.[107] Wynter sees this "redescription" as a profound shift in the prevailing descriptive statement and attending genre of the human in Western Europe.[108] Humanity had previously been defined by the cosmogonic order of perfection that distinguished the spiritual perfection of the heavens from the decaying materiality of the earth—enacting the human as fallen/sinful/flesh in need of redemption. Renaissance humanists, "allied to the Reform movement of Christian humanism,"[109] heralded the *imago dei* in the natural world and "reconceived [of God] as a Caring Father who had created the universe specifically for man's sake."[110] Wynter notes that this logic of *"propter nos homines*/for our human sake" came from a desire to revalorize human existence and envision a less oppositional relation to the divine, but she reminds us that

[106] Foucault as quoted by Wynter in "Unsettling," 263.

[107] Scott, "Re-Enchantment of Humanism," 175-177.

[108] Wynter, "Unsettling," 263.

[109] Ibid., 275.

[110] Ibid., 278.

any such vision is already caught up in the auto-institution of a genre-specific descriptive statement of the human.[111] Thus, the seemingly emancipatory logic of *propter nos homines* could only aid the development of a provincial ontology, even as it spoke triumphantly of humanity as a whole.

While it is clear that the intellectual upheaval of the *propter nos* provided the ground for a new descriptive statement of the human, more remains to be said concerning the content of that statement. Counter to Foucault's argument that the invention of Man marks the transition from one discontinuous episteme to another, Wynter suggests that though there is a significant "rupture" that takes place in the 16th century, we need to be attentive to the "continuous cultural field" that evolves and persists across these epochal shifts.[112] Wynter agrees that something novel is emerging with the invention of Man, but that novelty remains framed by the "genre-specific storytelling codes of symbolic life/death"[113] that give rise to descriptive statements and genres of the human.[114] Given their autopoietic functions, descriptive statements and genres of the human persist—in the very least as traces—through epistemic shifts, but a certain kind of endurance is also achieved in the continuous struggle over what the descriptive statement should be and how genres of the human are to be enacted. What Wynter names "the politics of being" points to this lasting contest between those in power who simultaneously determine and

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[111] Ibid.

[112] Wynter, "Unparalleled Catastrophe," 29.

[113] Ibid., 29.

[114] Wynter, "Unsettling," 318.

are determined by a genre-specific "order of knowledge/truth."[115] She sees such a politics and its continuous cultural field as constitutive in the invention of Man.

Wynter has much more of significance to say, some of which we will follow closely in later chapters, but the insights we can glean from an initial foray into her treatment of the overrepresented genre of Man and the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom speak volumes concerning the need to reckon with histories of narrative self-institution in our examination of control and interrogation of masculine identities. Wynter pushes us further than Foucault and Butler in recognizing what kinds of possibilities for performativity exist and how they are limited by, and thus limit, representation as it is woven into enduring ideological and material relations of power. To address the performative intersections of violences, power, and identity in a manner that does not grapple with the question of whose exercise of power is more or less productive—who has citational access to "legitimate" and lasting representation—is short-sighted and irresponsible. Wynter's account of the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom allows us to examine more precisely how enduring networks of power enable the autopoietic formation of *certain* embodied identities as recognizably human in relation to the formation of "deficiently-human" others—for our interrogation of control, this means the many, persistent histories of men attempting the mastery of being.

[115] Ibid.

Who is in Control?

Our particular theorizing of control implies, counter to more identity-oriented critiques, that we would be unwise in treating particular masculinities as the structures of identity from which violence and power are deployed, as it remains an open question whether or not the performance of masculinities can *ever* be fully disentangled from the exercise of mastery. If it proves to be an effective analytic, our concept of control helps to forestall the more popular (and perhaps appealing) question of how to rehabilitate masculinities in order to more closely interrogate historical constructions of masculinities and the operations of violence and power integral to those processes. Equipped with this new theory, we must still address the question of how to decide where and when we want focus our examination of these autopoietic enactments of power and violence.

Given its expansive framing, the question of control could seemingly be posed in a wide array of different contexts that lie within and extend well beyond the study of men and masculinities. This is perhaps an inherent issue with the conceptual, when abstraction prevents accountability to the material, but our interest is not in exploring the limitations and potential of control on a purely conceptual level; rather, we want to test the efficacy of control as theoretical tool that helps to distinguish and clarify how power and violence shape material relations. Towards that end, let us prepare to transition from our initial formulation of control into the exercise of application with a brief gesture towards the particular arrangement of histories, ideologies, philosophies and theologies, and material relations that we will take up in the pages that follow.

As previously noted in the introduction, each of the proceeding chapters engages a point in a constellation of entangled histories with the goal of illuminating the unique and overlapping operations of control within different contexts. The intention behind this

method is to test the analysis of control in multiple settings, to gain a more expansive sense of the nature and functions of control through that varied analysis, and to trace the self-institution of mastery as a "continuous cultural field"[116] that adapts and extends through different moments of historical change and rupture. Our story of control will not focus on a tidy, linear argument, but on the enduring relations and pivotal developments of power and violence in the performative formation of identity.

Theologian and Africana studies scholar Willie Jennings has argued that "Christianity in the Western world lives and moves within a diseased social imagination."[117] Wynter's account of storytelling codes, insofar as we have touched on it and certainly as we proceed to more close engagement, reveals the historical interdependence of the miasmic visions of Western Christianity and liberal monohumanism—related ailments that just might have sprung from the same infection. Given that this fantastical figure of the "Western world" traces its own imagined roots back to Ancient Greece, perhaps we use this narrative point of origin as our point of entry. In the philosophy of Aristotle and the slave labor upon which Athenian social order was built, we will observe a metaphysics of mastery which presumes material subjection while privileging the abstraction of transcendence. In the technologies of control that enact this ideological and material interdependence we may begin to glimpse a pattern that will prove at times resonant and at others dissonant with the autopoietic performance of mastery-as-masculinity that we will seek to further examine across the Gospels'

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[116] Ibid.

[117] Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 6.

message of salvation and eternal life, the Constantinian collapse of early Christian theologies into imperial apology, the great chain of being that shaped the hierarchy of Medieval Latin-Christian Europe, John Calvin's institution of a providential social order amidst the surge of Western European Colonial expansion, and Jonathan Edwards' rewriting of human history from the perspective of an evangelical revivalist, doting husband, and staunch defender of slavery. This frightfully pithy summary of course only hints at what lies before us, a tantalizing flight through the ages that hopefully sparks a desire to grapple with the looming enormity of control and perhaps learn how to better wrestle ourselves from its deadly grip.

CHAPTER 2

THE ONE RULES AND THE OTHER IS RULED: ARISTOTLE AND THE METAPHYSICS OF MASTERY

> A slave is a living possession.
> —Aristotle, *Politics*

> Aristotle's 'property with a soul.'
> —Moses Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*

> Aristotle, one of the most original aristocratic apologists, had provide the template in Natural Law. In inferiorizing women ("[T]he deliberative faculty of the soul is not present at all in the slave; in a female it is present but ineffective"…), non-Greeks, and all laborers (slaves, artisans, farmers, wage workers, etc.: "[T]he mass of mankind are evidently quite slavish in their tastes, preferring a life suitable to beasts"…), Aristotle had articulated an uncompromising racial construct. And from the twelfth century on, one European ruling order after another, one cohort of clerical or secular propagandists following another, reiterated and embellished this racial calculus.
> —Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism*

Ancient Athens is often characterized as the birthplace of philosophy, a rather meager presumption frequently accompanied by a longing, backwards glance through the narrowest of historical lenses—an autopoietic fantasy, to be sure. While the great minds of Greek philosophy were not lacking in genius, they were by no means the first nor the only people to think deeply about the purpose and conditions of existence. Still, the originary role Athens plays in the anachronistic autopoiesis of Western thought and history has ensured its foundational status and enduring influence in dominant modes of knowledge production. This influence, and the thoroughgoing concern for mastery that characterized Greek philosophy and culture, make Athens a significant point of historical and philosophical analysis for applying our newly assembled theory of control. Athenians

were, after all, societally dependent on slavery and thus deeply invested in enacting and reproducing the "human condition of owning."[1]

We will focus our examination on the work of Aristotle, as his metaphysical yearning, logical method, and pragmatic concerns for social order intersect at the central questions of what it means to be human and to live well. In Aristotle's efforts to engage these questions we can observe his reliance on the narrative coding of Greek cosmogony and the autopoietic operations of control that shape his understanding of the human and of masculine identity. Also important is the enduring influence Aristotelian metaphysics and philosophical method has had on Christian cosmogonies and classificatory mechanisms—the initiation of a persistent and adaptive politics of being. As I will later demonstrate, this is particularly true of the Greco-Roman world of early Christianity and Medieval Latin-Christian Europe.

"that for the sake of which…"[2]

As we have previously noted, countless philosophers, historians, and scholars of religion mark the indelible influence of Athens upon the ongoing construction and reification of a historicized "Western" culture and thought. Among them, Caribbean theorist Sylvia Wynter has examined the particular appropriation and naturalization of the Greek "idea of order" operating as part of a "continuous cultural field" extending from Athens through Latin-Christian Europe, the rise of Western European humanism, and the

[1] Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 171.

[2] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin Books, 2004), Alpha the Lesser 2, 994a. From this point forward, I will use the Bekker code to reference the works of Aristotle. A full accounting of the particular translations, editions, and texts in use can be found in the bibliography.

modern global capitalist order.[3] Emerging amidst the philosophical schools of ancient Greece and "carrying over" into the institutionalized religion of medieval Latin-Christian Europe, [4] this particular and enduring "idea of order" is described by Wynter as the hierarchical structuring of sociopolitical existence "projected upon the physical cosmos as degrees of rational perfection."[5] Wynter identifies this descent in perfection from the eternal heavens to the material earth as the descriptive mechanism of a master code, embedding dominant social and political relations into the underlying fabric of the universe.[6] The "Truth" of the cosmos posited in the act of classification—an act of production marked as description—also serves to instantiate a definitive "genre-of-the-human."[7] For Wynter, the monolithic conception of the human—and the colonialist function of its overrepresentation—is "that what institutes, regulates, normalizes and legitimates, what then controls…"[8] And as we might recall from the previous chapter, the performance of control begins with the narrative coding—the shared stories—that are

[3] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (fall 2003): 271-274.

[4] Ibid., 274.

[5] Ibid., 274.

[6] Ibid., 272.

[7] Ibid.

[8] David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe*, no. 8 (September 2000): 160.

internalized, naturalized, and uncritically reproduced in the continual process of self-institution.[9]

Wynter argues that the assertion of ontological priority served to obscure the mechanisms of knowledge production and enabled Greek, then Christian, and then humanist thinkers to shape the material relations governing sociopolitical structures through a monolithic "descriptive statement of the human."[10] While Wynter moves quickly along the arc from antiquity to the Middle Ages, as her interest lies more fully in the response of Renaissance humanism, our interrogation of control invites a closer examination of the emergence and inheritance of the Greek "idea of order." Despite our difference in pace, Wynter's mode of analysis—her attention to the "governing master codes" of human thinking and social structure—helps to illuminate our initial encounter with the most subtle and unseen violences at work in the autopoietic operations of metaphysical mastery and social order.

While the desire for a perfectly ordered universe can be said to characterize much of Greek philosophy in antiquity—at least in Pre-Socratic, Platonic, Peripatetic, and Stoic thought—few matched Aristotle's meticulous efforts to lay bare what he perceived to be the deep structures of reality. Aristotle gave a definitive new shape to the Greek "idea of order," using his developing system of logical reasoning together with empirical observation to classify the myriad forces, entities, roles, capacities, and desires that composed the diverse strata of a hierarchically ordered cosmos. These value-laden

[9] Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations," *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 25-29.

[10] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Truth/Power*,"* 274.

divisions extended from Aristotle's ruminations on motion and change in the *Physics*, to the question of virtue in *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the proper social relations outlined in his *Politics*. This is not to say that every element of Aristotle's thought fit neatly together to compose a cohesive system, but that we can observe recurring formulations that connect each branch of his work to an underlying narrative of *kosmos*.

Aristotle's empiricism is central to his broad project of classification, as the logical analysis of his observation and sense experience serves to confirm the necessary truth of a rationally ordered universe.[11] The world around him contains the answers to Aristotle's questions and the solutions to the problems he seeks to solve (given the proper application of reason), with one particularly notable exception: the question of being. Aristotle is confident that a philosopher can use sense perception to help identify specific things and where they belong in relation to others, but observation and experience are insufficient when faced with the question of *why* a particular thing is the way it is—discerning the *essence* of a thing.[12]

In *The Metaphysics* Aristotle takes up the question of primary principles and causes in order to investigate "being *qua* being."[13] He is quite upfront about the necessity of shifting from observation and experience to more abstract "theoretical knowledge," as primary principles and causes transcend the bounds of the sensual.[14] As we will further explore, with this assertion that knowledge production can and should be severed from

[11] *Met* A 1, 980a-981b.

[12] *Met* A 1, 980a-981b.

[13] *Met* G 1, 103A.

[14] *Met* A 2, 982a.

the materiality of human experience, Aristotle sets up a chronic denial of the body that enacts an enduring material and epistemic violence. Decentering the material particularity of empirical investigation and narrowing his classificatory measurements to the dual registers of substance and causality, Aristotle takes up "the most fundamental of the sciences" that "alone exists for its own sake": the epistemologically load-bearing work of "*that which discerns for what end each thing must be done*."[15]

Over the course of the fourteen books that constitute *The Metaphysics,* Aristotle explores the foundational truths upon which all other sciences and scientific inquiry are built. Often in dialogue with the schemas of other thinkers and logically structured in much of his approach, Aristotle addresses a vast array of interrelated philosophical concerns. Despite the breadth and depth of analysis that he manages to draw together into cohesive assertions, it would be both misleading and anachronistic to suggest that he lays out a clear and comprehensive metaphysical system. The general inquisitiveness of Aristotle's thought leads to a certain labyrinthine quality that characterizes particular portions of *The Metaphysics*—the puzzle work that constitutes book *Beta,* for instance—while also producing concepts that remain entirely clear and consistent, at least in formulation if not in application, throughout the fourteen books. Aristotle's understanding of causality, parsed into four distinct *causes,* is one such formulation and is where our primary interests lie.

Early on in book *Alpha,* Aristotle imports a model of causality from his previous work in *Physics*.[16] This theory of causality is woven throughout the remainder of the text,

[15] *Met* A 2, 982a. Emphasis mine.

[16] *Met* A 3, 983a.

for, as Aristotle reminds his reader, "we do not know the truth without the cause."[17] Each significant in their own way and often functioning all together, the four causes are put forth as: 1) "the substance and the essence," 2) "the matter and the substrate," 3) "that from which comes the beginning of the change," 4) "the 'wherefore' and the good."[18] Commonly referred to as the *formal*, *material*, *efficient*, and *final* causes, these modes of causality structure Aristotle's understanding of motion and change in the universe—his understanding of life. There is much to be said for each of the causes, but let us direct our attention to the fourth and final cause for the time being.

Aristotle describes the final cause as "that for the sake of which"—that for the sake of which a particular thing exists, a process continues, or a behavior is carried out.[19] More simply put, the final cause identifies an end or a purpose, invoking the teleological nature of Aristotle's thought. While the other modes of causation (material, formal, and efficient) speak of how a particular thing comes to be, how a process begins, or how change is initiated, the final cause speaks to the fundamental intention that directs a person, a natural process, or a behavior. Although it is not the smoothest turn of phrase, "that for the sake of which" invokes the primacy and totality of Aristotle's notion of a final cause—it binds together the material, the formal, and the efficient, in a cohesive and essential purpose. This purpose becomes especially significant when Aristotle turns to the question the human.

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[17] *Met* Al 2, 993b.

[18] *Met* A 3, 983a.

[19] *Met* Al 2, 994b.

Human beings are uniquely positioned in Aristotle's cosmic hierarchy. While he understands all living things to be "composites"—a unity of matter and form, of body and soul[20]—humans are distinguished from other living things in that their souls are eternal and possess distinctive intellective capacities.[21] Beyond even the capacities for imagination and reasoning, two areas where human beings exceed the potential of other animals, there exists in the soul of each human being a "contemplative intellect" that transcends the limitations of materiality.[22] Engendering the capacity for rationality, the contemplative intellect both provides for and extends beyond the immediate mechanisms of reasoning—what Aristotle refers to as the process of "thinking things through"—in that the contemplative intellect exercises the capacity to know and understand.[23] Significantly, the contemplative intellect does not just distinguish human beings from other living things, but establishes each individual as a singular self through the capacity for independent, self-reflective reasoning.[24] This human potential for knowing and understanding, a mode of thought that thinks the indivisibility of particular things, conceives of their unity and essence, reveals a much deeper causal operation at play: one that links the individual human to vast and cosmic ends.[25]

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[20] Aristotle, *On the Soul*, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), II 1, 412a14.

[21] *An* II 2, 413b25.

[22] *An* II 3, 415a

[23] *An* III 4, 429a10

[24] Independent in so far as other humans are concerned. As we will see, aspiring to participate in divine thought is central to Aristotle's understanding of the contemplative intellect.

[25] *An* III 4, 430a10

While the contemplative intellect persists in a human being as the capacity for knowing and understanding, the sheer actuality of knowledge and understanding eternally endures in what Aristotle conceives of as the "prime mover."[26] Eternal, unchanging, and unaffected, that "which moves without being itself moved"—often translated as the "unmoved mover"—is the final cause of the eternal heavenly bodies and the end of each and every human being.[27] As the cause that has no cause before it, the unmoved mover must transcend the shift between potentiality and actuality according to Aristotle, lest the mover itself be in motion (as potential moves to actual) and necessitate a prior cause.[28] Thus, "existing in activation,"[29] Aristotle's unmoved mover functions as the principle cause of motion and change: not as the initiator of motion (the efficient cause), the source of matter or "stuffs" (the material cause), or the assigner of forms (the formal cause), but as the teleological purpose, the ultimate "object of desire" and "object of thought."[30]

The unmoved mover exists in the pure actuality of "thought think[ing] itself," and is thus the fullness of the good and the true that is glimpsed in the momentary goodness and truth of human thought and contemplation.[31] Aristotle sees the pleasure of contemplation—this momentary transcendence into unmediated thought—as driving human desire and directing the purpose of a human life towards the end which emulates

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[26] *Met* L 8, 1073a.

[27] *Met* L 7, 1072b.

[28] *Met* L 7, 1072a.

[29] *Met* L 7, 1072b.

[30] *Met* L 7, 1072a.

[31] *Met* L 7, 1072b.

the eternal contemplation of knowledge and understanding existing in/as the unmoved mover.[32] A "fit object of wonder," the unmoved mover's life of "absolute thought" echoes in the contemplative intellect and rational soul of human beings, driving the desire to actualize the capacities for thinking as fully as possible in order to strive for the good and the true.[33] "That for the sake of which" human beings exist—their purpose and end—Aristotle ultimately names ("*Him"*) "God."[34]

In Aristotle's teleological grammar and logic of causality, we may already be glimpsing intimations of a kind of metaphysical mastery of others. As we will see, human beings have no hope of participating in the divine or inhabiting anything we could call a *real* relation to God. Humans can only long to imperfectly imitate the divine while the divine remains always entirely removed. Yet from that space of utter detachment, the unmoved mover defines human existence and the ultimate purpose that shapes each human's essence. Without directly dictating human action, the mover sets the conditions of human life and being. Does this unity of detached causality and essential purpose simultaneously constitute both the mastery of human personhood and the formation of divine identity—the former as moved by an unreachable other and the later as that which moves without being moved?[35] If we consider closely, we may observe unfolding from Aristotle's formulation of definitive human desire and purpose an invitation to *control,*

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[32] *Met* L 7, 1072b.

[33] *Met* L 7, 1072b.

[34] *Met* L 7, 1072b.

[35] For work on the far-reaching philosophical and theological implications of Aristotle's totalizing metaphysics see Laurel C. Schneider's critique of the "logic of the One" in *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

the emergence of a symbolic violence that we will find narratively encoded in the structural and immediate violences of the social order of ancient Greece. This is not to suggest a direct causal relation of the symbolic to the structural and immediate—we will not be playing the game of "which came first"—but to more fully interrogate the shared register of control at work within the broader social imaginary. Discerning the subtleties of symbolic violence at play in Aristotle's thought and their function as invitations to control requires us to identify at least the potential for the enactment of domination and subjection together with the productive formation of masculine gender identities—no small task. Here Wynter's thinking around narrative coding, descriptive statements, and genres of being human will prove very helpful.

We have already noted Wynter's critique of the Greek "idea of order" as part of a narrative master code and how this hierarchical categorization was "projected upon the physical cosmos as degrees of rational perfection."[36] Aristotle's detailed examination of causality and subsequent work of categorization via substance and cause exemplify both the overarching desire for logical order and the preeminence of rationality and perfection in establishing that order.[37] As we have begun to uncover, and will further explore, the idea of order that structures Aristotle's thought naturally shapes the specifically masculinized "descriptive statement of the human" that he puts forth.[38] In helping to construct a particular genre of the human defined by divine-masculine reason and

[36] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Truth/Power," 274.

[37] For a broader critical engagement across Aristotle's notions of substance, causality, and cosmological order see the edited volume *Feminist Interpretations of Aristotle,* ed. Cynthia A. Freeland (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

[38] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Truth/Power," 274.

presented as a universal description of human nature—thus justifying reason's mastery over the self and the mastery of those deemed rational over those deemed irrational—Aristotle initiates an invitation to control that will be actualized through the specific content of his description of the human.

It should already be clear that Aristotle does not see human beings as existing for themselves—whether as individuals or in a communal sense. The ultimate object of human desire and thought, the purpose of a human being is found in the immaterial, immutable, eternal "thought think[ing] itself": *God*, the unmoved mover.[39] Thus, the architecture of human life and the essence of a human being are defined by their relation to the divine life of absolute thought. While Aristotle holds great stock in a life of virtue and in responsible participation in the polis, both of these inherently depend upon the highest pursuit of human of existence—contemplating truth.[40]

Recall that among all creatures, human beings are said by Aristotle to possess unique capacities due to their rational souls. These capacities—perception, imagination, and contemplation, but chief among them contemplation—represent what Aristotle names "the most divine element in us."[41] In grasping our uniquely human purpose we must, Aristotle writes, seek to maximize these capacities and approach the contemplation of truth as the greatest work available to us.[42] He gives an impassioned call to this work, addressing his reader thusly:

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[39] *Met* L 7, 1072b.

[40] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 1177a18-35.

[41] *NE*, 1177a15-16.

[42] *NE*, 1107a7-78a8.

> If reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us…since reason more than anything else *is* man.[43]

Reason, for Aristotle, transcends the narrowness and decay that he sees so bluntly limiting human life. His desire, I would argue, is to find in these divine capacities and divine purpose a means of escaping the boundaries of mundane human existence and a means of, in some small way, escaping the totality of death. As Rosemary Radford Ruether suggests, the result of this exaltation of reason and rejection of materiality is that "bodily existence thus become[s] objectified as an inferior realm beneath consciousness, to be subjected to its control."[44]

If, as Aristotle suggests, "reason more than anything else *is* man," then what defines a human being for Aristotle simultaneously transcends humanness with near totality. Aristotle's descriptive statement of the human is constructed around an utterly inaccessible desire that engenders an ongoing effort to escape the basic conditions of human life and material existence. Positing the ultimate object of human desire and thought—that for the sake of which human beings exist—as eternally unaffected and entirely remote, Aristotle constructs what I suggest to be a very subtle mechanism of violence at the core of his metaphysics. The divinity of contemplative intellect in Aristotle's thinking at once distinguishes human beings as wholly unique—a species illuminated by flashes of the divine life—and binds them in an ongoing pursuit of self-

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[43] *NE*, 1177b30-78a8.

[44] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 78-79.

mastery and transcendence. While Aristotle holds this pursuit to be the path to happiness and fulfillment, a closer examination may reveal that this life of straining towards the divine is founded on fear, alienation, and deferral.

Let me attempt to specify the function of this mechanism of violence in Aristotle's thought. It is clear that here the essence of a human being is actualized insofar as a person is able to represent (we might say "mirror") the eternal and total actuality of the divine. That work of representation is driven by desire and knowledge—the increasing recognition that what can only be glimpsed in human life exists complete and unending in the divine. Thus, what human beings are meant to do, their ultimate purpose and end, is to maximize the intellective capacities of the human soul in order to more fully immerse themselves in the act of contemplation that mirrors God's "thought think[ing] itself."[45] While Aristotle surely saw this causal order as a mighty exhortation to the life of virtue and the betterment of the human self, his desire to "strain every nerve" in pursuit of transcendence may unintentionally invite very real violence unfolding from the symbolic realm.

This purposeful desire that drives human life at the essential level can never be fulfilled. The object of that desire definitionally cannot acknowledge, be affected by, affirm, respond to, or reciprocate that desire in any way.[46] While Aristotle would certainly disagree, I suggest that it might be helpful to begin to think of this teleological desire—one that is asymmetrical, ineffectual, eternally differed, and yet ultimately essential to human *being*—as a kind of coercive violence. In his expansive definition,

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[45] *Met* L 7, 1072b.

[46] *Met* Lambda 7, 1072a-b

Galtung describes a form of violence that is "positive" or "rewards" based in the influence it wields, rather than being punitive in nature.[47] Applied to Aristotelian desire, we can identify this coercive exercise of power as severely limiting the realization of human potentialities by "moving" individuals towards a singular, essential purpose, the nature of which is inherently discriminate towards anyone who doesn't fit Aristotle's descriptive statement of the human.

This desire thus compels a very specific mode of alienation, one that seeks a level of social privilege that transcends all but the most rarefied sense of material need, communal obligation, or interpersonal accountability. As we will see, this is reflected in exclusions that foreground Aristotle's own philosophical work: his notion of perfect human happiness and fulfillment does not concern women, children, slaves, uneducated men, and men without land, wealth, and ample time to think.[48] Fostering the contemplative intellect requires dominion over the unruly material conditions of the universe and of embodied human life, as they are made manifest in both oneself and others—a violent individuation and renunciation of materiality. From a vantage point that depends entirely on institutionalized slavery and kyriarchy, Aristotle suggests, "we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things."[49]

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[47] Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research,* Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969): 170.

[48] D.S. Hutchinson, "Ethics," *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 198-205.

[49] *NE*, 1177b30-78a8.

While this denial of human life driving the essence of a human being introduces a kind of self-inflicting violence at the symbolic level, Aristotle's metaphysics can be more clearly seen to invite the particular violences of control when we examine how they inform and are informed by his ethics and politics. By defining an ultimate, transcendent telos for human betterment, Aristotle also provides himself with an ontological metric for the hierarchical categorization of better humans. He is clear in deploying the essential human function of the contemplative intellect in order to draw clear distinctions that help structure a social order which reflects the order of the cosmos. His autopoietic enactment of the narrative coding and descriptive statement that help to form his decidedly masculine genre of the human.

"[R]eason more than anything else is man"[50]

We begin with Aristotle's discussion of how to live a virtuous life that leads to true happiness, as found in his *Ethics*. He puts forth three different ways of life that are guided by desire for pleasure, desire for virtue, and desire for knowledge, respectively.[51] While each desire is distinct in the quantity and quality of happiness it brings, Aristotle notes that these three modes of life are the only three reasonable pursuits that would motivate one to choose living over not living.[52] It is telling, then, that Aristotle's formulation of the above pursuits entails the foregone exclusion of a vast majority of the population. Aristotle express interest lies in the examination of nature perfected, those manifestations of the true and the good which provide metrics for categorizing the levels

[50] *NE,* 1177b30-78a8.

[51] *NE,* 1095b14-1096b25.

[52] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, ed. J. Solomon (London: Aeterna Press, 2015), 1215b22-29.

of relative deficiency that arise in comparison. "[T]herefore," Aristotle writes, "we must study the man who is in the most perfect state of body and soul…"[53] As if justifying his near total focus on "the man," he goes on to remark that "the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled."[54] We will return in detail to the social order that Aristotle prescribes in accordance with this claim, but for now it will suffice to say that women are not considered relevant to his discussion of happiness and the virtuous life, as Aristotle holds the virtue of women to be their silent and obedient complement to men's cultivation of excellence.[55]

Aristotle will save more than just women from concerning themselves with truly living the good life: he also excludes children—due to their undeveloped capacities; and slaves—due to their inherent lack of proper capacities.[56] While women, children, and slaves form a significant and recurring trio of otherness for Aristotle, he also clarifies that those free Greek men who need to work for a living cannot pursue a successful life, as money has become their object.[57] It is, in fact, only independently wealthy, free Greek men who have no responsibilities to a craft or trade and "who happen to be in power" that are fit to choose between the desires that animate "the life of politics, the life of philosophy, or the life of indulgence."[58] It is only among the elite members of the

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[53] Aristotle, *Politics*, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 1254a35-b3.

[54] *Pol*, 1254b9-15.

[55] *Pol*, 1260a20-32.

[56] *Pol*, 1260a8-20.

[57] *EE*, 1215a25-36; *NE*, 1096a5-10.

[58] *EE*, 1215a34-36.

population that Aristotle believes the conditions for living a happy and virtuous life can be found. Mastery and humanity are conflated here, as the aristocratic mode of being Aristotle invokes depended on slave labor for its continued existence and the subhuman designation of the enslaved to distinguish its status.[59] Thus, the performance of control is an essential prerequisite to Aristotle's ethics.

According to Aristotle, a life driven by the desire for pleasure revolves around indulgence of the basest human capacities—the senses.[60] While initially appealing in its excess and indulgence, the desire for pleasure is fit only for the irrational existence of animals, the immature years of childhood, and the utterly sensual life of enslavement ("slaves by nature"[61] being distinguished from animals only by the base rational capacities that persist in their human souls).[62] The desires of animals, children, and slaves are limited to the pursuit of sensual pleasures due to the inability—because of irrationality, age, or stunted capacity—to cultivate their intellective potential. The life of pleasure, Aristotle argues, is one "suitable to beasts."[63] A line of demarcation that will hold undue sway over centuries of repetition.

Aristotle acknowledges that both the virtuous life of political service and the contemplative life of the philosopher (based on virtue of the intellective sort) can lead to

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[59] M.I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: The Viking Press, 1980), 64-92.

[60] *EE*, 1215b22-1216a26.

[61] *Pol*, 1254a20-24.

[62] *EE*, 1215a34-36.

[63] *NE*, 1095b15-21.

happiness, but there is no question as to which path he considers to be superior.[64] He regards a life spent in contemplation of the truth, dedicated to fostering the intellective powers of the human soul, as unequivocally the best life a (free, educated, independently wealthy, socially well situated) man could possibly live.[65] While he builds a thorough case in defense of this assertion, Aristotle views the most authoritative evidence evincing the supremacy of contemplation as the divine life. In a pithy summation he writes that "the activity of God, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative; and of the human activities, therefore, that which is most akin to this must be most of the nature of happiness."[66]

In this larger, prescriptive turn towards the contemplative, Aristotle's braiding together of the ontological structure of the cosmos, the telos of human life, and the proper, ethical ordering of an individual's activity can be more clearly seen. We can trace a particular continuity—the primacy of divine-masculine reason—cutting across the layers of the symbolic, the structural, and the interpersonal, a conceptual loadstone that we already know is dependent upon and seeks to reproduce at least three mechanisms of controlling violence in the form of slavery, patriarchy, and a broadly kyriarchal social order. The supremacy of the contemplative intellect—of reason, of divine reason—is pervasive in its hierarchical determination of causes in the universe, of being, of human capacity, desire, activity, and value. What appears as abstract and ideal in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* seems to be quickly reified in his *Ethics*, engendering a male supremacy that

[64] *NE,* 1095b21-1096a4, 1177a10-20.

[65] *NE,* 1178b20-32.

[66] *NE,* 1178b20-32.

embodies his vision of ultimate human desire and happiness—an autopoietic enactment of narrative coding and genre. As we will soon discover, Aristotle's *Politics* further extends this supremacy through the mechanism of an ontologically-charged ethics of desire and happiness wherein the truth of God, which became the truth of the philosopher, becomes the truth of men.

"[T]he one rules, and the other is ruled"[67]

In much the same way that the simple order of creaturely life reflects the grand order of Aristotle's cosmos, the structure of the individual household reflects the political structure of the state.[68] Aristotle's analysis of the household centers on three defining relationships: "master and slave, husband and wife, father and child."[69] Given our attention to control, we should remind ourselves that these roles do not simply arise from an underlying societal structure, the relation between master and slave, husband and wife, father and child—between men and his others—are practiced, materialized and reproduced in their performative enactment. While Aristotle views the household configuration as a manifestation of the aforementioned ontological and ethical supremacy of men in relation to slaves, women, and children, we can observe in the formation of this triad the citational grounds for the performative formation of man, himself. The social, economic, and political order of the household reciprocally enacts and engenders the ethical and ontological formation of the masculinized human purpose—the contemplative

[67] *Pol*, 1254b12-15.

[68] *Pol*, 1253a40-1253b1.

[69] *Pol*, 1253b4-12.

intellect as ultimate end—idealized in the philosopher but embodied in the everyday patriarch.

The political organization of the human species begins, for Aristotle, with the asymmetrical union of a man and a woman in a family, "that the race may continue."[70] As Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza points out, "When slaves are added to the family, it can be called a 'house.' Several households constitute a village and several villages a city-state."[71] In accordance with nature, the union of families becomes the village, and the union of villages becomes the state or the *polis*.[72] At the heart of this societal evolution remains the relationship between husband and wife, and master and slave, the founding relations of each household that together form the state.[73] Within the household structure, Aristotle is unequivocal in his assertion that a man has absolute dominion as husband, master, and father. The subtlety and diffusion of symbolic and structural violence give way to the immediacy of control played out in the everydayness of the family. Given the brutality of his context, Aristotle's vision of a properly ordered social structure is not necessarily characterized by an increase in overt forms of violence—we could even say that he sought to avoid the persistent violent conflict that characterized the Classical Period in Greece.

What gives me pause, is that the content of Aristotle's political vision is entirely dependent upon a presumed mastery that builds from the violences of slavery, patriarchy,

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[70] *Pol*, 1252a25-1252b.

[71] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1985), 255.

[72] *Pol*, 1252b9-1253a.

[73] *Pol*, 1253a40-1253b5.

and kyriarchy as foundational terms of order.[74] The violence of slavery, in particular, is often invisibilized by continued reference to its historical ubiquity and its supposed disjunction from the present moment.[75] Yet, as Cedric Robinson points out, the supposedly mundane nature of slavery says less about the horrors of the institution then about the civilizations that so eagerly and persistently reproduced it.[76] We should be warry, then, of minimizing the fact that "[i]n all Greek or Roman establishments larger than the family unit, whether on the land or in the city, the *permanent* work force was composed of slaves."[77] Considering these tensions, perhaps we do need to approach Aristotle's conception of the *polis* as exceptionally violent, in addition to examining the ways in which the specific and often unrecognized violences of control are uniquely entangled in his anthropology and political philosophy.[78]

Aristotle's model of the household revolves around the authoritative activity of a man as "master," "husband," and "father."[79] In a lengthy, metaphysically charged analogy of body and soul that relates the position of animals, slaves, and women relative to a male patriarch, Aristotle writes:

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[74] Aristotle's philosophical commitment to the maintenance of order in Athens is closely examined by Susan Moller Oken in *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 73-99.

[75] Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, 17-44.

[76] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of The Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 54-62.

[77] Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, 81.

[78] For a broader treatment than our specific focus on control see *Engendering Origins: Critical Feminist Readings in Plato and Aristotle*, ed. Bat-Ami Bar On (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994); See especially Eve Browning Cole's chapter, "Women, slaves, and 'love of toil' in Aristotle's moral philosophy."

[79] *Pol*, 1253b5-13.

> At all events we must firstly observe in the living creatures both a despotical and constitutional rule; for the soul rules the body with a despotical rule, whereas the intellect rules the appetites with a constitutional and royal rule. And it is clear the rule of the soul over the body, and of the mind and the rational element over the passionate, is natural and expedient; whereas the equality of the two or the rule of the inferior is always hurtful. The same holds good of animals in relation to men; for tame animals have a better nature that wild, and all tame animals are better off when they are ruled by man; for then they are preserved. Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind. Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals (as in the case of those whose business it is to use their body, and who can do nothing better), the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master.[80]

Aristotle will go on to further distinguish the categories of "woman," "slave," and "animal," but it is highly instructive to observe how the strategic elision of difference between women, slaves, and animals informs a mutual categorization as inferior/other/ruled that suggests the necessity of men as superior/ruler/master. This clear line of hierarchical categorization that elevates "man" to a position of utter dominion over every *other* also hinges on the ontological assertion of the soul as master of the body and the intellect as ruler over the appetites. Of course, Aristotle would be adamant that this idea of order emerges from the true nature of things, but given our attention to the productive function of power and violence in the performative formation of identity, it is clear that the "truth" of Aristotle's idea of order depends on the embodied iteration of these concepts in the figure-made-flesh of the man-as-patriarch.

The interleaving mechanisms of symbolic, structural, and interpersonal violence reciprocally materialize relations of power enacted in the performance of control that Aristotle's work both bears witness to and further engenders. We would be remiss in

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[80] *Pol*, 1254b2-20.

suggesting that Aristotle simply describes a hierarchical social order into which certain figures fit according to the patriarchal cultural norms of the day. Such an analysis would fit were we to invoke a more traditional understanding of power, violence, and identity. But given the more expansive and fluid theorization that we are applying, we must see that Aristotle is not simply invoking patriarchal ideology to solidify unjust social relations, he is prescribing a particular process of masculine identify formation—self-instituting a specific genre of the human. He posits a set of truth claims about the nature of maleness and manhood that enable a legible citation and iterative performance of manhood which materializes the very power relations that Aristotle puts forth as natural. Masculine identity, if we examine Aristotle's description and further interrogate his prescription, must first be proven and performed before it's innateness can be believed—both the man and the truth of masculinity are forged in the performance of control, of mastery, over the self and the other.

The immensity of the cosmos and the banality of household are enfolded in Aristotle's politics, engendering a vision of social structure that emerged within and surely served to further shape the imaginary of his day. His hierarchical idea of order is grounded in the normative patriarchal operations of the household, even as it draws ideological authority from the causal relations of his metaphysics. In much the same way, it becomes difficult to disentangle the production of the patriarch as an ideological figure from the materialization of patriarchal power relations that occurs in the performative enactment of control. The citational and iterative function of identity formation does not suggest a definite beginning or an end to the self when applied to Aristotle's work, but does help us to see how control is the unity of discourse and practice, belief and behavior

in a manner that locates violence as a founding and enduring motion at the center of masculine identities. The production of truth and the exercise of power are made one in control, as it is the violence of mastery that at once creates, confirms, and conditions Aristotle's man.

"[F]or effeminacy too is a kind of softness"[81]

The creation and maintenance of a particular form of masculine identity is essential to Aristotle's understanding of human life in relation to divine purpose. To fulfill human purpose, which for Aristotle means to be a particular kind of man, is to master every errant desire and bridle such passions in service of a singular will that seeks only the truth. Of course, he allows for the reality of all manner of deviation from human excellence, but the essence of human being is the intellective soul that links the minute potency of a single, finite human man to the boundless, unceasing activity of divine thought. The desire for truth can help to cultivate virtue, win honor, and bring all manner of happiness, enriching the lives of those Aristotle understands to be capable of such excellence, but all virtue, honor, and happiness pale in comparison with the escape that truth affords. In his desire for truth, Aristotle strains towards a habitual transcendence of mortality promised in the brief glimpse of divine life. To touch that which in its unceasing activity and eternal perfection can never touch you in return, can never even feel the glimmer of your adoration, the momentary hum of your participation—this is fullness of human purpose for Aristotle, leaving us to wonder at the utter lack of mutuality in humanity's ultimate end. Is there a persistent impossibility that flavors

[81] *NE*, 1150b2-4.

Aristotle's desire, one that demands the violence of self-mastery and begets technologies of dominion?

Given our interrogation thus far, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that control, the mastery of others, is a defining force in the vision of human nature and perfection that Aristotle develops across his *Metaphysics*, *Ethics*, and *Politics*. As much as he is able to neatly categorize different human capacities, roles, and relations in order to establish the masculine supremacy of the master/husband/father—the patriarch—the formation and maintenance of masculine identity is portrayed by Aristotle as a constant struggle—a war for control of the self. The uncertainty of masculinity, this contest of mastery and desire, is only further intensified when we look beyond the Aristotelian milieu to the broader social imaginary that would shape and be shaped by his philosophy.

Much careful attention has been payed to the ins and outs of Aristotle's biological sexism, such that his gross and near total mischaracterization of "females" need not be rehearsed in detail.[82] We may learn all that we might wish from Aristotle's brief but oft-quoted assertion that "the female is as it were a mutilated male."[83] In what Thomas Laqueur has labeled a "one-sex model," the Aristotelian conception of human anatomy operates along a sliding scale of maleness;[84] there is a spectrum between deficient and

[82] Sophia M. Connell provides a meticulous analysis of Aristotle's categorization of "the female" and her biology in *Aristotle on Female Animals: A Study of the Generation of Animals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[83] Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 2 3,737a27-28.

[84] While Laqueur presents the one-sex model as dominant in ancient Greece, the singularity of the one-sex model in antiquity and the modern periodization of the two-sex model have both been challenged by subsequent scholarship. Helen King offers a particularly in-depth analysis of the one-sex model, suggesting that it typically existed alongside two-sex models that posited the biological deficiency of women through diverse essentialisms. See Helen King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

perfected maleness, but, as Laqueur puts it, "*man* is the measure of all things, and woman does not exist as an ontologically distinct category."[85] Aristotle thus establishes male anatomy as the minimum requirement for masculinity, but the possession of a male body was a mere prerequisite required for entry into the contest of Greek manhood.[86] Masculinity was not a stable social marker inherently attached to the male sex, but an exercise of particular capacities and desires that stabilized one's place in a shifting social hierarchy centered around masculine supremacy.[87] This is especially true given the flux of embodiment and its constant potential to betray the static nature of masculine inviolability.

Aristotle displayed a great deal of concern for "softness" in a man, as it pertained to both his moral formation and his bodily constitution. To be "soft" or "effeminate" was to surrender self-control and give in to "self-indulgence," "intemperance," and "incontinence"—to be mastered by the sensuous whims of pleasure and pain.[88] This softness of character—naturally in harmony with the perception of women's less muscular, more fleshy and soft bodies[89]—might manifest itself in all manner of embodiment for a man, or be betrayed in as public a shame as the increased emotion of "womanly men" and their penchant for mourning amidst their friends (when a true man

[85] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 62.

[86] Ibid., 8.

[87] Ibid., 52.

[88] *NE*, 1150a7-1050b5.

[89] Aristotle, *History of Animals*, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 4 11.

does not give himself to mourning, much less in the company of others).[90] For a man to be soft was to surrender the rational mastery of his own person to the sensual whims of the flesh—to abandon his better nature and leave off the grander longings of the soul to follow the bestial pursuits of the body. For Aristotle, this kind of self-indulgence went beyond a mere proclivity for hedonism, it represented a betrayal of the ultimate purpose for human life. If we listen closely, we may hear echoes of his previous disavowal of the body and its beastly penchant for change.

Whereas Aristotle saw softness and effeminacy as indicating either a lack of development or a profound deviance from nature, the larger, more muscular and taut (literally "harder") bodies of men bespoke their more perfected bodily state and its reflection of their elevated constitution. Such a constitution is always present in the male body in potency, but, in classic Aristotelian form, is only actualized in the legible practice of manhood through enduring work and habit. As Laqueur notes, Aristotle's concern for human anatomy is in the metaphysical truths that the material body illustrates—masculinity was a matter of the soul, exceeding physiological markers and thus constantly requiring embodied demonstration in order to be recognized.[91]

Aristotle's male is first and foremost the active principle of the human species.[92] In reproduction the man supplies the soul, in the household he rules over women, children, and slaves, in the *polis* he guards against evil and works towards the good of all, and in his lifelong pursuit of the truth he seizes happiness through fulfillment of his

[90] *NE*, 1171b5-12.

[91] Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 28.

[92] *GA* 2, 716a5-7.

human purpose. He is the penetrator, the progenitor, the patriarch, and the promise of something beyond human frailty. Aristotle writes that "something divine is present in him," and he must strive accordingly to actualize that which is unchanging, unaffected, disinterested, rational, and absolute in himself, everything which reflects the pure contemplation of truth which is the divine life.[93] In as much as the unmoved mover is infinitely distant, so a man in Aristotle's estimation seeks to distance himself from pleasure, pain, emotion, need, and obligation, anything that might draw him from the inhuman serenity of transcendent rationality. If he does not control his unruly materiality and master those around him in accordance with the superiority of his nature, he risks losing that divine spark, risks slipping into the soft and effeminate decay of mortality. In simple terms, Aristotle believes that in assuming positions of authority and power, men should desire something far beyond the limitations of the household or the state; his desire, the ultimate desire, is fixed on that glimpse of deification, that moment of ascendency where that something divine in a man is not held back by the material conditions of his mortal being.

The blatantly patriarchal structuring of Aristotle's work on ethics, politics, and biology may amount to nothing more than the philosophical translation of his context and its prevailing ideologies, but it is significant that each of these elements of his thought—and thus the more complete picture of his understanding of what it means to be a man—is woven into the symbolic order of a deeply anthropocentric and uniquely masculine metaphysics. The unmoved mover is the divinization of Aristotle's ideal male characteristics, presented as the divine perfection which guides the proper life of men—

[93] *NE*, 1177b25-1178a9.

that for the sake of which a man exists. But to define human purpose and desire according to a God that is entirely remote and incapable of interest is hardly the call-to-our-better-selves that I believe Aristotle intends it to be. This is particularly true given the utter dependence of the enlightened aristocracy on the women, children, and slaves that they claim mastery over. The transcendent abstraction and independence that Aristotle extols is entirely reliant on the material relations that it seeks to deny—proving the fantasy and impossibility of control. A sociopolitical order of mastery undergirds the control that comes seeping in through the subtle mastery of human being by the utterly detached mover, an untouchable and unaffected God that nonetheless defines human desire and thus determines what it means to be human as humanity's only true end. The diffuse, symbolic violence of the mover's divine abstraction fuels a much more structural and direct array of violences that depend on the autopoiesis of an aristocratic, intellective model of the human. While not fickle, bellicose, plural, unruly, and subject to emotion in the manner of the Greek Pantheon, Aristotle's ultimate divinity is completely unfeeling in its inherent dominion over human desire, a metaphysical monolith that makes perfect sense of the control that must be performed—the violence that is required—to form the master, the husband, the father, the patriarch—the man.

CHAPTER 3

LONGING FOR CONTROL: CREATION, INCARNATION, AND CREATURELY SUBJECTION

> [A]t its root the Christian myth is not only a story of fallen and redeemed "mankind'; it is also a story of failed and redeemed masculinity.
> —Colleen Conway, *Behold the Man*

> But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.
> —Romans 6:22

> God of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance of His mother, born in the world; Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood; Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ: One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ
> —*The Athanasian Creed*

The scandal of incarnation is often pointed to as that which differentiates Christianity from other religions.[1] That "God became flesh" is an unruly and inexplicable claim, the radicality of which has been subject to both celebration and censure in Christian communities throughout the last two thousand years.[2] Theologians, emperors, popes, and apostles have all worked to shape the contours of incarnation as it structures the salvific narrative of Christianity. Examining this translation of incarnation—the particular theological shapings of scandal—I contend that we can begin to discern the ways in

[1]It is the Apostle Paul who first refers to the *skandalon* of the gospel in I Corinthians 1:23.

[2] Laurel C. Schneider, "Promiscuous Incarnation," *The Embrace of Eros: Bodies, Desire, and Sexuality in Christianity*, ed. Margaret D. Kamitsuka (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 232-233.

which the operation and conservation of control became entangled in the earliest forms of Christian theological imagination.

The structure of this chapter moves with the mediating role that incarnation occupies in the imperial-made-orthodox Christian theologies that shaped Latin-Christian Europe from Nicaea onwards. Jesus' christic figure stands as a point of convergence between God as creator and humanity as God's creation—Creator, Christ, and Creation formulated as a triune framework that is dependent upon interlocking modes of mastery that envelop Christian theological imagination. Centering the figure of Christ incarnate and the Greco-Roman milieu of the gospels and Pauline texts, we recall the Aristotelian formulation of the Unmoved Mover in ancient Greece, and look forward to Thomas Aquinas' re-structuring of creation and its essence during the Scholastic period in Western Europe.

As we will see, these historically distinct theological moments are linked by an enduring investment in the proper ordering and categorization of humanity and the cosmos—forming what Sylvia Wynter refers to as "a continuous cultural field."[3] At issue within this hierarchical structuring of theological imagination, and at work in the violences of control, is the question of human life and value—a grasping after what Wynter labels a "master code"[4] of narrative representation that would define the "genres of being human" and at once affirm or deny access to the legible performance of personhood.[5] In this context of theological categorization and narrative representation we

[3] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Truth/Power," 318.

[4] Scott, "Re-enchantment of Humanism," 183.

[5] Ibid., 189.

can begin to interrogate both the indirect violences of control, such as the symbolic and structural, while also identifying how they bolster the direct exercise of power and violence, all at work in the formulation of masculine identities.

"So God and Man is one in Christ"[6]

While the kyriarchal structure of ancient Athenian society provided avenues for elite men to legibly perform masculinity through the control of one's household and the mastery of one's peers, Aristotle's concern over control of the self was symptomatic of a shared social anxiety over desire and sexual activity in relation to performance of masculine identity. Together with the very public formation of masculine identity required by the one-sex model, the diverse desires and closely scrutinized sexual activity of ancient Athenian men generated the pressing question of how to effectively present masculinity and consistently avoid emasculation, all while pursuing the fulfillment of one's intimate longings. This cultural concern for the representation of masculinity was not an anxiety unique to the men of Athens, as we can observe a similar, perhaps even heightened, anxiety displayed broadly in the Greco-Roman world from which the New Testament figure of Jesus Christ emerges.

In this enduring and evolving social imaginary, Aristotle's metaphysical/political/ethical/biological formation of man as the active principle of humanity echoed in the Greco-Roman sensibilities that spread throughout the variously conquered and colonized Mediterranean peoples. While Aristotle's philosophical

[6] The Episcopal Church, "The Athanasian Creed," *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2006), 864-856.

formulation of manhood was guided by his transcendent desire for divinity, the actual performance of masculinities in the Greco-Roman context reveals a much more embodied contest between the pseudo-divine attributes of manhood and the unruly desires of men. There was a tension between the embodied human and immutable divine that had no small influence on early Christian claims of incarnation and their operations under empire.

In his meticulous study of gender, sex, and sexuality in the Greco-Roman context, Craig Williams argues that in relation to masculinity, "what was at stake was less a man's actual behavior and more the *appearance* he gave and the *image* he had; how he was seen and talked about by his peers more than what he actually did in the privacy of his bedroom."[7] In both the Greek context of Aristotle's work and the Greco-Roman world from which early Christianity emerged, there was a grave concern for men to be perceived as *active* rather than *passive*, especially in relation to sex.[8] The passive role was considered appropriate only for women, male children and male slaves, never for

[7] Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18. Williams' text is especially helpful for our work as he presents a detailed synthesis of the extensive scholarship on gender and sexuality in antiquity that had accrued up to the point of his writing. Representative of this wide array of study are such texts as John J. Winkler's *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1990); David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays On Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); *Roman Sexualities*, eds. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). Williams (7), Winkler (3), Halperin (ii), Gleason (xi), and Hallet and Skinner (6-7, 13), all pay homage to the work of Michel Foucault in his *History of Sexuality* series as central to the field of inquiry that they are engaging. In addition to Foucault, Hallet and Skinner (6) and Gleason (xi-xii) all refer to the great influence of Halperin and Winkler in their work, with Halperin (ii) and Winkler (4) also referring to one another. Of course, the field extends beyond these thinkers, but it is important to acknowledge the central strands of this scholarship that Williams so helpfully draws together.

[8] Ibid. Although Williams does explore the shared features and substantial differences between Greek and Roman understandings of gender and sexuality, his focus does turn to the specifically Roman concerns over masculinity and sexual norms.

freeborn adult men of status.[9] Williams further clarifies the specifically Roman understanding of activity and passivity as corelating to the "insertive" and "receptive" roles in acts of penetration (which nearly all sexual acts where, in some cases very creatively, construed to be).[10] As Jonathan Walters details, the act of penetrating was also considered the principal sight of pleasure, suggesting that "the other participant is primarily there for the use of the penetrating man."[11] He goes on to explain that,

> [s]exual activity is routinely conceptualized in Roman public discourse as penetrative, sexual pleasure…as accruing to the penetrator, and the penetrator-penetrated relationship as "naturally" involving a more powerful individual wielding power over a less powerful one.[12]

Williams summarizes this insertive injunction as "the prime directive of masculine sexual behavior," suggesting that it mapped onto the patriarchal structure of a Roman society which held that "penetration is subjugation…and masculinity is domination."[13] In this adaptive conflation of activity/insertion/penetration/masculinity/domination and passivity/receptivity/subjugation, we can already see how the blending of symbolic, structural, and direct forms of violence help to construct a perception of masculine identity that is constituted in the performance of control. Manhood, masculinity, these are of course social constructs and not inherent attributes, but were embodied and

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[9] Jonathan Walters, "Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought," *Roman Sexualities*, eds. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 31.

[10] Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 18.

[11] Walters, "Invading the Roman Body," 31.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 18.

materialized as recognizable relations of power through the legible citation (if not the physical act) of penetration and domination.

Central to the anxiety over appearing to maintain the insertive role is an intricate code of conduct that delineates acceptable and unacceptable sexual activity in relation to "the principle of *pudicitia*."[14] As Williams explains, while *pudicitia* is often translated as "chastity,"[15] it is a term that more specifically refers to "the ideal of the physical inviolability of the free Roman citizen."[16] The sexual integrity of Roman citizens, particularly the "impenetrability" of (real) men,[17] was key to the formation of their identities and the maintenance of their social status, as this notion of inviolability functioned as an essential distinction between the enslaved and freeborn.[18] As Walters notes, in the Roman context "not all males are men, and therefore impenetrable: some males—the young and the unfree, for example—do not have the status of full men and are therefore characterized as potentially penetrable by other males."[19] We can observe the inextricable link between masculinity, sexual agency, bodily purity, and mastery (of the self and the enslaved) in this notion of inviolability. It is significant that the principle of *pudicitia* operates among the freeborn but functions most definitively to produce the clear demarcation of slave and free—revealing the performative enactment of masculine

[14] Ibid., 106.

[15] Ibid., 6.

[16] Ibid., 106.

[17] Ibid., 191.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Walters, "Invading the Roman Body," 32

identities to be dependent upon the violent material relations of slavery. This technology of control enfolds ownership, desire, embodiment, sexual practice, and social order into a principle of penetration.

Beyond solidifying the distinction between enslaved and freeborn, the concept of inviolability also functioned to legitimate the purity of Roman bloodlines and to secure the authority of the *paterfamilias*.[20] It was thought that no citizen should violate the *pudicitia* of another, and that for a man to be so violated would certainly bring into questions his masculinity, and thus his social status and role as *paterfamilias*.[21] That a Roman man be seen as being in control over his body, that he evince mastery over himself and absolute inviolability, was essential to his legibility as masculine and co-constitutive of his control over others.[22]

Williams notes that "playing the insertive role in penetrative acts, while being a necessary precondition for full masculinity, was not a sufficient one."[23] Thus, performing the masculine prime directive of a penetrative sexual actor was essential to the formation of masculine identity but conveying the perception of the "active" figure was only part of a more intricate pastiche of required citations. Chief amongst the modes of control that had to be enacted in order to embody a legible masculine identity that would in turn materialize the relations of power interconnected to the perception of manhood was control of the self. Echoing Aristotelian sensibilities, the "softness" of effeminacy was to

[20] Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 104.

[21] Ibid., 120.

[22] Ibid., 136.

[23] Ibid., 137.

be avoided at all costs and actively warded against by the consistent demonstration of masculine "*imperium* ('dominion') and *fortitude* ('strength')."[24] Williams explains that influential Roman politicians and philosophers such as Cicero, considered reason to be the foundation of masculine self-control and the governing mechanism of this dominion and strength.[25] Furthering the significant Peripatetic parallels, reason was seen as the strong part of the soul that must assert dominion over the unruly emotions and passions "in the same way that a master controls his slave, a commander his soldier, and a father his son."[26] Thus, rational control of the self and of one's emotions reciprocally reproduces and is produced by the a man's literal mastery over his slaves, his soldiers, and his children. Again, we can observer the simultaneous enfolding and unfolding of material relations of mastery and the performative enactment of control—the co-constitutive autopoiesis of order and identity.

Given the imperceptible nature of the internal war for control being waged between reason and emotion, the aesthetics of self-control became an essential metric in the performative formation of masculine identities in the Greco-Roman context. The mobility of gender performance and the conditional legitimacy of masculine identity engendered a great deal of anxiety over properly conveying the appearance of strength and dominion in clear contrast to softness and effeminacy. Failure to convincingly perform self-control and control over others could immediately threaten the security of one's masculine identity and invite emasculating—and thus socially debilitating—

[24] Ibid., 139, 140.

[25] Ibid., 147.

[26] Ibid.

identifications with women and the enslaved.[27] Williams suggests that the Roman codes surrounding embodiment and behavior that could appropriately materialize masculine gender identities had fluctuating boundaries but revolved around the mastery of one's fears and desires.[28] The expression of emotion was a particularly telling sign of one's level of self-control, as tears, crying out in pain or need, or nearly any show of emotion beyond the stoic and subdued reactions of rational man, would immediately signal a softness of character that undermined masculine identity.[29]

The effeminacy of overindulgence was thought to be naturally occurring deficiency in women but was condemned as a disorder of desire when demonstrated by a man.[30] A man was expected to avoid looking slovenly, but overly involved cultivation of one's appearance signaled by "artificially curled hair, skin treated with the finest cosmetics, feminine headgear, and depilated legs and chest," conveyed the softness that was antithetical to masculine strength.[31] Truly, any form of "excess"—be it too much sex, self-regard, sensual pleasure, colorful clothing, mirth, or general emotion—could be read as effeminacy and threaten to disrupt the performance of a legibly masculine identity.[32]

As Williams notes, the most egregious form of disordered desire a Roman man could display was in the willing and eager surrender of his inviolability—signaled by the

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[27] Ibid., 148.

[28] Ibid, 151.

[29] Ibid., 151.

[30] Ibid., 151, 155.

[31] Ibid., 143.

[32] Ibid., 168.

desire to play the receptive role in sexual activity.[33] "Being dominated or even penetrated by his sexual partners," be they men or women, indicated a man's lack of self-control and self-mastery, an indulgence in the effeminate receptivity of those who sought pleasure and gratification over reason and strength.[34] Yet Williams also demonstrates that there was no shortage of Roman men who desired to be penetrated so long as they could still play the dominant, masculine type in public.[35] What's more, there was an equal abundance of freeborn men willing to meet the receptive needs of their fellow male citizens by playing the insertive role.[36] Clearly, all manner of desires could be pursued as long as such indulgences were sheltered under the cover of visible adherence to a heteropatriarchal social order. As Williams writes "masculinity was not fundamentally a matter of sexual practice; it was a matter of control."[37] The power and violences of control *made* Roman men, and their concern was not with curtailing their desires but articulating and embodying them through the recognizably masculine mechanisms of reason, self-control, strength, and dominion. Thus, the co-constitutive tension of desire and self-control was a silently productive one, a stimulus for patriarchal networks of power that enhanced technologies of control and became a stage for violent performance.

There is no separating the control that asserts mastery over the self and that which enacts mastery over others in the formation of masculine identities that Williams

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[33] Ibid., 8.

[34] Ibid., 155.

[35] Ibid., 170.

[36] Ibid., 135.

[37] Ibid., 155.

describes.[38] The idea of a Roman man's inviolability is only made real by the free and total violation of others, beginning with his slaves.[39] Walters reminds us that "having one's body penetrated was seen as slavelike."[40] Thus, to legibly perform masculinity, the freeborn Roman man must present evidence of genuine manhood that exceeds the biological assertion of maleness and freeborn social status—he must, as Williams puts it, be recognized as "one who penetrates."[41] The ownership of slaves was essential to the signaling of a Roman man's activity. Williams explains that in the ancient Roman context enslaved people possessed no *pudicitia,* none of the integrity and inviolability that define a citizen, and as property they were *essentially receptive*—subject to the desires and dominion of their masters.[42] This mean that, as Walters details, the enslaved were:

> under the control of their owner, under orders, most specifically that their bodies belonged to their owner, to do with as he or she wished. Slaves could be beaten, tortured, killed, and the fact that a slave, male or female, was at the disposal of his or her master for sexual use was so commonplace as to be scarcely noted in Roman sources.[43]

Dominion over one's slaves, especially through sexual violence, was the foundational to a Roman man's performance of masculinity and careful cultivation of the status of manhood. Specifically, the penetrative violence of rape enacted control by materializing the sexual, gendered, political, and economic narrative coding of the inviolable male

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[38] Ibid., 106, 107.

[39] Ibid., 107.

[40] Walters, "Invading the Roman Body," 40.

[41] Ibid., 180.

[42] Williams, *Roman Homosexuality,* 180.

[43] Walters, "Invading the Roman Body," 39.

citizen and the enslaved whose inferior status precluded the possession of bodily integrity that could be violated—the act of rape literaly making the man-as-master.

This embodied relation of property and ownership reveals profound and deeply violent connections drawing together the social and ideological operations of economic value, sexual desire, human freedom/unfreedom, and the performative enactment of identity—the exercise of control being the primary mechanism linking a dominant narrative coding with the operative terms of order. Illustrating how deeply these relations structured the practice of being human, it was argued that even an enslaved person who was freed might remain bound by duty to satisfy the sexual demands of their former master.[44] Between a free Roman man and one of the people he enslaved, there was no concern over the nature of a sexual act or the gender of the person in the receptive role as long as the master was the penetrator.[45] A conflation that would endure far beyond the Greco-Roman context.

The performative formation of masculine identity was enacted not only through the domination of enslaved peoples, but through mastery over freeborn Roman women. While a Roman man was never to engage in sexual activity with another male citizen's wife, Williams writes that "Roman men traditionally exercised over their women a dominion much like that with which they ruled their slaves."[46] Wives were subject to the desires of their husbands, and the exercise of control in relation to one's wife was

[44] Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 107-108.

[45] Ibid., 136.

[46] Ibid., 150.

essential to the maintenance of the masculine "head of household" role. The Roman man sitting atop the patriarchal household order was thought to reflect the ideal of Roman dominance over other nations, as the individual man's control of his wife and slaves prefigured the control he hoped to exercise over effeminate and soft "foreigners."[47] Seemingly essential to the dominant descriptive statement of the human, control appears to have shaped every facet of Roman life and the performative formation of masculine identities within that context.

Let us pause and take stock of the social imaginary at work in the Greco-Roman context that William's has so thoroughly interrogated. It is easy to carry out a critical analysis that articulates the ways in which power and violence operate in the performative formation of masculine identity without ever naming the daily regime of horror such a performance would institute and reproduce. The technologies of control that we have described thus far suggest that the symbolic and structural violence that suffused the Roman social order and the broader Greco-Roman world gave rise to a pervasive system of direct interpersonal violence centered on slavery and the family. As mastery was the ordering principle of enslavement and the household, we can be certain that a wide range of violences—from physical harm to emotional abuse and material coercion—were exercised as a matter of routine. Violence towards the enslaved was likely to be more pervasive and severe in its physicality than violence within the family, but that is certainly not without exception. Given the ubiquity of mastery and its attendant modes of harm, I want to focus particularly on violence in the form of sexual assault and rape.

[47] Ibid., 148, 155.

A foundational violence of patriarchal culture, rape is an enduring, everyday terror that we will find being deployed across the broad swath of histories we examine. As we are soon to observe in the Greco-Roman context—and as we will find holds true across the centuries—rape and the threat of rape are co-constitutive of slavery and conquest as technologies of control. The adaptability of rape as a mechanism for producing and reproducing mastery is revealed in the diversely dehumanizing social structures that this mode of sexual violence undergirds. In its intertwining of physical domination, mental and emotional violation, and vicious intimacy, rape enacts the desire for mastery on an interpersonal level as it simultaneously reproduces the social orders of control that invite and encourage rape as a practice that is vital to maintaining the existing networks of power. Revealing the interdependent desires of sexual domination and hierarchical order, rape is deployed in the materialization of violability and inviolability, the embodiment of the enslaveable and those who enslave, and production of the master in the reproduction of those who are mastered—a multivalent violence that is both personal and structural in its drive to dehumanize.[48]

Essential to the legible performance of masculine identity, Roman men's sexual assault and rape of both the people they enslaved and their freeborn wives was expected.[49] Say what we might about the complexity of desires at play in the sexual

[48] This theorization of rape draws inspiration from the insights of Angela Davis in her essays "The Legacy of Slavery: Standards for New Womanhood," and "Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist," found in *Women, Race, & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), as well as the work of Traci C. West in *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), and the work of Patricia Hill Collins in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000). I will engage particular elements of Davis and West's work on rape more directly in later chapters.

[49] Nghiem L. Nguyen, "Roman Rape: An Overview of Roman Rape Laws from the Republican Period to Justinian's Reign," *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*, Volume 13, No. 1 (2006): 85-86.

relationships between Roman men, the privilege of willingly submitting oneself to the forbidden pleasure of sexual receptivity was preserved by a pervasive and enduring regime of intimate violence enthusiastically carried out against people bound in slavery and women bound to their husbands.[50] As we have discovered, this routinized—and thus invisibilized[51]—violence was simply the baseline expectation for the performance of masculine identity, as a Roman man's control of himself and of others extended far beyond his sexual practices. Take the case of the rape of a married freeborn woman: the primary concern in the event of such violence was the integrity of the household and the *paterfamilias*, the victim being seen as a "weak point through which the stranger was able to invade the home."[52]

In this social imagination dominated by control, capacities such as reason and atrocities such as rape were complementary forces driving the materialization of contending masculine identities and patriarchal networks of power. This was even more apparent beyond the boundaries of the noble Republic, for when the might of Rome was stirred to war virtually every subdued population was subject to widespread rape with no thought to gender or freeborn status.[53] Seemingly regardless of the specific acts that one actually carried out, legibly performing the interleaved violences of control was essential to becoming and remaining a man in the Greco-Roman world. Wealth, mastery, and masculine inviolability were the bedrock of the operative genre of the human. Tracing the

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[50] Ibid., 76-86.

[51] Yves Wynter, "Violence and Visibility," *Symposium: Revisiting Johan Galtung's Concept of Structural Violence*, *New Political Science*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (June 2012): 196, 202.

[52] Nguyen, "Roman Rape," 84.

[53] Ibid., 86.

autopoietic urge of manhood becomes increasingly complicated as we move now into the writings of the New Testament within the Greco-Roman context—a textual setting where personal wealth, mastery, and inviolability are challenged and transformed by communal, cosmic desires.

"perfect God and perfect Man"[54]

In her examination of Greco-Roman notions of masculinity and their influence on New Testament Christology, Colleen Conway reminds us that while the actual achievement of idealized manhood was a possibility limited to the elite, the technologies of control that constituted the legible performance of legitimate masculine identities still shaped the shared social imaginaries of the Greco-Roman world.[55] Enveloped in the Roman Empire, the small religious sect that emerged in the 1st century CE and called themselves Christians came into being amidst a landscape deeply embroiled in imperial violence—currents of control that they were both subjected to as inchoate communities and susceptible too in their theological and ecclesial development. It is worth noting, that this fraught atmosphere engendered within different Christian communities at least as much resistance to as reproduction of various forms of control. In the latter case, where we will focus our attention, Conway suggests that "[w]hen the New Testament writers worked out their Christological formulations, they did so alongside this dominant [Roman] ideology of masculinity."[56] Just how thoroughly the Greco-Roman fixation on

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[54] The Episcopal Church, "The Athanasian Creed," *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2006), 864-865.

[55] Colleen M. Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16.

[56] Ibid.

control was infused into the shared theological imagination of early Christians remains to be seen.

Examining ancient Greek and Roman understandings of divinity, Conway notes that in the enduringly influential Aristotelian schema masculinity is linked to perfection, which is in turn linked to the divine.[57] This shapes a Greco-Roman social imaginary populated by an overarching sense that "God is the perfect example of masculinity"[58]—the "ultramale."[59] Calling to mind Mary Daly's resonant claim, "if God is male, then the male is God,"[60] we should not be surprised that in the Greco-Roman world the symbolic violence of a masculinized metaphysics is co-constituted by the structural violence of a kyriarchal social order and the diverse modes of direct violence that we have already begun to catalogue. Control suffused the Greco-Roman experience of reality; from the heavens to the household, there was no escaping the thoroughly entangled materialization of manhood, divinity, truth, and power in the performative formation of masculine identities.

Conway is one of a number of New Testament scholars who have interrogated the operations of Greco-Roman thought and culture in the Gospels, Pauline texts, and other books of the New Testament with specific attention to masculine identities and the figure

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[57] Ibid.,

[58] Ibid., 36

[59] Sharon Lea Mattila "Wisdom, Sense Perception, Nature and Philo's Gender Gradient," *Harvard Theological Review* 89 (1996): 106. As quoted in Conway, pg 57.

[60] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 19.

of Christ.[61] The general consensus that emerges from this scholarship suggests that depictions of Jesus' masculinity varies from text to text, but the concern that he be presented as legibly performing a legitimate masculine identity is consistent throughout the New Testament.[62] Much of this work could be brought into our examination of control, but we will focus on insights relating directly to the theological imagination that develops reciprocally with the emerging question of incarnation in early Christianity.

Many of the New Testament scholars taking up the issue of Jesus' performance of masculine identity have acknowledged that his invocation to suffer, his appeals to the least and the poor, and especially his torture and subsequent crucifixion can all be read as failures—intentional or otherwise—to exercise the kind of mastery that was expected of a true man in the Greco-Roman world. But the same scholars will note this initial impression of powerlessness and effeminacy does not fully account for the complex and significant role of masculinity in the New Testament texts, particularly as it concerns the figure of Christ and the salvific effects of incarnation. Acknowledging the historically multiplicitous nature of scriptural interpretation and Christian theologies of incarnation, we proceed with our examination only through an explicit disavowal of the ahistoric monolith of "right" readings of scripture and "right" doctrine.[63] Numerous interpretive

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[61] *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), edited by Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson includes a wide array of work on this subject. See also: Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); *Reading Acts in the Discourses of Masculinity and Politics*, eds. Eric Barreto, Matthew L. Skinner, and Steve Walton (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Robert Stegmann, *Contested Masculinities: Polysemy and Gender in 1 Thessalonians* (London: Lexington Books, 2020).

[62] Conway, *Behold the Man,* 7; Stephen D. Moore, "'O Man, Who Art Thou…?': Masculinity Studies and New Testament Studies," in *New Testament Masculinities*, 17-20.

[63] Catherine Keller and Laurel C. Schneider, "Introduction," *Polydoxy: Theology of Multicplicity and Relation*, ed. Catherine Keller and Laurel C. Schneider (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1-7.

traditions—including feminist, womanist, materialist, queer, and liberationist—have demonstrated the capaciousness of Biblical texts and the transformative potential of reading the Gospels and Pauline epistles through multiple critical lenses. Within this immense array of interpretative frames, my specific intention is to demonstrate that in both the Gospels and Pauline texts, it is possible—plausible, even—to read the function of Jesus' performance of masculine identity not as a rejection or subversion of control, but an appropriation and expansion of control through theologies of incarnation. Particularly, Jesus' performance of masculinity in these texts is not overtly bound to the preservation of status in a localized social order; rather, the depiction of Jesus' reinterpretation of Greco-Roman technologies of control is linked to an eternal, salvific order—the kingdom of God.[64] I contend that read this way, the texts contain invitations to control that find strong and lasting footing in the theological convergence of Christianity and empire in the 4th century.

Examining New Testament writings in general, and looking together with Janice Capel Anderson at the Gospel of Matthew in particular, Stephen Moore notes the significance of self-mastery in the depiction of Jesus' actions and teachings.[65] The Matthaean Jesus is often shown demonstrating strict control of his own passions and demands a great deal of self-control from his followers, according to Anderson and

[64] Conway, 67; Moore, 11; Jerome H. Neyrey, "Jesus, Gender, and the Gospel of Matthew," in *New Testament Masculinities*, 63-64; Tat-siong Benny Liew, "Re-Mark-able Masculinities: Jesus, the Son of Man, and the (Sad) Sum of Manhood?" in *New Testament Masculinities*, 125; Eric Thurman "Looking for a Few Good Men: Mark and Masculinity," in *Testament Masculinities*, 142.

[65] Moore, "O Man," 11; Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, "Matthew and Masculinity," in *New Testament Masculinities*, 69, 85.

Moore.[66] In fact, as Tat-siong Benny Liew argues in his analysis of Mark, Jesus performs and proclaims a denial of the flesh and control over one's passions that can be read as both exceeding and contesting the stoicism of Greco-Roman masculinity through the endurance of "persecution, suffering, and death."[67] Much more ascetic in tone, this masculine self-control embodied in Jesus's life and teaching was certainly more unyielding than the oft-affected self-mastery that legitimized masculine identities and materialized networks of power in the broader imperial context.

As we have seen, Greco-Roman technologies of control were likely to serve the desires of those who were able to legibly perform masculinity at the expense of those who were not, but the control modeled and preached by Christ does not appear to be immediately directed towards any earthly desire or power. Naturally, this transcendent intensification of self-control has elicited numerous theological responses that resist both the power of normative social ordering and the privileging of individual desires. An early example of this ascetic denial of worldly desires is found in the mystic meditations of the Desert Mothers and Fathers dwelling in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine from the 3rd century onward.[68] The countercultural mandate of these ancient ascetic communities would live on in Christian monastic orders for centuries to come. In contrast, the interpretative trajectory that was guided by the Constantinian "theological culture"[69] coalescing at Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon eschews ascetic renunciation and countercultural

[66] Anderson and Moore, "Matthew and Masculinity," 85.

[67] Benny Liew, "Re-Mark-able," 110, 125.

[68] *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Benedicta Ward (Trappist, Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 1975), xvii-xix.

[69] Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 12.

aspirations, lifting up Christ as herald of an immense expansion and divinization of the patriarchal order of control that subsumes households, empires, and the entire earthly network of material relations.[70]

Raised to dominance through imperial assimilation starting in the 4th century, this strain of theological imagination transforms the Greco-Roman focus on reason and perfection in the formation of masculine identities from the manifestation of the divine and instantiation of patriarchal power in society to a cosmic divine patriarchy where God is Father, Jesus is Son, and control determines one's place in an eternal kingdom.[71] As Mary Rose D'Angelo writes, "in a sense the Gospel does indeed reject patriarchal organization within the community, but it does so in the name of the absolute patriarchal claim of God."[72] The self-control that Jesus espouses and performs throughout the New Testament becomes a pretext for—and condition for inclusion in—a cosmic order of control with God as imperator and Christ as the hybridized mediator between the human and divine.[73] Though Christ may have suffered and died at the hands of the Roman Empire, he subsequently conquered death and was elevated to a level of authority above all earthly powers—subordinate only to the ultimate mastery of God the Father.[74] In this theological formulation, the Greco-Roman sense of control as the embodiment of

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[70] Conway, *Behold the Man*, 84, 122, 142, 143-146, 183.

[71] Schneider, "Promiscuous Incarnation," 239-242. For more on imperial influences at play in the 4th century production of Christian creeds and orthodoxies see also, Ayres, *Nicaea*, 86-92, 251-260.

[72] As quoted in Anderson and Moore, 78. Mary Rose D'Angelo, "*Abba* and 'Father': Imperial Theology and the Jesus Traditions," *JBL*, Vol. 111, No. 4 (Winter 1992): 629.

[73] Anderson and Moore, "Matthew and Masculinity," 78-79.

[74] Conway, *Behold the Man*, 84.

masculine/divine reason and perfection is not abandoned but freshly attuned to the possibility of true immortality in Christ through the will of God the Father.

God incarnate, fully human and fully divine, this vision of Jesus bridges the impassable void that stands between the divine spark of "man's" rationality and the eternal perfection of divine life in the Greco-Roman imagination. Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection become the foundation of a cosmic kyriarchy that promises eternal life according to the Father's mastery over all created things, Christ's mastery over death, and human mastery of the self. Thus emerges the possibility for Christian mastery over the self to be realized through technologies of control and become most legible in the performance of masculine identities. New Testament passages such as I Corinthians 11:3—"But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ"[75]—and Ephesians 5:22-23—"Wives be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior"[76]—remind us that early Christian communities were not immunized to the patriarchal context of the Greco-Roman by their faith in Christ. Rather, the very scripture that has inspired radical and lifegiving resistance to violence, injustice, and empire also contains theological resources that inspired the expansion of the Greco-Roman order of control to a transcendent level, wherein the reward for the legible performance of masculinities included eternal life alongside earthly status and authority.

[75] 1 Cor. 11:3 NRSV.

[76] Eph. 5:22-23 NRSV.

Despite the enormous complexity of scriptural interpretation and theological formulation in early Christianity, there emerged a historically dominant strain of theological imagination constructed around a divine order of eternal control and deployed in service of earthly empires, monarchies, and the institutional Church. Avowing faith in the incarnate Christ and service to his Almighty Father, men fashioned control into a divine mandate as they instituted themselves as emperors, kings, popes, priests, lords, and fathers—supposed embodiments of the *imago dei*. Interpreted within the "orthodox" frameworks of the ecumenical councils—still deeply informed by the Greco-Roman idea of order—incarnation can be read as the ultimate fulfillment of the desire to escape the material conditions of mortal existence that so occupied Plato, Aristotle, and generations of their readers. As the Word made flesh (the literal embodiment of truth), Christ manifests the goal of transcending the mercurial body in pursuit of the rational spirit. Jesus' messiah figure is formulated as both fully human and fully divine, never ruled by bodily passions—conquering hunger, lust, pain, etc.—and the first man to vanquish the certainty of death—extending the promise of a resurrected body and life eternal to all those who follow him.

The formally developed doctrine of incarnation promises escape from the sin, the suffering, the excess, the frail and fickle nature of creaturely existence in a fallen world. In Christ, Aristotle's exhortation to cast off human concerns and strain towards the eternally contemplated truth of divine life can be transformed into a promise that obedience and faith will be rewarded with perfect, unending communion with God. The divine can be seen in the New Testament texts not merely as the final cause of the cosmos, "that for the sake of which" human beings exist, but as the Father and the

Creator, the final *and* efficient cause of all things; no longer floating in absolute contemplative disinterest beyond the heavens but in the world through Christ. The desire that Aristotle believed drove a "good life" in search of truth is no longer subject to the endless deferral of mortal limitations, and is thus amplified to such a degree that earthly existence loses any inherent value—life becomes a proving ground, wholly alienated from any meaning that is not woven into the master narrative of eternal salvation.

"the cause of the being of all things"[77]

The resurgence of Aristotelian philosophy in Western Europe in the 12th century was thanks almost entirely to the earlier rediscovery and preservation of Greek thought by Jewish and Muslim scholarly traditions, exemplified in the figures of Moses Maimonides, Ibn Rushd (Averroës), and Ibn Sina (Avicenna).[78] This reintroduction was a reflection of the rich intellectual and cultural exchange between Muslim, Jewish, and Christian thinkers, particularly in Bagdad and the Iberian Peninsula, in the centuries leading up to the heightened interreligious conflict that characterized much of the Medieval period. Peripatetic influence soon flooded the universities of Western Europe, welcomed by university faculty and intellectuals broadly, but staunchly resisted by many of the theology faculty and church authorities heavily influenced by Neoplatonic thought.[79] Gilles Emory and Matthew Levering write that, whether in opposition or

[77] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Claremont: Coyote Canyon Press, 2010), I, Q. 8, Art. 1, ad. 1.

[78] Richard E. Rubenstein, *Aristotle's Children* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2003), 12-17.

[79] Jan A. Aertsen, "Aquinas's philosophy in its historical setting," *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993), 24-25. See also, Rubenstein, *Aristotle's Children*, 283.

agreement, "all high- and late-medieval Christian theologians in the West were in dialogue with Aristotle…"[80] Into this contested milieu of philosophy and theology, Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism, stepped Thomas Aquinas—Doctor of the Church and consummate reader of the Philosopher (his appellation for Aristotle). Aquinas' entanglement with Aristotelian thought may well defy measure, as Jean-Pierre Torrell has declared that "Thomas retained so many important elements of Aristotle's thought that they cannot be numbered."[81]

Given its significance and enduring historical treatment, Aquinas' relationship to the work of Aristotle needs careful examination. As Mark Jordan has consistently argued, Aquinas' close and persistent engagement with the work of Aristotle did not mark him a member of *any* philosophical school, much less make him an "Aristotelian."[82] Certainly, Aquinas sought to make good use of the insights he gleaned from Aristotle's philosophical method and intensive theorization of the natural world—particularly as a pedagogical resource for his students[83]—but this employment of Aristotelian thought did not amount to a simple Christianization of Aristotle's schema by Aquinas.[84] Rather than adopting a "pagan" system of philosophy, Aquinas "subjugates" the texts of philosophers to the "sacred teaching" of theology, further elevating the inherent good of natural reason

[80] Gilles Emory and Matthew Levering, "Editor's Preface," *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, eds. Gilles Emory and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), ix.

[81] Jean-Pierre Torrell as quoted in Emory and Levering, "Editor's Preface," v.

[82] Mark D. Jordan, "Theology and philosophy," *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, 232. See also, Mark D. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas After His Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 60-65.

[83] Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 62.

[84] Jordan, "Theology and philosophy," 235.

through the light of faith.[85] Writing decidedly as a Dominican theologian in service to his Order and his Church, Aquinas' broader subjugation of "pagan" philosophy for the enrichment of Christian theology reflects the specific infusion of the Greco-Roman order of control into the Latin-Christian theological imagination as exemplified in and effected through Aquinas' work.

Aquinas' corpus is extensive and touches on nearly every topic that a Medieval philosopher, theologian, or student of the Arts might have found significant.[86] We will severely limit our examination of his work to the theological formulations that—building from Aristotelian arguments—function to reshape and further integrate mechanisms of control into Christian theological imagination. Interrogating the intensification of control that emerges within Aquinas' doctrines of creation, incarnation, and grace will also prepare us to trace the conservation of control in and through theological imagination as it proceeds from the medieval scholasticism into a burgeoning era of humanist thought.

In his monumental *Summa Theologica,* Aquinas' puts forth a theology of creation—specifically creation out of nothing—in which he seeks to delineate the nature of all created things according to their relationship to God as creator.[87] The concept of "participation" is central to Aquinas' formulation of the created order, and marks both his enduring (and admirable) concern for establishing real relations (not merely 'external' or 'accidental') between creatures and God, and his efforts to synthesize the Neoplatonist

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[85] Ibid., 234-235.

[86] Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, "Introduction," *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas,* eds. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1-2.

[87] Aertsen, "Aquinas's philosophy in its historical setting," 16, 22.

influences of Augustinian theology and Aristotelian scientific inquiry.[88] Such efforts would have been entirely impossible if not for the enduring Jewish and Muslim scholarly traditions that afforded Aquinas access to translations of Aristotle's work and a rigorous discursive field to engage. Building off of the earlier theological formulations and Aristotelian commentaries of Muslim scholars Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd—who found themselves similarly positioned between enduring Neoplatonist influences and freshly uncovered Aristotelian insights—Aquinas put forth a novel model of creation that maintained the Neoplatonic cycle of eternal emanation (*exitus)* and return (*reditus)* that was popularized by Plotinus and Christianized through Augustine, while avoiding the sheer abstraction of Plato's idealism.[89] Aquinas was able to accomplish this by articulating the all-important mode of participatory being—the relation of creatures to creator—not through an idealist denial of material reality but through Aristotle's metaphysics of causality, exemplified in the Unmoved Mover.[90]

Aquinas begins his theology of creation by providing a set of proofs that evince the presence of a creator. Over the course of these five arguments for God's existence Aquinas draws directly on Aristotelian causality, echoing the necessity of the unmoved mover as the final cause that drives all motion in the universe without itself being moved.[91] This early turn to Aristotle echoes throughout the entirety of the *Summa* and

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[88] Leo J. Elders, *Thomas Aquinas and His Predecessors: The Philosophers and the Church Fathers in His Works* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 23-24.

[89] David B. Burrell, "Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers," *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 62-70.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 2, Art. 3, corpus.

Aquinas' larger body of work, already signaling a robust reinstitution of the order of control we encountered in the Stagirite's thinking. But Aquinas is not simply attempting to repeat Aristotle—he reaches beyond him, as I will demonstrate, to new intensities of control. Employing the logic of causality—efficient, formal, material, and final—developed in *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, Aquinas casts a vision of God as *both* "that for the sake of which" all things exists and the source of all existence—efficient and final cause of all being, beginning and end, alpha and omega.[92]

It may be tempting to read Aquinas' theology of creation as simply reformulating the Augustinian *exitus*/*reditus* model of *creation ex nihilo* within the strict bounds of Aristotelian causality, but a more profound shift can be observed in Aquinas' novel theorization of creation out of nothing.[93] Aristotle's mover is the principle cause in an uncreated universe, sustaining motion from afar as the perfect, immutable end and object of desire. For Augustine, creation emanates from, is sustained through, and returns to the perfection of divine spirit, with humanity participating in the goodness of God as eternal souls weathering a decaying and insubstantial material subsistence. Aquinas draws on both models in order to construct what in his context was a radically positive theology of creation emanating from and returning to the divine totality of being.[94] Affirming the substantial reality of the created universe while maintaining God as its source and end,

[92] Ibid. See also, I, Q. 2, Art. 2, corpus.

[93] Jordan, *Rewritten Theology*, 60-89.

[94]John F. Wippel, "Metaphysics," *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 96-97. See also, Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 99-105.

Aquinas introduces a novel conception of the category of existence (*esse*) that brings all of being into a particular, necessary relation to God.[95]

Maintaining the Aristotelian notion of composite substance (form and matter), Aquinas posits a prior, necessary unity of existence (being) and essence that composite substance presupposes.[96] He argues that "every being in any way existing is from God…all beings apart from God are not their own being, but are beings by participation."[97] Aquinas uses the term "participation" to indicate a very real relation of dependence that every created being has to the underlying existence communicated to them from the perfection of divine Being—an emanation of existence that actualizes the potential of an individual being's essence.[98] While Aquinas' sense of participation establishes a necessary and efficacious relation to God on the part of every created being, that relation does not in any way suggest actual engagement with divine Being.[99]

Aquinas suggests that existence extends from God to creation as an inherent expression of the sheer actuality of divine goodness and perfection—being emanates from God as the ongoing act of creation but divine Being remains utterly removed and untouched.[100] What is significant in Aquinas' reimagining of both "existence" and

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[95] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 2, Art. 3, corpus; I, Q. 8, Art. 1, corpus, ad. 1; I, Q. 18, Art. 4, ad. 1.

[96] Elders, *Aquinas and His Predecessors*, 29-30; Aertsen, "Aquinas's philosophy in its historical setting," 24, 29-30; Burrell, "Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers," 69.

[97] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I. Q. 44, Art. 1, corpus.

[98] Burrell, "Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers," 69-70; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 75, Art. 5, ad. 4.

[99] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 45, Art. 3, ad. 1.

[100] I, Q. 45, Art. 3, corpus, ad. 1.

"participation" is that it enables him to put forth a model of creation where the totality of being is wholly dependent upon and subsumed in God's life, yet God remains absolutely distinct from and unaffected by the existence and "participation" of God's creation. Echoing the dominant Christological formulations that emerged from imperialized Christian theologies in the 4th century, Aquinas' theological innovation does not ultimately disrupt the technologies of control that populated the Greco-Roman social imaginary, rather, his work uniquely reinstitutes them on an even grander scale. As we will see, what proceeds from this model of creation is a divine order of control that is unmitigated in its subsuming of all of existence.

Further interrogating Aquinas' schema, it becomes apparent that—intentionally or not—his theology of creation introduces a mechanism for divine mastery to naturally extend well beyond the ontological ground of existence (already a substantial mechanism of symbolic control), moving through the emanation of all being to drive the desire and will of each particular being. Closely following Aristotelian theories on human nature and happiness, Aquinas centers God as the perfect object of human desire and participation in the divine as the teleological end of human nature—although Aquinas believes, contrary to Aristotle, that humans can be ushered into full participation with the divine in the afterlife.[101] Here both desire and participation are aligned with the rational soul and its intellective capacities that mark the (decidedly male and masculine) image of the divine in humanity.[102] While his basic framing of human desire and purpose is rife with Aristotelian influence, the integration of Aquinas' conceptions of existence and

[101] I-II, Q. 2, Art. 8, corpus, ad. 1-3.

[102] I, Q. 93, Art. 6, corpus; I, Q. 93, Art. 1, corpus, ad. 1.

participation move him increasingly further from the Stagirite's position and work to profoundly deepen the operations of divine mastery.

For Aquinas, all beings receive their very existence *from* God and have their existence *in* God, thus all human desire and acts of will are predicated on divine actuality.[103] But human will is not merely predicated on the goodness of divine life, it is also actively moved by God. As Aquinas' writes, "the act of the intellect or of any created being whatsoever depends upon God in two ways: first, inasmuch as it is from Him that it has the form whereby it acts; secondly, in as much as it is moved by Him to act."[104] Certainly, all beings are moved by God as their beginning and end—efficient and final cause—but there is also a sense in Aquinas' work that certain elements of human activity are predestined and individuals are moved by grace to seek the perfection of their nature.[105] Davies explains that "[f]or Aquinas…to acknowledge God's providence is tantamount to accepting that everything that happens does so in accordance with what God intends."[106] This does not mean that every single action is directly determined by the will of God, some things are necessary while others are contingent, but all creaturely activity is subsumed in God's will and propelled by God's grace—either by the nature of its existence or movement towards its natural end.[107]

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[103] I-II, Q. 109, Art. 2, ad. 1.

[104] I-II, Q. 109, Art. 1, corpus.

[105] I, Q. 109, Art. 6, corpus; I-II, Q. 111, Art. 2, corpus; III, Q. 1, Art. 3, corpus, ad. 1-4.

[106] Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 159. See also, Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 22, Art. 1.

[107] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 14, Art. 13; I, Q. 22, Art. 2, corpus.

Participants in the divine through the simple fact of their creaturely existence, human beings are unique in their potential to partake much more fully in the life of God through the perfection of their rational nature.[108] The growth of reason, a la Aristotle, is the mechanism of this creaturely perfection, but in Aquinas' schema reason also takes on an explicitly moral function that has direct salvific ramifications.[109] Aquinas suggests that an action is judged "good, inasmuch as it is in accord with reason, and evil, inasmuch as it is against reason."[110] Further, any exercise of the human capacity for reason must be directed towards God as the proper end of that intellective nature, lest it stray from the goodness of its divinely ordered and sustained purpose; as Aquinas notes, "[s]ince it is the office of reason to control, if an act issuing from deliberate reason is not shaped by due purpose it will be against reason, and will have the character of evil…"[111] Aquinas is clear that evil—or sin—demands punishment or compensation according to the "order of Divine justice."[112] So it is by acts of reason directed towards a proper end that human beings are said to begin to perfect their nature through participation in the divine, but it is by lack of reason or reason guided by natural purpose that humans sin and fall under God's judgment. It is only through God's providence and grace that a human can accomplish the former, as without it each is doomed to failure and damnation.[113]

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[108] II-II, Q. 182, Art. 1; III, Q. 1, Art. 4, corpus; III, Q. 3, Art. 8, corpus.

[109] I-II, Q. 18, Art. 5, corpus.

[110] I-II, Q. 18, Art. 5, ad. 1.

[111] I-II, Q. 18, Art. 9, corpus.

[112] I-II, Q. 87, Art. 6, corpus.

[113] I-II, Q. 109, Art. 2, corpus, ad. 1.

With characteristic directness, Aquinas declares "Now that we need the help of God to move us, is manifest,"[114] for "free-will can only be turned to God, when God turns it…"[115] But the gift of grace which turns a person's will toward God is not dispensed equally.[116] Amidst his intricate explication of the operations of grace, Aquinas makes it clear that it is God's will to call some into goodness and leave others to sin.[117] But even this sin and evil are not outside of God's mastery, as "God allows evil to happen in order to bring greater good therefrom."[118] Thus, all creatures have their existence in God, human activity is uniquely moved by God, certain individuals are predestined for the glory of full participation in divine life, others are given over to sin, but not one person is ushered into glory or damnation outside of the will of God.

Predestined and incarnate "instrument" of God's grace, the figure of Christ is perhaps the greatest example in Aquinas' theology of the good that God wills in response to the evil God also wills.[119] Human salvation is achieved through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[120] The life and death of Jesus pacifies the demands of divine justice—inaugurating and opening the way to sonship and eternal life for those

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[114] I, Q. 109, Art. 6, corpus.

[115] I, Q. 109, Art. 6, ad. 1.

[116] I-II, Q. 112, Art. 4, corpus.

[117] II-II, Q. 82, Art. 3, corpus.

[118] III, Q. 1, Art. 3, ad. 3.

[119] III, Q. 13, Art. 2, corpus. Aquinas might balk at the phrase "the evil God wills," but he is adamant that all human activity—good or evil—falls under divine providence and all human activity is dependent upon God's will to move it.

[120] III, Q. 24, Art. 4, corpus, ad. 3; III, Q. 53, Art. 3, corpus.

called by God's grace.[121] What is of particular interest in this seemingly familiar soteriological formulation is that Aquinas consistently refers to Christ, specifically Christ's humanity, as God's "instrument" of salvation.[122]

While Aquinas' use of "instrument" and "instrumental" is meant to convey a complex causal relation between the Godhead and the human person of Jesus—maintaining the Chalcedonian confession of Christ as "perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity" without any mixture of the two—this language unintentionally speaks to the arbitrary and instrumental function of salvation in his theology.[123] As we will see, Aquinas does not view Christ's incarnation as necessary nor the damnation of sinners as necessary; the intricate salvific model that he lays out—the very need for any form of salvation in the first place—is based entirely on the mystery of divine whim.

According to Aquinas, God's justice demands payment for sin but God answers to no higher authority than Godself, so God could simply forgive all sin.[124] Put very simply, "if He forgive sin, which has the formality of fault in that it is committed against Himself, He wrongs no one: just as anyone else, overlooking a personal trespass, without satisfaction, acts mercifully and not unjustly."[125] While Aquinas provides certain justifications, he admits that Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection were not necessary outside of the divinely revealed necessity of them having already taken

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[121] III, Q. 46, Art. 2, ad. 3; III, Q. 24, Art. 1, ad. 1; III, Q. 24, Art. 3, corpus; III, Q. 56, Art. 1.

[122] III, Q. 13, Art. 2; III, Q. 19, Art. 1; III, Q. 48, Art. 6, corpus; III, Q. 56, Art. 1, ad. 2-3;

[123] Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 300-307.

[124] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. 46, Art. 2, ad. 3.

[125] III, Q. 46, Art. 2, ad. 3.

place.[126] Salvation, resurrection, incarnation, and in some sense all of creation—these are external instruments playing out providential design. Divine life is the only necessary life and it is entirely self-sufficient in its perfection—God is not helped or harmed by human salvation or damnation. For Aquinas, God—in the impassive, immutable, and omnipotent nature of the divine—does not, *cannot*, care what happens to creation.[127] The whole of material existence, creaturely will, salvation and damnation, is all actualized by the impassive goodness of God that extends by nature of that perfect goodness from the pure, eternal activity of God's self. The precarity of creaturely life, the threat of eternity in hell, the struggle for salvation, these only exist because God wills it—and God is in control.

"man is the beginning and end of woman…"[128]

It is clear that Aquinas' theology of creation is meant to establish a sense of reality and divine relation that has not previously been granted to creatures and material existence under the Neoplatonic influences shaping Christian theological imagination. But we need only examine the "divinely established natural order"[129] that proceeds from his doctrines of creation, incarnation, and grace to discover the further conservation and intensification of technologies of control. Between his subjugation of Aristotelian thought and his adherence to the authoritative revelation of the New Testament texts, Aquinas assimilates a particularly concentrated dosage of Greco-Roman storytelling codes and reproduces a very similar descriptive statement of the human. Perhaps, then, it is

[126] III, Q. 46, Art. 3, corpus.

[127] I, Q. 9, Art. 1-2; I, Q. 20, Art. 1-4.

[128] I, Q. 93, Art. 4, ad. 1.

[129] II-II, Q. 104, Art. 1, corpus.

unsurprising that he replicates many of the structural and direct violences that populated the Greco-Roman social imaginary, made uniquely severe through theological interpretation.

Evincing what Wynter refers to as "a continuous cultural field"[130] moving nomadically from ancient Athens through medieval France, Aquinas' natural order echoes Aristotle's in its organization by "degrees of rational perfection,"[131] but in this case categories of perfection are directly determined by divine acts of creation and grace.[132] To begin, "inequality" is inherent to God's created order.[133] Natural (which for Aquinas must always mean providential) hierarchies better demonstrate the glory of creation through varying levels of perfection. Thus, human souls can be more or less virtuous according to their design and human bodies—prefiguring proto-racialized logic—can be more or less "robust" and "beautiful" according to the climate they inhabit.[134] There are also men who are naturally suited to lead and men who are naturally suited to follow.[135] And of course, the nature of men and the perfection of their capacities for reason—the justifications for their mastery of others—are all predicated on the divine life and will. The autopoiesis of human genre is thus woven into a specific narrative of divine providence and eternal salvation.

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[130] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Truth/Power/Freedom," 318.

[131] Ibid., 274.

[132] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 91, Art. 3, corpus.

[133] I, Q. 96, Art. 3.

[134] I, Q. 96, Art. 3.

[135] I, Q. 96, Art. 4, corpus.

Aquinas further informs his readers that inherent inequality exists between men and women. He writes that the image of God is present in the human species through their intellectual nature, but more immediately "the image of God is found in man, and not in woman: for man is the beginning and end of woman; as God is the beginning and end of every creature."[136] Aquinas bolsters this descriptive statement of the human by arguing that men are created by God to be the active, intellective, authoritative, and more perfected half of the human species.[137] Women, he argues, are necessary only for procreation, as in any other task a man is more helpful.[138]

Aquinas propounds further misogyny, but let us linger on the enfolding of cosmogony, social order, and ontology that takes place in the assertion that "the image of God is found in man…man is the beginning and end of woman; as God is the beginning and end of every creature." Far from abstract theological discourse, Aquinas is defining what it means to be human on an embodied level—engendering the self-institution of a particular genre of the human whose narrative coding both demands and depends on practices of domination. It is difficult to imagine a claim that more effectively and authoritatively instantiates an order of control; inspiring autopoiesis of masculine identities through the exercise of divinely sanctioned power and violence. To be the beginning and end of humanity, to be like unto God—a God that is entirely untouchable and has total mastery—this is what it means and what it takes to perform the *imago Dei*

[136] I, Q. 93, Art. 4, ad. 1.

[137] I, Q. 92, Art. 1.

[138] I, Q. 92, Art. 1, corpus.

that is inextricably bound to the *imago vir*. This is an essential element of the shape that Aquinas helps give to Christian theological imagination in the Latin-Christian West.

Continuing through dominant readings of the New Testament authors, Constantinian Christianity, and the Scholasticism of Aquinas' day, the formulation of Christ's incarnate role as mediator links the transcendent and imminent in a narrative coding that serves to reproduce the dominant terms of order through a divine referent, and thus deepens the citational authority of a provincial genre of the human that is self-instituted through practices of mastery—through control. The *exitus* and *reditus* that structures dominant Christian cosmogony reinforces the operations of control—the performative enactment of masculine identities through the practice of mastery—in the present through an appeal to Christ's eventual return according to God's will. Creator, Christ, and Creation are joined into one cosmic order where men—following Christ—make themselves in the *imago dei* by submitting to the mastery of the Father (a submission that was also required of women and children but typically did not produce the same self-institution of the divine image, given their assumed deficiency). In this submission to divine power men are granted their own patriarchal mantle of authority, produced by the exercise of control and reciprocally reproducing the dominant networks of power. Although not yet colonial in its operations, we can observe the entanglement of being/power/truth/freedom in this politics of being whose influence will certainly extend beyond this episteme, breaking through into the next.

CHAPTER 4

AMAZING RACE: COLONIALITY, RATIONALITY, AND THE PROVIDENTIAL ORDER

> For we know there are masters and servants, magistrates and subjects: in a household there is the good man which is the head, and the good wife which ought to be the subject. We know then that this order is inviolable, and our Lord Jesus Christ has not come into the world to make such confusion as to abolish that which was established by God his father.
>
> —John Calvin, *Sermons on Galatians*

> How do we understand heterosexuality not merely as normative but as consistently perverse when violently exercised across the colonial modern gender system so as to construct a worldwide system of power? How do we come to understand the very meaning of heterosexualism as tied to a persistently violent domination that marks the flesh multiply by accessing the bodies of the unfree in differential patterns devised to constitute them as the tortured materiality of power?
>
> —María Lugones, *Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System*

> During the same period as European colonial domination was consolidating itself, the cultural complex known as European modernity/rationality was being constituted. The intersubjective universe produced by the entire Eurocentered capitalist colonial power was elaborated and formalized by the Europeans and established in the world as an exclusively European product and as a universal paradigm of knowledge and of the relation between humanity and the rest of the world.
>
> —Aníbal Quijano, *Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality*

That Christian theologies and Christian social order in Western Europe extended a pre-existing imperial order and were thus co-constitutive of the global, genocidal terror of Western European colonialism is readily apparent. In the context of the conquest and colonization initiated in the 15th century, the broad goal of this chapter is to uncover the

shifting technologies of control at work in the continuous cultural field shaped by Christian theologies and governing Western Europe during the rise of so-called Modernity. Specifically, I will examine the adaptive functions of mastery in the emergence of race as a category of ontological distinction that comes to redefine the performative formation of masculine identities at the intersection of a burgeoning humanism and rapid colonial expansion.

A turn to sustained engagement with Sylvia Wynter's extensive analysis of "coloniality" and the violence of Western Europe's evolution into a global power guides the structure and focus of this chapter. Wynter's insights into the auto-instituting nature of cultural narrative—what she names "autopoiesis"[1]—and the centrality of knowledge production in the materialization of power suggest a novel reading of the cultural, intellectual, and geopolitical developments so triumphantly claimed by the so-called Modern Era. Working within the broader frame of analysis that Wynter cultivates, I draw on the decolonial theory of Aníbal Quijano and María Lugones in an effort to address further the specific, adaptive function of "rationality" in racializing modernity, and to more closely examine the significance of gender to the structures of coloniality. As with the technologies of control at work in the ancient Greek, Greco-Roman, and Medieval European contexts we have previously examined, I intend to further uncover the enduring and adaptive amalgamation of reason, ontological order, and the performance of masculinities in service to the violence of mastery.

[1] Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations," *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 27.

Poised as he was between the archetypal modernizing thrusts of Renaissance humanism and the major Christian reform movements of the 16th century, John Calvin provides an exemplary point of contact amidst our growing constellation of significant thinkers who were entangled in technologies of control. In his copious sermons, commentaries, and theological volumes he is consistently focused on the nature/function of grace within the specific relation between God, creation, and Christ-as-mediator—the very same dynamic that, as we have seen, so occupied the New Testament authors, Augustine, and Aquinas. Within this shared thematic, Calvin shifts attention from the metaphysical intricacies that engrossed Augustine and Aquinas to what he perceived as being the more immediate concern of the individual human precariously poised between sin and salvation on a daily basis. This reorientation hinges on Calvin's intense focus on Word and faith, allowing him to articulate and materialize a theological imagination based on distinctively evangelical principles of knowledge, order, and grace. As I hope to make clear, Calvin's theological and social innovations rely on the collective enactment of mastery-as-masculinity to conserve technologies of control already operating in Christian theologies and Christian social order. Beyond maintaining the terms of order, Calvin's work also serves to both expand the nature and enhance the adaptability of these violences and their co-constitutive enactment of masculinities, enabling them to function as foundational mechanisms for the development and spread of Western European colonialism through the inchoate logic of racial difference.

Knowing, Being, Mastering

Let us recall from chapter one the organization of Sylvia Wynter's analysis around the narrative coding, descriptive statements, and genres of the human that she

identifies as primary sights of contestation in the politics of being.[2] The exercise of power in the production/reproduction of truth, freedom, and being depends on the human stories and practices that auto-institute a particular genre of being human and shape how we are able to experience ourselves as human.[3] As we may remember, Wynter's primary interest lies in the epistemic breakthroughs that mark and extend beyond what Michel Foucault names "invention of Man."[4] In particular, she notes the significance of this 15th century humanist "redescription" of the human in overturning the dominant spirit/flesh coding that granted a redeemed Church absolute authority over a supposedly fallen world.[5] In this act of redescription, Renaissance humanists, "allied to the Reform movement of Christian humanism,"[6] heralded the *imago dei* in the natural world and "reconceived [of God] as a Caring Father who had created the universe specifically for man's sake."[7] Wynter suggests that this logic of *"propter nos homines*/for our human sake" was an important revolution in human thought and came from a desire to revalorize human existence and envision a less oppositional relation to the divine.[8] It was, as Wynter notes,

[2] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (fall 2003): 318.

[3] David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe*, no. 8, September 2000: 183.

[4] Wynter, "Unsettling," 263.

[5] Ibid. See also, Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism," 175-177.

[6] Wynter, "Unsettling," 275.

[7] Ibid., 278.

[8] Ibid.

a significant epistemic turn and an important movement of resistance against the ideological and material dominance of the Roman Catholic Church.[9]

Noting the cosmogonic reorientation made possible by the *propter nos*, Wynter goes on to theorize the invention of Man in two stages: Man_1 and Man_2. Our focus here is on the first iteration, leaving the second for the chapter that follows. Essential to the enactment of Man_1 as *the* genre of the human was, Wynter argues, a reordering of the narrative code of symbolic life and death.[10] "The name of what is good" and "the name of what is evil," as she refers to the coding of symbolic life and death, necessarily shifted from "Redeemed Spirit" and "Fallen Flesh" with the humanist assertion of the *propter nos*.[11] What arose in its place was not an entirely new insight, but the adaptation of an old theme drawn from the continuous cultural field of shared Greco-Roman and Christian influence that we have so closely examined in past chapters.

Reason, Wynter suggests, became the measure that set the scales of legible humanity.[12] Recall that in the Greco-Roman, Medieval Latin-Christian—and as we are about to observe—the Western European Renaissance contexts, reason is seen as an innately gendered capacity: one that we can recognize as complimenting an enduring and inherently gendered overrepresentation of the human that was primarily, perhaps singularly, concerned with men and masculinity. Furthering this axiomatic patriarchy, Renaissance humanists insisted that Man was created in God's image and the proof of

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 287.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

that image in Man was rationality, instituting reason and irrationality/sensuality as the code of symbolic life and death—enacting a genre of the human whose performative formation was already well under way.[13]

Wynter cites the work of prominent 15th century Italian humanists Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who argued—consonant with Aristotelian and Thomistic views on reason—that the human species was the only created beings whose existence played out at a point of permeability between the heavenly and earthly realms. In line with Christian orthodoxies, Ficino and Pico posited man at the apex of earths created order. Their novel proposition was that man was free to reach heavenwards in the cultivation of the rational image of God in himself or to stoop to the sensual urges of his animal nature—his development was not entirely determined by providence or his materiality. But of course, this empowering, universal vision of human potential emerges from and serves to reinforce a Christian cosmology and understanding of rationality that is particular to Western Europe. Thus, the provincial genre of the rational human stood poised to overrepresent itself in an expansive performative enactment of Man_1 that would sweep across the globe, instituting, as Wynter argues, the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom.[14]

Aníbal Quijano's theorizing of "coloniality" and the foundational claim of rationality are key to Wynter's analysis of Man as an "overrepresented genre of the human."[15] Quijano argues that the devastation of Western European conquest and

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 287-288.

[15] Ibid.

colonization runs far deeper and extends well beyond the legacy of colonialism as a geopolitical structure of power.[16] Operating at the heart of Western European colonialism, and enduring to this day, is a totalizing order of "intersubjective constructions" that Quijano names the "coloniality of power."[17] This production of naturalized categories of race, ethnicity, and nationality was reliant upon a provincial conception of "rationality" as a primary distinguishing metric and central epistemological mechanism.[18] Central to Quijano's argument is this assertion that the humanist conception of reason—and its supposed providential origins—enabled fifteenth century Western Europeans to enact and immediately naturalize racial distinctions, constructing an amorphous "whiteness" in opposition to the "darkness" of other peoples, and subsequently locate themselves atop a global, racial hierarchy of human development.[19] Rational Man—which must always be read in the context of the Western imagination as White Man—was exalted as the brain conducting all bodily operations in the closed system (what Quijano calls a "totality") that was the natural order.[20]

Quijano's analysis offers us a long view of the primary ideological mechanisms and material relations operating in Western European conquest and colonization, but we would do well to remember that very little united the nations of Western Europe in the pre-modern and modern eras outside a desire for wealth and dominion. As Black Radical

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[16] Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, Nos. 2-3 (March-May 2007): 169-170.

[17] Ibid., 168-170.

[18] Ibid., 171-173.

[19] Ibid., 171, 176.

[20] Ibid.

theorist Cedric J. Robinson suggests, the enduring aristocracies and incipient capitalist bourgeoisies that shaped the 16th and 17th century emergence of the nation-state were fully occupied "attempting to destroy or dominate each other."[21] While it was these violent delights that eventually culminated in the accumulative enactment of whiteness, this came only after centuries of ceaseless conflict, and as a pragmatic consideration for more effective modes of domination.

Historian Gerald Horne details the turn towards whiteness and away from religion as a synthetic grounds for colonial unification. As Horne recounts, colonists from Spain, Portugal, Britain, and the Netherlands faced staunch opposition in their North American ventures from indigenous peoples and both free and enslaved Africans.[22] This led to the growing sentiment that total eradication of indigenes and enslavement of all African peoples was the only viable way forward.[23] Thus, in the early 17th century the purity of sectarian and national distinctions faded somewhat as whiteness became the rallying point for those colonial settlements and colonial armies that were able to survive by effectively unifying against the dual threat of indigenous attack and Black revolt.[24]

Returning to the broader question of rationality, its reconstruction—a renaissance of Greco-Roman and early Christian genres—self-instituted the narrative coding necessary for the enactment of Man as the universal historical subject. Quijano points out

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[21] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 53-54.

[22] Gerald Horne, *The Dawning of the Apocalypse* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020), 190-202.

[23] Ibid., 21-22, 191-199.

[24] Ibid., 195-196, 204, 213-215.

that the self-historicizing function of the concept of reason is bound to the emergence of modernity as the totalizing narrative of cultural, political, intellectual, technological, and overall human-developmental progress.[25] So entangled are the functions of rationality and modernity that Quijano treats them as the joined "cultural complex known as European modernity/rationality."[26] While modernity/rationality functions to devastating effect as a global teleological order, Quijano also points out specific granular shifts that are enacted through this complex.

Within the general regime of truth that is constituted in "the European paradigm of rational knowledge," there is a particular individualization of knowledge production with regard to the rational subject.[27] Quijano invokes Descartes' *cogito* as an exemplar of the "modern" constitution of the self as a self through reason. This theorization of rationality leads, Quijano argues, to a severe limitation (and racialization) of knowledge production to the supposedly autonomous thought and self-reflection of the individual that is assumed to be instituted as an individual by those very same rational functions—an echoe of Aristotle's "thought think[ing] itself."[28] Any being that cannot carry out the proper functions of rationality—read any non-male, non-white, "uncivilized" other—therefore cannot constitute itself as a self—a 'subject'—and thus does not have the capacity for objective discourse and reflection.[29] The determining function of this

[25] Quijano, "Coloniality of Modernity/Rationality," 171-173.

[26] Ibid., 171.

[27] Ibid., 172.

[28] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 7, 1072b.

[29] Quijano, "Coloniality of Modernity/Rationality," 172.

provincial notion of 'reason' in the process of knowledge production is precisely the underlying function of modernity/rationality in the extensive and enduring network of power that is identified in Quijano's "coloniality."

We have previously observed the persistent union of reason and mastery in the dominant narrative coding, genres of the human, and social orders of ancient Greece, the Greco-Roman world of Christianity's inception, and Medieval Latin-Christian Europe. As Wynter might suggest, we can see breakthroughs in this continuous culture field's extension across different epistemes. Quijano's theorization of coloniality helps us to see how the breakthrough that occurred with the invention of Man is inescapably linked to the geopolitical upheaval initiated in 1492 with the rise of Western European conquest and colonialism. As a technology of control, we can trace the different, adaptive functions of reason/rationality deployed as an ideological measure for human capacity and as a supposedly organic structuring of material relations. Reason is utilized in these continuous contexts to define the human and masculinity is used as the measure of humanity, thus we find that the practice of control depends on the conflation of reason and masculinity—producing dominant masculine identities by drawing on the narrative coding of rationality and the everyday exercise of legible reason in the performative enactment of mastery.

We can see how Quijano's analysis of the individuating function of reason within the broader regime of rational knowledge production in Western Europe helps to clarify the performative enactment of Wynter's Man_1. The autopoiesis is in full effect, as rationality structures the narrative coding, descriptive statement, and genre of the human—in the experience of which the exercise of rationality simultaneously constitutes

the racialized, legibly human self and naturalizes the code, statement, and genre that instituted the very conditions for that performative self-creation. With this understanding, we are nearly ready to follow Wynter in her account of the materialization of Man_1 as the emergence of coloniality, we just need to attend to a critical intervention proposed by decolonial feminist María Lugones.

Noting that Quijano and other thinkers addressing the coloniality of power have "tended to naturalize gender" in their analysis,[30] Lugones sets out to examine what she names "the coloniality of gender."[31] Quijano's theorization of coloniality provides the framework within which Lugones positions gender and sexuality at the intersection of race, ethnicity, and class as constructed categories of distinction that are essential to the process of colonization and the enduring enactment coloniality.[32] The basis of Lugones' critique is that Western European conceptions of gender were not straightforwardly imposed on colonized peoples; rather, Westerners' ideas about gender profoundly affected the ways that they categorized, conquered, and colonized other peoples.[33]

For instance, the heteropatriarchal order dividing Western European men and women was not simply transfered onto colonized peoples, but functioned as an authoritative metric for identifying the specific deficiencies that distinguished colonized

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[30] María Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," *Hypatia*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 187. Both Quijano and Wynter address the function of gender within coloniality, with differing levels of naturalization and conflation of gender/sex. Quijano does so in "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," while Wynter clarifies her position in several essays, including "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom."

[31] María Lugones, "Towards a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia*, vol. 25, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 742, 747.

[32] Ibid., 747.

[33] Ibid., 743-744.

peoples as less-than-human in concert with their gender failure. Lugones writes that in the imposition of this gendered order "colonized people became males and females…not-human-as-not-men…not-human-as-not-women."[34] That is, colonized peoples were not simply declared unhuman (although it often came close) but reduced to deficiently-human status according to their perceived inability to legibly perform the proper gender identities of either a man or a woman. The operating genre of being human was so tied to gender coding that the capacity for humanity was primarily a matter of being a man or being a woman in accordance with provincial classifications. Lugones argues that colonists did not attempt to forcibly impose the constructed roles of man or woman onto indigenous peoples, rather, they marked them as less-than-human due to their perceived incapacity to perform said roles.[35]

The deficiently-gendered, less-than-human status that was assigned to colonized peoples was, Lugones suggests, materialized and continually re-instituted through the rape of Native American women and enslaved African women.[36] Working with Lugones' insights, Azille Coetzee and Louise du Toit further examine the role of sexual violence and rape in the process of "colonial sexual-racial reordering."[37] Coetzee and du Toit contend that within this reordering indigenous and Black women were cast as "always already raped and therefore unrapeable both in law and social understanding."[38] This was

[34] Ibid., 744.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Lugones, "Heterosexualism," 203.

[37] Azille Coetzee and Louise du Toit, "Facing the sexual demon of colonial power: Decolonising sexual violence in South Africa," *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Volume 25, Issue 2 (2018): 5.

[38] Ibid., 8.

not simply an ideological position, but part of the narrative coding of coloniality that was materialized in and instantiated by the ongoing rape of Native American and enslaved African women. The formulation of an "always already raped" status was inseparable from the enactment of rape-as-mastery that we have observed to be a pervasive and enduring mechanism of masculine self-institution—a devastatingly effective technology of control.

While Lugones does not emphasize the function of Western rationality in her discussion, I believe it provides an important point of connection between her argument and our work with Wynter. In every context we have examined thus far, reason has functioned as a primary metric for the categorization of human beings and the basis for a patriarchal order that distinguished men from women, children, slaves, and foreigners. It is difficult to think that what Lugones is describing as the coloniality of gender is not part of this continuous cultural field and the descriptive statements and genres of the human being produced therein.

The Order of Man

As previously noted, Wynter traces the invention and overrepresentation of Man in two interrelated configurations: Man_1 emerging in the Italian Renaissance and grounding the formation of Man_2 in the eighteenth century, with Man_2 enduring through the present moment.[39] Our focus remains on the figure of Man_1, as the chapter that follows will take up the evolution into Man_2. Now, we have learned a good deal about the symbolic coding, descriptive statement, and general content of Man_1 as an

[39] Wynter, "Unsettling," 264.

overrepresented genre of the human, but we have yet to examine the particularly gendered and racialized material effects of that overrepresentation.[40]

In the auto-institution of Man_1 as a universal vision of human perfection—a "political subject"[41] untethered to the authority of the Church but placed atop a natural order created for "his" sake—Renaissance humanists had produced a uniquely malleable basis for a pervasive enactment of genre that helped to engender Western European conquest and colonialism. The autopoietic complex of identity that constituted Man_1—an individual, rational, civilized, educated, heterosexual, wealthy, able-bodied, Western European, Christian male—presented an adaptable mechanism for categorical distinction that was easily deployed in the service of political, economic, intellectual, and ecclesial ambition.

The flood of conquest and colonization that flowed westward from the Iberian Peninsula, and later on from most of Western Europe, mobilized Man_1 as the universal prototype for human being. Wynter argues that the ensuing encounter between Western Europeans and the indigenous peoples caring for the lands conquerors named the West Indies and the Americas initiated a fundamental shift in the politics of being.[42] Within what Wynter calls the "dynamics of a colonizer/colonized relation," Western Europeans effectively materialized their discursive identity formation as *the* subject of history—

[40] In this context we are only able to briefly gloss the multiple, overlapping, and ongoing accounts that Wynter has put forth on this topic, but I would direct interested readers to the following essays and interviews (already cited in this work): "Columbus and the Poetics of the *Propter Nos*," "1492: A New World View," "Sylvia Wynter: The Re-Enchantment of Humanism," "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," and "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species?"

[41] Wynter, "Unsettling," 266.

[42] Ibid., 264.

enacting the genre of Man_1 in/through the assertion of a "by-nature difference" separating them from the indigenous peoples of the Americas.[43] Wynter suggests that this assertion was the basis for the development of racial categorization and cites Spanish philosopher and theologian Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda—who characterized this difference of nature as analogous to one between "monkeys and men"—as a prime example.[44] Sepúlveda was famously called on by King Charles V of Spain to defend the brutal colonization and enslavement of indigenous peoples against the accusations of excess cruelty brought by Bartolomé de las Casas. He drew on Aristotle's discussion of inherent capacity in order to declare native peoples slaves by nature.[45]

Sepúlveda is just one voice among a whole multi-century chorus of Western European intellectuals who eagerly affirmed an essential difference between "sophisticated" Westerners and "savage" natives. Such attempts can be found in the work of Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith, and Immanuel Kant, not as peripheral musings but as essential elements of their own celebration of the individual, male, political subject that was rational Man.[46] Drawing this clear distinction between the human/subhuman—a distinction that would evolve into

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, "Democrates Alter, or Of the just causes of the war against the Indians," ed. and trans. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, (Alicante*:* Miguel de Cervantes Virtual Library, 2006).

[46] Such instances include: Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, eds. Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Book I, CXXIX, pg. 100; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Seattle: Pacific Publishing Studio, 2011), 77; John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: T. Tegg and Son, 1836), 12; Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 2012), 196, 208, 339, 438, 486, 560-562; Immanuel Kant, "Of the Different Human Races (1777)," *Kant and the Concept of Race: Late Eighteenth-Century Writings*, ed. and trans. Jon M. Mikkelsen (New York: SUNY Press, 2013).

white/non-white by the 18th century—enabled the subsequent justification of wave upon wave of genocidal violence, enslavement, rape, torture, and all manner of mindful cruelty carried out *propter nos homines*—for our human sake. This culminating production of racial distinction is the foundational shift in genre and descriptive statement that Wynter is thinking with in her account of Man. How the question of the human yields the idea of race, as a genre-specific humanist vision of progress/regress, is precisely what Wynter's theorization of the politics of being seeks to address.

Wynter's attention to the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom, as in its interdependence, reminds us to attempt to take into full account the myriad forces being drawn into convergence in service of the self-instituting supremacy of Man. The global violence of Western European colonialism was not a dirty secret carried out by a few intractable conquistadors at the furthest horizons of empire. Rather, the logic of conquest and colonization—ultimately a logic of racial supremacy—suffused Western European networks of power and the political, economic, social, juridical, educational, and religious systems that materialized said power. Descriptive statement and genre, as Wynter illustrates, do not exist solely on the level of discourse but are foundational to the performative enactment of human being and the sociopolitical networks of power that enactment takes place amidst.

We can certainly identify control, and thus the performative enactment of masculinity through the violence of mastery, as a central operation at work in the invention and overrepresentation of Man. Wynter also helps us see much more clearly the formative mechanisms of performativity in her analysis of the autopoietic. From its sweeping totalization of knowledge production to the individual performative enactment,

the overrepresented genre of Man fuses the logic of mastery with the auto-institution of masculine identities in every instance. This institution of control at the foundational level of being and its materialization is consonant with the functions of control in the context of Aristotle, the Gospels, and Aquinas, but what Wynter is describing with the invention and overrepresentation of Man is a virulent politics of being that has untethered itself from any specific local—catastrophic in its supposed universality.

What Wynter helps us to see with her account of Man and its overrepresentation are the prevailing ideological configurations of control for the last 500 years. These enduring mechanisms of mastery—rationality, ownership/property, salvation/election, providence/nature, capacity/incapacity, violability/inviolability, coloniality—and their diverse operations are laid open to much closer investigation by Wynter's analysis of the invention of Man and the evolution from Man_1 to Man_2. Wynter's account of the invention of Man allows us, thinking alongside her, to also see this invention as a re-instantiation of technologies of control, but deployed on a much broader scale. The autopoietic function of mastery-as-masculinity is drawn into the renaissance of rationality and begins to operate on a global level—the self-instituting supremacy of Western European Man. Especially in the case of the capacity for and individual formulation of reason, we see how these technologies of control have been cultivated on more local scales in other contexts, but now come to be suprahistorical narratives spread across the globe as a driving force in Western European colonialism.

It is important to see in the invention of Man that the mastery and masculinity of control become attached to Western European categories of race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, and class—these modes of mastery become something essential to

the now-global projection outwards of a provincial definition of the human. This is especially true of the by-nature difference that is instantiated through the encounter with indigenous American populations and later the different people's spread throughout the continent of Africa. And it's through the renaissance of rationality that these hierarchical categorizations of the human—race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, class, and sexuality—emerge in a globally dominant fashion and become definitive of a local-made-universal genre of the human. The humanist idealization of reason simultaneously enacts and conceals the violence of mastery at the foundational level of being and the genre-specific formation of the human in the performative enactment of that mastery.

"We know then that this order is inviolable"

One might guess that John Calvin's significance in the history of control is due to both his inestimable influence on Protestant Christianity and the infamous, "dreadful" decree of predestination that came to define his work. [47] While these remain important factors in examining Calvin and his legacy, it is the admixture of his Christian reform and his consummate humanism that draws our focus here. As Wynter points out, Man_1 emerges as the individual, political subject from amidst the generative tension of these very same intellectual and sociopolitical movements (Western European humanism and Christian reform).[48] This duality at work in Calvin's thought distinguishes him from fellow reformers—as his theology works to enhance divine mastery in every instance while also instituting robust civil authority and an intricate social order. This tension, as I

[47] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: Volume Two*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 955.

[48] Wynter, "Unsettling," 275.

hope to make clear, shapes the whole arc of his evangelical theology in relation to control.

Calvin is in many ways the epitome of a Renaissance humanist, despite his uniquely ecclesial commitments. Born in 16th century France, Calvin was just fourteen when his father sent him to the University of Paris for an education in the liberal arts. While his father's original intentions were for Calvin to pursue priestly ordination, conflict with the local church inspired him to direct the younger Calvin into the field of law instead. Leaving Paris after four years, Calvin took up his juridical studies at the University of Orléans and continued on at the University of Bourges. During this time, it is said that he was very aware of the growing conflict between the church authorities in Rome and the humanist and reform movements. He was particularly sympathetic to the activities of Erasmus and Luther, although careful at this point not to position himself in opposition to Rome.[49]

Setting out on a period of travel a short year after arriving in Bourges, Calvin's focus on a legal career was supplanted by a developing interest in the classical literature of the Greeks. This he brought to bear on the increasingly volatile struggle between different sects of reformers, humanists, and Rome. As his involvement with the conflict between reformers and the French arm of the Church increased, Calvin was forced to flee his homeland to take refuge in Basle, Switzerland. Basle had become a safe haven for followers of Luther and Zwingli, and the chosen sequester for none other than Erasmus. It

[49] Alexandre Ganoczy, "Calvin's life," *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim, trans. David L. Foxgrover and James Schmitt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4-6.

was there that Calvin would, in 1536, pen the first edition of his tumescent, lifelong work: *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.[50]

It is difficult to overstate the volatility of Europe and the global destruction it engendered during what Gerald Horne describes as "the long sixteenth century."[51] Colonial incursions into so-called North America initiated several hundred years of genocide against indigenous peoples—killing untold millions, erasing cultures, and eradicating upwards of ninety percent of certain indigenous populations.[52] To work the land that was stolen and serve the depraved desires of white masters more than ten-million people from all over the continent of Africa were enslaved and forced across the Atlantic—with millions dying during the voyage.[53] And as Horne recounts, this global devastation of Western European colonialism was in-part an extension of incessant violent conflict among European nations, unmitigated religious persecution, and the growing fear of the Ottoman Empire and its rapid expansion.[54]

As Lisbon, Madrid, Paris, and London (with Amsterdam to join eventually) vied for geopolitical superiority, the currents of murderous Catholic and Protestant animosity, a burgeoning system of Atlantic trade, fear of Muslim conquest, and enduring power struggles amongst the aristocracy together shaped the tumultuous milieu of Calvin's life and work. Calvin's experience was typical for a Protestant of his time—subject to the ebb

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[50] Ibid., 6-9.

[51] Horne, *The Dawning of the Apocalypse*, 8.

[52] Ibid., 12.

[53] Ibid., 11-12.

[54] Ibid., 18-35.

and flow of religious persecution and its larger place in the political conflict between fluctuating Catholic and Protestant powers. In Calvin's native France, the 1562 Massacre of Vassy and "the epochal" St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre—taking over ten thousand lives a decade later—drove Protestants to the relative safety of Central and Northern Europe.[55] While he sought refuge with the Swiss, many of Calvin's later followers would flee to England and from there join the flow of colonists to North America.

The *Institutes*, his copious letters, sermons, and commentaries, together with his managing of ecclesial and civil powers in Geneva, reveal an enduring and deeply experiential struggle between Calvin's steadfast belief in the blessed providence of the natural order and the abyssal sin and evil of the individual human being. As we will see, Calvin's acute concern with human degeneracy engenders a particularly control-centered theorization of the human condition in relation to sociopolitical order. Calvin's thinking certainly proceeds from the auto-instituting ground of Man_1, and he fully embodies the humanist poetics of the *propter nos* in declaring that "the universe was established especially for the sake of mankind."[56] Yet he is certain that humanity has squandered this singular election, and it is only through a prevenient and enduring grace—divine action mediated through Christian social order—that humans are able to carry on the search for truth and life.

[55] Ibid., 112, 139.

[56] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: Volume One*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 204.

The Regeneration of Man

In his consummate Renaissance humanism, Calvin seeks a return to the sources—the Biblical texts, Church Fathers, and the Greeks—as the ground for his evangelical theology.[57] Outside of scripture, Augustine is perhaps Calvin's most frequent and trusted source—the inspiration for his views on sin, grace, and election.[58] He also relies heavily on Platonic, Neoplatonic, and Aristotelian metaphysics, despite declaring a disinterest in the "minutiae"[59] of philosophers of antiquity and disdain for "the subtleties of the sophists."[60] Even Calvin's wry caricature of "the Schoolmen" and their "deceitful subtleties" is tempered by a reliance on the exemplary scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas.[61] Despite his mockery of their metaphysical abstraction, Calvin is happy to appropriate the work of previous thinkers in framing his pragmatic approach to salvation. Put simply, he assumes a readymade cosmology moving freely between Augustine's Neoplatonic influence and Aquinas' Aristotelian leanings, eschewing metaphysical intricacies in order to focus on his eminently practical concern for the spread of the gospel. Calvin is simultaneously predictable in his repetition of orthodox positions and surprisingly nimble in his reordering of Christian doctrine.

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[57] 'Evangelical' in the basic sense of proselytizing through the preaching and teaching of the gospel, not in the tangled complexity of contemporary usages.

[58] B.A. Gerrish, "The Place of Calvin in Christian Theology," *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 291.

[59] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume One*, 194.

[60] Ibid., 22.

[61] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume Two*, 1373.

Calvin famously opens the *Institutes* with the assertion that there is no knowledge of God without knowledge of the self.[62] What Calvin presumes when he speaks of 'the self' reveals both the auto-institution of the genre of Man in his work and the intensification of control that his understanding of the divine demands. To begin, Calvin envisions the path to knowing ourselves as an existential journey of individual, rational self-reflection.[63] This is possible given that the capacity for reason and contemplation are unique to humans as beings endowed with immortal souls and made in the image of God.[64] Calvin affirms the classical view of reason as the highest human faculty, the ruler over each individual's "internal order."[65] In fact, echoing both Aristotle and Aquinas, Calvin suggests that rational man is the greatest of all of God's earthly creatures—a microcosm of the universe and its grand order.[66] Calvin also insists that each individual must draw upon their singular capacity to reason in an effort to examine their mortal condition and be awakened to their weakness and inability before God.[67] Reason, for Calvin, is simultaneously the capacity that evinces our lofty status as mirrors of divine

[62] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume One*, 35.

[63] Ibid., 36.

[64] Ibid., 276, 270

[65] John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis: Volume 1*, trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2009), 53.

[66] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume One*, 54; *Commentary on Genesis*, 51.

[67] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume One*, 36.

glory and reveals to us just how far we have fallen.[68] Awakened to that weakness, we must come to realize that "we are not our own masters, but belong to God."[69]

Having by reasoned reflection uncovered the sinful degeneracy hiding within, each individual is then guided by knowledge of their own incapacity to seek knowledge of God and their standing before Him, according to Calvin.[70] This search for knowledge can be summed up in the discovery that the individual's "very being is nothing but subsistence in the one God." The bulk of Calvin's theology is the further detailing of this subsistence, and we can pithily observe that the subsisting self is essentially a lone vessel awash in the storm of divine providence—reliant on grace in every aspect of existence, accountable for predetermined actions, dependent on the mysterious will of God for salvation and regeneration. This essential subjection emerges most clearly in Calvin's sweeping account of providence.

According to Calvin, God's providential will is determinate down to the cellular level. Not a whit of knowledge[71], a drop of rain[72], or a modicum of earthly authority[73] is bestowed without God willing it. And Calvin is clear to distinguish his sense of providence from earlier theologians and philosophers.[74] He is adamant in stating that God

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[68] Nico Vorster, "John Calvin on the Status and Role of Women in Church and Society," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 68, Pt. 1 (April 2017): 191.

[69] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume One*, 689.

[70] Ibid., 35

[71] Ibid., 41.

[72] Ibid., 204.

[73] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume Two*, 1510-1514.

[74] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume One*, 200.

is not merely the "first cause" or originating motion in a distant chain of causation—rather, the divine will determines all things with immediacy and consistently intervenes on a particular level.[75] Calvin pursues this line of reasoning into the absurd, as he solemnly suggests that God specifically determines the size of nursing mothers' breasts, willing some infants to be fed more than others.[76]

But providence is no laughing matter for Calvin and he is resolute in his desire to communicate the totality of God's mastery to his readers. This comes through clearly when, concerned that astrological musings might cause Christians to lose their fear of God as ruler of the universe, Calvin declares "that there is no erratic power, or action, or motion in creatures, but that they are governed by God's secret plan in such a way that nothing happens except what is knowingly and willingly decreed by him."[77] We could invoke near-endless examples demonstrating Calvin's all-encompassing notion of providence, as he proceeds to do, but it is sufficient to say that he adamantly claims that absolutely everything in the universe is subject to God's will. We will address this later on, but it is important to note that a primary effect of this concept of providence is the subversion of any critique on a structural or systemic level—all order is providential, making sin and evil matters of individual struggle or a concern leveled at groups whose humanity is so degenerated that Calvin recognizes no order among them.

While grace is perhaps the preeminent theme in Calvin's account of the divine will, he does not clearly distinguish the two. Calvin is sure that whether it causes

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[75] Ibid, 200-210.

[76] Ibid., 201.

[77] Ibid.

immense suffering or intense joy, all events and actions are willed by God according to God's ultimate purpose for his chosen people.[78] This would seem to suggest that everything that takes place is by God's will and an expression of God's grace. Now, there are particular modes of grace that have special importance for Calvin, such as Christ's work as Mediator and the predestination of the elect. These instances of specific divine intervention he refers to as "special providence," working on more individualized level than the "general providence" that upholds the natural order.[79] Salvation, for Calvin, seems to be a blend of both the general and the special varieties of God's grace.

Foremost among Calvin's theological concerns are salvation and the process of regeneration that it affects. Calvin thus devotes a great many pages to the discussion of salvation, a topic that we can significantly condense for our purposes. He first explains that the individual human is damned by sin and utterly incapable of doing a single thing about it without God's help.[80] Despite their powerlessness and the determined nature of their existence, the individual human is held accountable for their sin because the natural order and attending laws give testimony to good and evil and imbed in the human consciousness an awareness of these distinctions and of the divine.[81] The general providence of the natural order and of the sociopolitical order that God creates and sustains prevent most individuals from sinking to the lowest levels of sin and evil but is

[78] Ibid., 211.

[79] Ibid., 202-203.

[80] Ibid., 576-577.

[81] Ibid., 280-282.

not sufficient for helping the individual to turn away from sin.[82] It is into these dismal conditions that the intervening grace of special providence enters.

It is in light of human weakness that God deigns, according to his "good pleasure," to elect a certain few individuals for the "singular privilege" of salvation.[83] This is, Calvin assures us, an election based purely on God's mysterious plan and not on any human factor.[84] Salvation is also a process carried out entirely by God, with the individual being moved to the posture of willing and eager partaker in God's free gift. God creates the conditions for faith, provides the Word that God will then plant and awaken in the human heart, and moves the individual will to receive, embrace, and respond to faith.[85] As the individual is moved to hear and accept the Word of God in the grace that engenders faith, that person begins down the path of regeneration—a process of becoming one with Christ in a mystical union that "engrafts [the believer] into his body."[86]

As the believer is drawn into Christ, the image of God in that person is moved toward greater fullness—a process that involves an awakening of greater knowledge, a purifying of the heart, and an increasing wholeness of being.[87] Although an individual can never be certain that they are elect, chosen by God for salvation, observing the

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[82] Ibid., 197-210.

[83] Ibid., 583.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., 576-585.

[86] Ibid., 583, 189.

[87] Ibid., 189.

aforementioned signs of regeneration should give the believer a strong hope that that have been graced.[88] The believer should then expect a life of suffering and trials, one that invites them to consider God's grace in the midst of tribulation and take up their cross with eyes fixed on the life to come.[89] In this way, from the realization of one's degeneracy to the hope of life everlasting in union with the divine, the knowledge of self leads to knowledge of God.

Calvin puts forth an understanding of 'the self' that plays on familiar themes, signaling his foundational dependence on the robust metaphysical offerings of the Greeks, the Patristics, and even the Scholastics. Although deeply humanist in his hyper-individualization of the self, where Calvin departs from the theological tradition that he is so reliant on is in his functional distinction between the idealization of 'the self' in the spiritual realm and the limitation of 'the self' that orders the material realm. Preaching on Paul's famous eschewal of identity in Galatians 3, Calvin clearly states that the salvific potential of all people is equal and God brooks no human categories of distinction when willing the elect to regeneration in Christ.[90] But that equality pertains only to the individual's spiritual condition before God vis-à-vis eternal salvation; the shared spiritual standing of a sinner in need of divine grace does not have any bearing on the fundamental inequality of the created order.[91] Calvin reminds his readers that Paul is not inciting

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[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid., 700-716.

[90] Dawn DeVries, "Calvin's Preaching," *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 117-118. See also, John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2009), 341-347.

[91] Ibid.

resistance to unequal conditions—he even "forbids slaves to be anxious about their state"—rather, "he means that it makes no difference what your condition among men may be…since the Kingdom of Christ does not at all consist in these things."[92] As we will see later on, Calvin spends the entire fourth book of his *Institutes* demonstrating the providential hierarchy of the created order and extolling Christians to eagerly subject themselves to the powers that be.

Lest we get ahead of ourselves and dive headlong into Calvin's political order, we need to first examine the kinds of categorical distinctions that shape Calvin's understanding of the created order and thus his politics of being. Calvin is unique in his treatment of inequality, because it is primarily neither a result of sin nor an inherent feature of material limitation: at its foundation, inequality in the created order is God's willing design. The first and most overt distinction that is drawn between Calvin's particular enactment of the genre of Man and a deficiently human other is in the case of women (which means those who performed womanhood in a manner that was legible to Calvin). Working from the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2, Calvin establishes rational man as the glory of God's created order and bearing the authority of the *imago dei*.[93] In a familiar refrain, Calvin goes on to suggest that women were also created in the image of God, but only "in the second degree."[94] Calvin notes that women were created into their role as wives—fashioned from man, in order to support man, and be subsumed by man in

[92] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume Two*, 1486.

[93] Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, 53, 79-85.

[94] Ibid., 80.

order to make him whole.[95] Women's subjection to men and wives' subjection to their husbands was, Calvin argues, an inherent feature of human nature, one that was only intensified by the fall.[96] He writes in his commentary on I Timothy that woman was created "in order that she might be a kind of appendage to the man; and that she was joined to the man on the express condition, that she should be at hand to render obedience to him."[97] It is important to note that Calvin does not view women as simply being lesser than men, he sees women as an appendage whose subjection is key to the fulfillment of masculine identity—an obvious instance of control.

Addressing the place of women in the household, she is called by God to submit to her husband, to bear children, and to "study to keep this divinely appointed order."[98] The heterosexual Christian family is, of course the foundation of social order for Calvin. In the church, women are to be modest, quiet, and are banned from preaching and teaching.[99] Calvin characterizes women as weak, suspicious, and timid, but cites God's will as that which excludes them from the offices of preacher and teacher.[100] Women "are subject," he writes, "and to teach implies the rank of power or authority."[101] Men are

[95] Ibid., 79-85.

[96] Ibid., 52, 79-85, 114-115. See also, John Calvin, *Commentary on I Timothy*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2009), 51-53.

[97] Calvin, *Commentary on I Timothy*, 51.

[98] Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, 80; *Commentary on I Timothy*, 51-53.

[99] Calvin, *Commentary on I Timothy*, 49-51.

[100] Ibid., 50, 52.

[101] Ibid., 50.

entrusted with governance of "the pillar and foundation of truth"[102] that is God's church, and thus exercise sole control of the production of salvific knowledge through the preaching and teaching of the Word.[103] If we recall, the Word is essential to faith and the believer cannot be moved to faith and salvation without the Word being planted in and illuminating their hearts. Of course, God determines every step on the path to salvation, but functionally, he who holds the holy truth of the Word holds the means of salvation—an eternal mastery placed in the hands of the Preacher (as enactment of) Man.

Feeling the consonance of Calvin's position with the cultural field extending from Aristotle, through Augustine, Aquinas, and onward, it is important to understand that he is not committed to masculine inviolability in the same form(s) as the aforementioned thinkers. Calvin's hyper-individualized focus is in fact a mechanism that enables him to naturalize his primary concern: the maintenance of divine order. He accepts the occasional compromise of masculine inviolability and control on the individual level when it supports the broader system and structures of divine-masculine control. For instance, as monstrously "unnatural" as Calvin might judge it for a woman to be in a place of authority, he concedes that God might place a woman in command of a nation in order to punish weak men or to show God's own glory through the use of a weaker vessel.[104] Order, for Calvin, is the articulation of God's will and grace, and he is able to deftly integrate any individual inconsistency into the grander narrative of God's mysterious plan.

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[102] Ibid., 68.

[103] Ibid., 68-69, 50.

[104] William R. Stevenson Jr., "Calvin and political issues," *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 182.

Just as providence is both general and specific, Calvin is invested in the maintenance of order on both a structural and individual level. Calvin exhorts his readers to suffer all manner of violence, deprivation, and cruelty in the name of order, but his advice to married women whose husbands are beating them is perhaps the clearest example of Calvin's investment in the inviolability of providential order at every level. Calvin writes, at length:

> We have a special sympathy for poor women who are evilly and roughly treated by their husbands, because of the roughness and cruelty of the tyranny and captivity which is their lot. We do not find ourselves permitted by the Word of God, however, to advise a woman to leave her husband, except by force of necessity; and we do not understand this force to be operative when a husband behaves roughly and uses threats to his wife, nor even when he beats her, but when there is imminent peril to her life…and so we exhort her in the name of God to bear with patience the cross which God has seen fit to place upon her; and meanwhile not to deviate from the duty which she has before god to please her husband, but to be faithful whatever happens.[105]

Calvin's consoling tone does little to cover the sheer misogyny of his position; in fact, his hollow sympathy may add to the horror of what he prescribes. How little value Calvin must place in the life of a woman if he counsels her to endure the violence of her husband until it threatens her life—which, as we know, is a very real threat in any/every instance of intimate partner violence—and admonishers her to continue to dutifully serve her abuser and ensure his pleasure. And how especially cruel to fain sympathy while dismissing the seriousness of this violence as simply her lot in life. Perhaps this is less shocking when we recall that Calvin understands women to be wives and wives to be helpful appendages of their husbands—the violent mastery of masculine identity is central to the maintenance of the created order.

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[105] As quoted in Mary Potter, "Gender Equality and Gender Hierarchy in Calvin's Theology," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 11, no. 4 (1986): 735.

The gendered hierarchies that we observe above function at the heart of the natural order and sociopolitical order that God has established and maintains, but Calvin also seeks to define the human out at the furthest horizons of order's reach. Revealing an operative coloniality in his thought, Calvin voices time and again a pair of particularly "modern" concerns: first, that humans distinguish themselves as rational creatures in contrast to unthinking beasts;[106] second, that barbarous and savage peoples threaten the "divinely established order."[107] These two pillars of reason and order form for Calvin, and for most moderns, the naturalized evidence of providential grace and election. As we will attend to very soon, this is deeply connected to Calvin's belief that civil government and "civil righteousness" help to preserve humanity and where it is lacking humanity may degenerate as well, but let us hold that line of questioning for the moment.[108]

We have seen that Calvin views reason as the highest human faculty and the primary manifestation of the *imago dei*. We have also seen that he views both reason and the *imago dei* as disproportionately manifest in men and women. Given Calvin's understanding of varying gradations of humanity along the metric of rationality and its reflection of the divine image, it is telling that he shares such great concern over the descent into a 'barbarous,' 'savage,' or 'beastly' existence with his humanist peers. Adding to this anxiety is Calvin's notion that God directly determines the individual's capacity for reason and is willing and able to remove reason and understand from a person or persons—affecting what Calvin could only see as a degeneration of their

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[106] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume One*, 47, 270, 276, 712.

[107] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume Two*, 1485, 1503,1488; *Volume One*, 44.

[108] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume Two*, 1487.

humanity.[109] Calvin writes that "men's minds are in God's hands and under his will, so that he rules them at every moment. For this reason it is said 'He takes understanding away from the prudent and makes them wander in trackless wastes.' Still, we see in this diversity some remaining traces of the image of God, which distinguishes the entire human race from other creatures."[110] It is clear that Calvin fears those "barbarous" and "savage" peoples persisting right on the very border of human and beast, order and chaos, grace and degeneracy. In the face of this colonial difference, of the "insane and barbarous men who furiously strive to overturn [the] divinely established order,"[111] Calvin turns to the power of the state as a means of extending order to those furthest horizons where he perceives the lines between humanity/inhumanity beginning to blur.

The waves of Puritan colonists who left England to carve out settlements in North America carried with them Calvin's esteem for order and racist enmity towards humans they deemed degenerate. Following their initial invasions, English colonists soon adopted what Horne names an "expand or die" policy of conquest through steadily expanding settlement.[112] This settler colonialism not only promised abundant stolen land and wealth, it also addressed the pressing concerns of indigenous reprisal, slave revolt, and cooperation between these two groups who were felt to most threaten the growing

[109] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume One*, 277.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume Two*, 1485.

[112] Gerald Horne, *The Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism: The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy, and Capitalism in Seventeenth-Century North America and the Caribbean* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2017), 376.

supremacy of "Pan-European" whiteness.[113] Often seeing themselves as divinely predestined administers of order, settler colonials sought to order the land and quell the threat of heathenism through eradication of indigenes, and cultivate a properly structured society through the labor of enslaved Black women, men, and children.[114] The savagery of settler colonial violence became a manifestation of divine grace, stemming the tide of the uncivilized and unsaved.

Two Kingdoms

Despite the emphasis that is typically placed on his doctrine of predestination, Calvin's politics of being truly hinges on his theology of two kingdoms. We have already noted Calvin's profound separation of the spiritual and earthly realms, but this dichotomy is fully materialized in Calvin's theorization of "a twofold government in man," consisting of a spiritual kingdom and a political kingdom.[115] Hinting at the duality of eternal predestination, one kingdom shines resplendently as the heavenly abode of the elect while the other persists as a shelter of grace and order amidst a fallen world. Calvin insists that these kingdoms are absolutely distinct, having different laws and authorities, and even writes that they "must always be examined separately."[116]

Having dealt with his notion of the spiritual at some length already, we know that it is the realm of individual salvation and regeneration, what Calvin calls "the life of the

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[113] Horne, *The Dawning of the Apocalypse*, 24.

[114] Horne, *The Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism*, 300-307.

[115] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume One*, 847.

[116] Ibid.

soul."[117] For Calvin, the spiritual kingdom is where the believer's true home and inheritance resides, and all of their desire and longing should be directed towards that eternal blessedness during their pilgrimage on earth.[118] He speaks of this life as one of exile and misery, in a body that is nothing but a prison.[119] The ultimacy of the spiritual kingdom and the deficiency of material life affects for Calvin a particular form of transcendent authority to be exercised in the political kingdom. Calvin holds that the political is comprehensive in its dealings with "the concerns of the present."[120] The political kingdom orders the "duties of humanity and citizenship" that are necessary for proper human relations.[121] While the will of God orders every instance of the political, Calvin is very clear in stating that any spiritual freedom that the believer has gained in Christ does not undermine the necessary subjugation that they must submit themselves too in the divinely appointed political order.[122]

Calvin describes civil government as a necessary resource for life, comparing it to "bread, water, sun, and air."[123] The political is definitive of humanity as a group, or, we might say, the human in practice. For Calvin, the individual human is a spiritual being before God, while the human species is a political race governed by God's earthly rulers—this distinction enables a more total authority to be exercised in both orders. Civil

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[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid., 716.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid., 847.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid., 847.

[123] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume Two*, 1488.

government is a means of God's grace, providing the conditions for the church to endure, faith to flourish, righteousness to be pursued, peace to be upheld, and property to be secured.[124] Whoever threatens this political order threatens to "deprive [man] of his very humanity" (recall here Calvin's anxiety over 'savage,' 'barbarous,' and 'beastly' peoples).[125] Although it cannot be known who the elect are until the day of judgment, civil government is both a function and evidence of God's grace, instituting and preserving the proper outward conditions for salvation in accordance with God's mysterious plan.[126]

Calvin suggests that there is a diversity of forms of civil government and that we should recognize each of them as instituted by God's will, but further examination reveals his notion of diversity to be very limited.[127] He lists Plato's three forms of government—monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy—suggesting that monarchy gives way too easily to tyranny and that aristocracy or a mixture of aristocracy and democracy "far excel all others."[128] Calvin fails to address any form of governance outside of the European purview—those lacking the civil grounds of discipline, religion, and property—relying heavily on the typically 'modern' discourse that focused on the commonwealth in comparison to the arch-European governance by monarchy and aristocracy. This would seem to disregard the many different modes of governance and

[124] Ibid., 1486-1488.

[125] Ibid., 1487.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid., 1493.

[128] Ibid., 1493.

social organization that Western Europeans were encountering among the different indigenous peoples that they were conquering, colonizing, and enslaving over the course of Calvin's lifetime. These peoples, we can surmise, constitute the barbarous, savage, and beastly others that fail to legibly demonstrate rationality and thus lie in the fallow lands at the very edge of civilization, awaiting the imposition of sophistication. It would seem that the order Calvin posits and the humanity that it protects goes far in reproducing the narrative coding and genre of the human that would come to define Western European self-institution.

Within Calvin's concept of legitimate civil government and political order there is an assumption that inequality is a necessary and inherent function.[129] Calvin puts forth hierarchy as the divinely ordained principle for social stability and writes that "countries are best held together according to their own particular inequality."[130] Atop this political hierarchy sits the "magistrate" (ruler or primary authority), who wields immense and virtually unquestionable power, according to Calvin.[131] He writes at length, dedicating over thirty pages to the providential appointment of the magistrate and the "inviolable majesty"[132] that God bestows upon them as "ministers of divine justice,"[133]

[129] Ibid., 1494.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid., 1488-1520.

[132] Ibid., 1516.

[133] Ibid., 1491.

"instrument[s] of divine truth,"[134] "God's deputies,"[135] "a living law,"[136] and "father of his country."[137] All power, Calvin insists, comes directly from God, and the simple state of possessing power inherently decrees divine favor and demands obedience and honor.[138] To question or resist the magistrate, Calvin states, is to question or resist God.[139] In fact, he could not be more clear in admonishing his readers to honor and obey those in authority no matter how capable or incapable, peaceful or murderous, benevolent or tyrannical they may be.[140] Facing injustice and abuse from authority, "nothing remains but that we should serve and live,"[141] as "no command has been given except to obey and suffer."[142] Calvin provides for one exception, that obedience to authority should never cause one to disobey God.[143] This remains an exception in name only, as all authority comes from God and is determined by his will, so no actual conflict is possible between divine and earthly powers. Calvin adds to this confusion when he suggests that God at times overthrows the existing political order, installing a benevolent ruler as a reward or a

[134] Ibid., 1491.

[135] Ibid., 1492.

[136] Ibid., 1502.

[137] Ibid., 1511.

[138] Ibid., 1509-1514.

[139] Ibid., 1510-1511.

[140] Ibid., 1511-1519.

[141] Ibid., 1515.

[142] Ibid., 1518.

[143] Ibid., 1520.

tyrant as punishment and trial.[144] Trusting God's mysterious plan, believers have a duty to uphold order above all else, knowing that this life is "of itself nothing but misery," and fixing their eyes on the hope of a life to come.[145]

Beyond the unquestionable authority of the magistrate and the inviolable political order the role embodies, Calvin also details the magisterial responsibility of maintaining discipline—*ordre et police*[146]—both at home and abroad.[147] Both in civil punishment and in war, the magistrate is to exercise moderation, but Calvin describes it as a pious act for the magistrate to carry out the judgment and vengeance of the Lord.[148] Calvin does write that war should only be sought after all other options are exhausted, but he balances this caution with a warning that failure to slay the wicked and unrighteous who threaten the innocent is, in fact, "the greatest impiety."[149] The political order of civil government is divinely ordained by God and serves to protect Christian belief and practice, public peace, private property, and the general humanity of the people—Calvin plainly states that at times this protection requires the violence of civil discipline and war.[150]

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[144] Ibid., 1512-1518.

[145] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume One*, 716.

[146] Claude-Marie Baldwin, "John Calvin and the Ethics of Gender Relations," *Calvin Theological Journal*, Vol. 26, Issue 1 (1991): 140.

[147] Calvin, *Institutes: Volume Two*, 1496.

[148] Ibid., 1497-1498.

[149] Ibid., 1500-1501, 1498.

[150] Ibid., 1488.

The Kingdom of Man

The theo-political two kingdom order that structures Calvin's evangelical theology depends upon the enabling relation between the spiritual and civil realms. The spiritual realm is a future promise of equality, immortality, and the fullness of being that does not discriminate on the basis of any human difference, only on the providential will of election. The hope of this promise and its evidence in individual regeneration props up the explicitly hierarchical order of the material realm, centered on civil government (the state). The idea of spiritual equality has absolutely no bearing on the functional reality of inherent inequality and the violent networks of power that structure Calvin's politics of being. The artificial distinction between the spiritual and political also serves to undermine any question of accountability or responsibility on a structural or systemic level—the divine plan being unquestionably righteous and determinate—reducing all agency to the individual before God.

Ultimately, Calvin's order extends outwards from the microcosm of the rational human, a provincial genre of the human that emerges from the auto-institution of a narrowly Western European ontology founded on symbolic codes of rationality/irrationality and a descriptive statement of the world made for humanity's sake. This set of local codes, statements, and genres is naturalized and universalized through the logic of God's omnipresent, hyper-particularized determining will. Remaining in God's grace—which initiates and sustains order in the first place—means maintaining the natural order, the maintenance of which necessarily depends on the performative enactment of humanity as providential defined and moved towards regeneration in Christ. To challenge the present order—whether in the face of a

murderous tyrant, a rapist slave master, or an abusive husband—is to challenge the will of God and question His mysterious plan.

Of course, order in Calvin's theorization is represented in those who are able to perform humanity legibly (i.e. as rational Man), and thus women, children, slaves, and those 'barbarous' peoples who struggle to distinguish themselves from beasts must have order imposed on them, that God's general grace might cover them and the conditions for intervening grace might be cultivated. God's will thus aligns with the present and dominant order and that order happens, in Calvin's time, to be founded on the performative enactment of the overrepresented genre of Man_1. Calvin is convinced that God's mastery over humanity is absolute and thoroughly individualized, and it is the duty of Christians to eagerly subject themselves to that mastery and to participate in the material extension of that mastery through the natural, ecclesial, and political orders that govern creation. He calls this grace.

In Calvin's theology we can observe that as it functions in the material realm grace is order, and order is a mechanism of hierarchical social relation instituted and maintained through technologies of control—specifically the enactment of the genre of Man and it's ethnocentric, heterosexist, classist categories shaped according to a provincial, Western European vision of the human. The enactment and maintenance of order is thus the enactment and maintenance of a particular genre of the human, one that is decidedly masculinist, stamped by providence, elected to carry God's grace and order to the nations. As we will see in the chapter that follows, the coloniality that emerges in the work of Calvin and his humanist peers conserves the patriarchal terms of order while engendering a racialized rearticulation of the human and the evolution of Man_1 into Man_2.

We know from previous chapters that the desire for mastery and its ordering of material relations is not unique to "the long 16th century" and its legacy of coloniality.[151] The Renaissance humanists, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, and John Calvin were not the first to rely on a narrow conception of rationality in an attempt to define and enact a dominant vision of the human being. What Wynter's theorization of Man and his overrepresentation helps us to see—beyond the ubiquity of narrative autopoiesis and performative self-institution among humans—is the specific storytelling codes that shape an immensely consequently moment of intellectual, religious, political, cultural, and economic upheaval. With her analysis of the elements that compete within the politics of being—master codes, descriptive statements, genres of the human—Wynter allows us to do more than just recount, but to begin to fully unravel and unsettle these violent and densely packed histories of conquest, colonization, enslavement, and genocide. Asking who could put themselves forward as human, and by what means, reveals how the performative enactment of identity materializes particular ideologies—in this case, how the self-institution of mastery-as-masculinity can proliferate into a whole array of violent technologies, be it the rational political subject or Calvin's Christian order, through the autopoietic practice of being human.

[151] Horne, *The Dawning of the Apocalypse*, 8.

CHAPTER 5

THE GREAT CHAINING OF BEING: RACIAL CAPITALISM AND THE END OF HISTORY

> The cords of credit and debt—of advance and obligation—that cinched the Atlantic economy together were anchored with the mutually defining values of land and slaves: without land and slaves, there was not credit; and without slaves, land itself was valueless.
>
> —Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*

> All the events of divine providence are like the links of a chain, the first link is from God and the last is to him.
>
> —Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*

We turn now to a moment in the unfolding narratives of control where the performative enactment of mastery as masculinity becomes reciprocally linked with the increasingly dominant mechanisms of global history and global capital. Representing an epistemic breakthrough rather than a clean break, to utilize Sylvia Wynter's distinction, this adaptation in the technologies of control and the autopoiesis of masculine identities further extends the "continuous cultural field" of coloniality and overrepresentation which gives historical shape to our broader analysis of control from the ancients onward.[1] As the scope of historical narrative and capital exchange expanded in the 18th and 19th centuries, so does the scope our interrogation—extending to encompass the Atlantic World and the violent networks of power linking Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Crisscrossing this transatlantic network of domination were blood drenched passages of

[1] David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe,* No. 8 (September 2000): 199.

human exchange marked by enslavement, torture, and death, driven by the thirst for wealth and the desire for mastery.

Once again thinking with Wynter's account of coloniality, narrative coding, and self-instituting identities in our investigation of control, we follow her explication of Man_2 as an evolutionarily selected and economically instantiated genre of the human. Poised between the enduring influence of Man_1 and the horizon of Man_2's emergence, Jonathan Edwards exhibits, as we will see, elements of both the political and economic contours that shape each genre. Our reading of Edwards—and the persistent logic of election/selection guiding his interpretation of the past and vision of the future—will help us to trace the epistemic breakthrough of the 19th century in context of the U.S. settler-colonial experiment: what endured and what was forced to adapt in that continuous cultural field extending the narrative coding of Man. Towards this end, we will turn to the work of American Black Studies scholar Cedric Robinson and Trinidadian historian Eric Williams to help us further clarify the historically interdependent functions of racism and capitalism that are constitutive of Man_2. A look at American historian Walter Johnson's study of the Mississippi Valley "Cotton Kingdom" provides us an in-depth case of the numerous technologies of control—the performance of mastery as masculinity—connecting plantation owners, industrialists, and global financiers in the context of transatlantic trade.

In reading with Wynter and the other thinkers whose work unfolds within her broader analysis of Man_2, we are following closely her critique of the liberal humanist narrative of natural progress and the continuous cultural field that it extends. As we will see, Wynter identifies Man_2 as a "purely secular" genre of the human—there being no

divine causality invoked, only the biological functions of natural selection.[2] I read this assertion of the "purely secular" as indicating 1), a distinctive break from the overtly Christian content of previous descriptive statements and 2), an invitation to further explore the Christian logics that both endure in the implicit structuring of a "purely secular" genre and endure through the apparent formation of contending descriptive statements of the human. Following Wynter, I take up this invitation through an examination of the figure and work of Jonathan Edwards. Within a treatment of his broader theological and cultural influence on the emergence of American evangelicalism, I focus on his unfinished magnum opus, "A History of the Work of Redemption." In this study of Edward's startling work of theological chronology, I intend to demonstrate the significance of evangelical Christian narratives of history for the interdependence of secularized, liberal Christian, and evangelical Christian terms of order—which together serve to uphold the mutually reinforcing systems of violent supremacy through the deployment of interwoven technologies of control.

The Evolution of Man

In an interview with Wynter that focuses on the histories and forms of humanist thought, David Scott describes the shift from one episteme to another—and thus from one descriptive statement and one genre of the human to another—as a "breakthrough,"[3] in contrast to the epistemic "break" posited by Michel Foucault.[4] Characterizing the later as

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[2] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (fall 2003): 307.

[3] David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter," pg 199

[4] Ibid.

a "discontinuous" emergence, Wynter redirects attention to the underlying politics that persists in and through epistemic flux.[5] Wynter explains, in agreement with Scott's description, that the conceptual distinction of a 'breakthrough' in relation to a 'break' helps to illuminate the adaptive mechanisms of self-enactment and to reveal how each episteme can be seen as an evolving expression of a "more fundamental" and enduring political struggle over the nature of the human and the nature of being.[6]

For Wynter, the notion of an epistemic break elides the abiding self-interest of the autopoietic in relation to the maintenance of power in the politics of being. She suggests that the normative production of knowledge and power in each episteme "has to function in a way that enables its social reality to be known in terms that are of adaptive advantage to the survival, well-being and stable reproduction of the mode of being human that each ruling group embodies and actualizes."[7] Where a break in the production of knowledge and power would seem to suggest the emergence of absolute distinction and difference in relation to genre, the notion of a breakthrough allows us to trace a more subtle, and as Wynter says "adaptive," shift that suggests significant changes in genre without indicating a complete departure.

With the adaptive sense of epistemic breakthrough in mind, we stand to benefit from being equally attentive to that which distinguishes Man_2 from Man_1 and to the consistencies that persist beyond this shift in the dominant genre of the human. Wynter is clear is stating that genre of Man_2 is not merely an augmented articulation of Western

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

Europe's rational, political subject, but the product of an epistemological transformation that produced new storytelling codes and a new descriptive statement. At the same time, the emergence and enactment of Man_2 is dependent upon the enduring logics that gave rise to Man_1—the continuous cultural field that Wynter traces back to the Latin-Christian Middle Ages and signals back even further, a gesture that we have followed with the autopoiesis of masculine inviolability and mastery all the way back to the Greeks.[8] Keeping a close eye on the persistent, adaptive self-institution that drives the politics of being, we are prepared to examine the shift in storytelling codes—the epistemic breakthrough— that Wynter details in her account of Man_2 as a re-articulation of overrepresentation.

Recall that the 16th c. Western European genre of Man_1 relied on the symbolic coding of a rational/irrational man-as-human in relation to a civilized/barbaric social order—a narrative enactment dependent upon the Medieval Latin-Christian coding of a saved/damned human in a cosmic spirit/flesh order. In much the same way, the 19th c. articulation of the genre of Man_2 transformed the logic of election underlying the saved adherent of Rome and the rational steward of God's creation—an autopoietic institution of a new (but not so different) story. With the cataclysm of Western European colonialism churning at full force in the eighteen-hundreds—marked by the monstrous appetite for land, labor, and lives feeding the white supremacist settler experiment of 1776—imperialists in Western Europe and North America were driving the acceleration of increasingly industrialized, increasingly globalized networks of exchange. Having adapted over centuries, these systems of trade, finance, labor, production, and

[8] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 309-310.

accumulation began to loosely cohere into the dominant world order often referred to as "modern capitalism."[9] In the same era, the so-called Enlightenment and its culminating transformation of science, philosophy, political economy, and social imagination in Western Europe and North America helped give birth to a newly universalizing and "organic" conception of being. Wynter sees this turn in thought as exemplified by Adam Smith's reduction of human development to economic success and nationalistic achievement—and, I would add, by Immanuel Kant's phenotypical taxonomy of the unequal development of human races—and culminating in Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection and the evolutionary process.[10] From the heart of this turgid milieu of capitalism, racism, patriarchy, nationalism, and social Darwinism—and representing the white men who extracted their wealth, power, and acclaim from "innovation," "progress," and "enlightenment"—emerges the genre of Man2.

Wynter primarily attributes this "purely secular" and "biocentric" turn in the descriptive statement of the human to the tremendous upheaval in thought engendered by the work of Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution. She writes that "[t]his principle, that of bio-evolutionary Natural Selection, was now to function at the level of the new bourgeois social order as a de facto new Argument-from-Design—one in which while one's selected or dysselected status could not be known in advance, it would come to be verified by one's (or one's group's) success or failure in life."[11] Wynter conveys the flow of her broader analysis over the course of this single, expansive sentence. At first glance,

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[9] Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of The Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 39, 41-43.

[10] Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism," 182.

[11] Wynter, "Unsettling," 310.

we can observe that as a newly articulated genre of the human, Man_2 relied on the narrative coding of evolutionary "selection" and "dysselection."[12] Replacing the previous coding of the rational/irrational and its transcendent claim to the *propter nos*, the evolutionary model of Natural Selection asserted a new, presumably-material-in-its-biological-orientation basis for the origin, development, and evaluation of all life on earth. The ontological immediacy of this new universal account of being threatened to undermine popular notions of providential election through scientific appeals to a pragmatic, wholly uninvested, and "organic" process of evolutionary selection and dysselection. The grounds for this process of natural selection were presented as a-cultural and ahistorical—a set of proven facts emerging from objective, scientific observation of nature and its laws. Man_2 was put forth as the representation of a biologically-superior-because-evolutionarily-selected human being.[13]

Continuing on, Wynter makes note of the narratively self-instituting relationship between the 'organic process' of Natural Selection and the developmental metric of economic achievement. With economic success as the marker of evolutionary selectedness in the capitalist free market, the story of natural progress was confirmed in the existing geopolitical and social orders. Hierarchical distinctions enabled by the social construction of ethnicity, race, class, gender, and national identity were simultaneously naturalized and deployed as evidence of that natural status. In this autopoietic adaptation of genre, the rational, political subject of Man_1 is transformed into the evolutionarily selected, *homo economicus* of Man_2. That this statement of being is seen as evident in the

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 310, 314-316.

existing order functions as the perfect verification. As Wynter urges us to observe with her notion of the epistemic breakthrough, the narrative coding and descriptive statement shift substantially, but the underlying logic of election and hierarchical differentiation persists. The dominant patriarchal, ethnocentric, classist, and Christian supremacist mechanisms of knowledge production and the networks of power that they produce do not fade into the past, they adapt and endure.[14]

While Wynter does not ascribe any kind of teleological determination to the continuous cultural field that she traces across these shifting epistemes—there is no causal necessity governing Wynter's accounts—she clearly indicates a sense of achievement, an expansion or growing totalization, that comes with each of the breakthroughs she examines. This is particularly true of the narrative coding of the selected/dysselected, which she describes as "function[ing] at all levels of the social order."[15] Evolution gives an intricate account of all living things, a grand narrative offering much more complex and specific mechanisms for classification and integration. More specifically, Wynter points to the exceedingly malleable classificatory potential of the logic of natural selection and the numerous "differential degrees" of selection/dysselection that are produced therein.[16]

Positioning race as the historical and conceptual ground of selection/dysselection and economic success as the instantiating mechanism, Wynter suggests that the differential degrees of evolutionary selection allow for a more durable stratification of the

[14] Ibid., 314-318.

[15] Ibid., 323.

[16] Ibid.

social order, as class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity produce myriad degrees of distinction in relation to one another and primarily in relation to race. As a part of an epistemic breakthrough, the narrative self-institution of race builds upon the previous storytelling codes of rationality/election and spirit/flesh. In the genre of $Man_{2,}$ race operates as the organizing force that drives the adaptation of earlier mechanisms of distinction—with gender being primary and ethnicity, class, and religion augmenting. Thus, whiteness is formed as another mode of self-instituting differentiation that further solidifies the networks of power accessible by men who were able to performatively enact the genre of Man_1 and carried that autopoiesis over into the genre of $Man_{2.}$ To be sure, our particular concern with the performative formation of masculine identities continues to apply through the examination of both Man_1 and Man_2, as the overrepresentation of these genres is an exercise of control and the genres themselves hinge on the conflation of masculinity and humanity—the enduring formulation of man-as-human.

Wynter argues that the logic of differential degrees enables whiteness to operate as the primary force of identification that upholds the social order, maintains existing networks of power, and allows for adaptive change when necessary.[17] She gives the example of the class divide in the United States—incidentally the political/social arena in which the narrative coding of Man_2 functions most effectively, according to Wynter—and the significance of the felt differences that disrupt solidarity between white and Black working class Americans. Black Americans must be systemically impoverished as the primary evidence for their dysselected status, white working class and working poor

[17] Ibid., 320-326.

Americans read the impoverishment of Black communities as evidence of their own evolutionary superiority and proof of the natural order in which they exist. Thus, whiteness constitutes a sufficient degree of difference in relation to non-white poor and working class persons in order to coerce poor and working class white people into accepting their own evolutionary inferiority in relation to those in the middle and upper classes.[18]

Wynter provides a more thorough account of how the genre of Man_2 is adapted to the contemporary politics of being, but we will resist the urge to move with her to the present moment. Our concern still lies in the past, in the histories that Wynter's theorization of the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom invokes and their relation to the question of control. In particular, Wynter's account of the dually biological and economic descriptive statement of the human offers an incisive conceptual reinterpretation of the hotly contested relationship between race and capitalism. The convergence of racism and capitalism is a significant moment in the politics of being that we will stay with, taking the time to more fully examine—with an eye towards shifting technologies of control—the histories surrounding the emergence of what Cedric Robinson refers to as "racial capitalism."[19] Our examination continues with the figure of Jonathan Edwards, and the way that racial and economic technologies of control shaped his grand narrative of election and redemption.

[18] Ibid., 324.

[19] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 37.

A Master's Narrative

Even before the United States began to establish itself as a global economic force through the cotton trade and subsequent industrialization—even before the thirteen colonies joined together to declare themselves one nation—there was a keen interest in determining the place that this pernicious settler colonial experiment would hold in world history. If the Puritan colonists fleeing religious conflict in Britain were to be believed, theirs was to be a city on a hill, claimed in the name of "the God of Israel."[20] Their mandate to Christianize the "heathen" lands they called America came from "the Governor of the Universe," and was essential to the spread of the gospel and progressing the salvific history of the true church.[21] The early eschatological character of this burgeoning Christian nationalism would only grow more fervent as underlying Calvinist theologies of providence, election, and Christ's coming reign helped to shape a distinctly American evangelicalism. Central to the development of this particular evangelical strand of Christian nationalism—as opposed to Catholic, Orthodox, and mainline Protestant iterations of American imperial religion—is the work and legacy of Jonathan Edwards.

At times referred to as "the father of the American evangelical tradition"[22] and considered by some to be the nation's best-known theologian,[23] consensus lies in the immediate and enduring influence Edwards had on Christianity in the U.S. generally

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[20] Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 13-16.

[21] Ibid., 26-29.

[22] Kenneth P. Minkema, "Jonathan Edwards's Defense of Slavery," *Massachusetts Historical Review*, Vol. 4 (2002): 23.

[23] Douglas A. Sweeney, "Evangelical Tradition in America," *The Cambridge Companion to the Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 217.

speaking and on evangelical groups in particular. Born in New England in 1703, Edwards was often ill and had several severe bouts of sickness over the course of his fifty-five years of life.[24] He is frequently described as being quite dour, with Edwards himself bemoaning the harshness and sharp critique that came so naturally to him.[25] Edwards was well educated, very well connected to New England social elites as well as political and religious authorities, and lived much of his life in the possession of wealth befitting his upper-class status.[26] He was a prolific writer, preacher, revivalist who enjoyed the privilege of respect and reputation among New England elites. Given his socioeconomic status, his role as a revivalist, and his enduring influence on American evangelicalism, Edwards life and work offer us a uniquely focused glimpse of the increasing interdependence of Christian social order, a capitalist vision of the human, burgeoning nationalism, and evangelical eschatology in relation to control.

"There is a beauty of order in society"[27]

As a dedicated student of the *Institutes* and ardent follower of Calvin foremost among the reformers, Edwards was deeply wedded to a providential conception of the natural order of things. He understood the structure of society to be a manifestation of

[24] George M. Marsden, "Biography," *The Cambridge Companion to the Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 19, 21, 35.

[25] Stephen J. Stein, "Introduction," *The Cambridge Companion to the Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 4; Marsden, 24, 31; Kenneth P. Minkema, "Personal Writings," *The Cambridge Companion to the Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 44; M.X. Lesser, "Edwards in 'American Culture,'" *The Cambridge Companion to the Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 288.

[26] Marsden, 23-24, 25-36; Minkema, 52-56.

[27] Jonathan Edwards, *The Nature of True Virtue, in Works of Jonathan Edwards Online, Volume 8, Ethical Writings*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 568.

God's will and grace—inherently hierarchical, with each group and individual having their proper place. Edwards found a deep beauty in the divine determination of human society, and believed that humans were united together in their relation to God as the ground of all being and relation. This focus on the shared experience of being led Edwards to declare that all people—including white women, indigenous peoples, and Black slaves—were spiritually equal.[28] Like Calvin's before him, Edward's declaration boiled down to a suggestion of the shared spiritual state of total depravity, every person's dependence on election for salvation, and every member of the elect's entry into paradise.[29] As we will see, Edwards' ideas concerning equality served to confirm his reverence for the created order and shape a benevolent paternalism that structured all of his material relations.

As the head of a rather well-to-do estate with few material concerns, Edwards enactment of control was primarily articulated through his position as spiritual authority over his family.[30] Following Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin, Edwards was a firm believer in the inherent superiority of men over women, as more perfect physical creations and more brilliant reflections of the *imago dei*.[31] Providing an analogy for the hierarchical distinction between the inferior woman and superior man, Edwards writes

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[28] Rachel Wheeler, "Lessons from Stockbridge: Jonathan Edwards and the Stockbridge Indians," *Jonathan Edwards at 300: Essays On the Tercentenary of His Birth*, eds. Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Caleb J.D. Maskell (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005) 134; Minkema, "Jonathan Edwards's Defense of Slavery," 35; Ava Chamberlain, "The Immaculate Ovum: Jonathan Edwards and the Construction of the Female Body," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (April 2000): 314.

[29]Minkema, "Jonathan Edwards's Defense of Slavery," 35.

[30] Ava Chamberlain, "Edwards and social issues," *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 333.

[31] Chamberlain, "Construction of the Female Body," 306.

"beasts are made in imitation of men."[32] As the image of man, Edwards thought that women should fulfill the role of helpmeet—able to assist in the upkeep of the household and its material provision, but not allowed to hold any position of political or religious authority.[33] As with Calvin's Geneva, the supposed spiritual equality of women would appear to have had no demonstrable effect on their subordinate status in society.[34]

Edwards espoused these views with a fond but unyielding paternalism.[35] He particularly cherished the "purity" of women's religious expression—the utmost manifestation of this quality being found in his wife Sarah.[36] The first time Edwards wrote of his wife's devotion to God was an inscription he penned in a book that he gave to Sarah as a gift shortly after they met. The twenty-year-old Edwards praised Sarah, then thirteen, for her profound spiritual connection to God and for the love that the almighty must hold for her.[37] It would not be until several years after their marriage that Edwards would write once more of Sarah, this time in his well-known account of New England revival. While he used Sarah's own narrative of her lengthy period of ecstatic religious experience, Edwards removed from the writing any general evidence of a woman as the subject and author, and of Sarah in particular.[38] Less well known, is Sarah's claim that

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 314.

[34] Chamberlain, "Edwards and social issues," 335.

[35] Minkema, "Jonathan Edwards's Defense of Slavery," 35.

[36] Minkema, "Personal Writings," 47.

[37] Ibid., 46-47.

[38] Sandra M. Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 71.

the ecstatic "transports" she wrote of were at first product of her concern that she had angered Edwards "over a 'point of prudence'"[39] and that he might kick her out of the house and horsewhip her.[40] There is no evidence to suggest that Sarah's concerns were ever realized or that that there was any history of Edwards physically harming her (not that we should expect there to be if he did), despite Edwards' well-earned reputation as a harsh disciplinarian. That being said, it is difficult for this author to believe that the intensity of emotion detailed in the account of Sarah's transports would emerge from a baseless concern.

Edwards' celebrated relationship with his wife and his high view of "female spirituality" are often cited in an effort to present his views on spiritual equality as a significant counter cultural position that signals a shift towards a more egalitarian Christian theology and practice.[41] In response to this, I suggest that we view these gestures Edwards made towards equality as a means of rearticulating a hierarchical understanding of the created order, seeking to adapt and reinforce rather than undermined the traditional position. Edwards clearly has a sense of wonder and reverence for the shared being of all living things, but this affords him a sense of spiritual openness without causing him to question the terms of order that so profoundly harm many of the people around him. We have already begun to demonstrate Edwards' commitment to maintaining the existing social order of his day—with more to come—exemplified in his championing of a by-nature distinction of male superiority and female inferiority. This

[39] Minkema, "Personal Writings," 48.

[40] Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power*, 68-69.

[41] Minkema, "Personal Writings," 47-48; Chamberlain, "Edwards and social issues," 337.

ontological stratification organically extends to the networks of political, social, and religious power, preventing women from wielding any legible authority outside of the close bounds of their households.

Edwards explains the asymmetry of the existing order as a generous expression of God's grace in a fallen world, but hints at time when those constraints might be cast off with the return of Christ.[42] While the elect might share in equal measures of saving grace with the arrival of the new heavens and the new earth, Edwards is clear in stating that there will not be equality in heaven but "degrees of glory."[43] Some will be placed in elevated positions as a reward for their labors on earth and all will be able to earn "higher degrees" of glory through their labors in heaven—every person will occupy their proper position, such is the beauty of God's grace.[44] We will see that beyond his view of women's limitations, Edwards' attitudes towards non-European and non-Christian peoples and civilizations leaves little doubt as to whose earthly labors would be best rewarded in heaven. In Edwards' narrative coding of male supremacy and its institution through a spiritual economy, we can observe the autopoietic logics of election/selection and labor/accumulation shaping his articulation of human genre in the full capacities of man and the deficient appendage that is woman. Edwards' paternalism enacts a Janus-faced mechanism of control—producing a sense of the inherent spiritual capacity of women while eliminating any connections or corrections that capacity might allow to the

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[42] Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption, in Works of Jonathan Edwards Online, Volume 9*. ed. John F. Wilson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 480.

[43] Jonathan Edwards, *Miscellanies, in Works of Jonathan Edwards Online, Volume 13*. ed. Harry S. Stout (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 430-431.

[44] WJE 13:430-431.

dominant networks of power and thus working to prevent any alteration to the existing order of material relations.

This seemingly benevolent self-institution of mastery extends beyond a gender hierarchy, as we will discover that Edwards' notion of providence relies on an expansive order of racial capitalism. He expresses a great deal of concern for property and the moral significance of economic success—concerns that emerge from his investments in male supremacy, the moneyed elite, and—as we will see—the institution of slavery.[45] Addressing the dangers of "men's vices," Edwards' abandons his characteristic existential anguish in favor of more materialist concerns: "[vice] weakens them as it enfeebles their minds and renders them effeminate. It weakens them as it consumes their wealth. The strength and power of a nation or kingdom consists very much in their wealth."[46] In three quick movements, Edwards links morality, rationality, masculinity, wealth, and the power of a nation in a direct causal relation. This concern over mastery of the self and, in turn, mastery over property and over the body politic, comes into full view when we more closely examine Edwards' ardent embrace of the institution of slavery.

[45] Jonathan Edwards, "Sin and Wickedness Bring Calamity and Misery Upon a People," *Sermons and Discourses, in Works of Jonathan Edwards Online, Volume 14*. ed. Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 495.

[46] WJE 14:493-494.

"I am God's servant as they are mine"[47]

Jonathan Edwards was a slave owner who staunchly defended the institution of slavery.[48] Records reveal that his parents and extended family owned slaves, he and his wife Sarah owned at least seven slaves during their married life, and the couple left at least one slave to the inheritors of their ample estate.[49] There was sharp increase in slave ownership among elites across New England during Edwards' lifetime, and he invested a great deal in the purchase of slaves in order to ensure the maintenance of his household and cement his status among the Northampton aristocracy.[50] Edwards had lavish tastes, a deep concern for maintaining his position among the local gentry, and fought continually for a salary that would afford him the proper effects befitting his rank—including slaves.[51] These details reveal both Edwards' immediate and indirect investments in the business of slavery in the Thirteen Colonies and in the racial capitalist system of Atlantic trade. As we will soon discover, Edwards' own words written in defense of slavery prove even more illuminating.

The facts above clearly demonstrate Edwards' desire for mastery, but his attempts at justifying the institution of slavery give us a much better sense of the particular contours of his longing for control. As far as we know, there is but one instance where Edwards addressed the topic of contemporary slavery—the draft of a sermon written in

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[47] Jonathan Edwards, as quoted in Minkema, "Jonathan Edward's Defense of Slavery," 40.

[48] Minkema, "Jonathan Edward's Defense of Slaver," 36, 42.

[49] Ibid., 24-25, 43-44.

[50] Ibid., 24, 28-29.

[51] Ibid., 36.

defense of a fellow New England minister.[52] Coming to the aid of one Benjamin Doolittle, whose parishioners had united in protest of the lavish lifestyle and undue wealth that led to his owning a slave, Edwards lauded the religious profit a slave stood to gain when serving a Christian master.[53] Edwards wrote that it behooved a slaveowner to show kindness and grace to their slaves, in imitation of Christ's example of a "good master."[54] There was no question that the racial distinction of slave and master was a providential one and not to be railed against, but that did not mean a master should mistreat his slave.[55]

Edwards goes on to reinforce the legitimacy of owning and trading in slaves born in North America, but to question the cruelty of the Atlantic slave trade.[56] He voiced concerns about violating the sovereignty of African nations and of thwarting efforts at Christianization there through the capture and enslavement of African peoples.[57] Apparently these concerns did not stop him from purchasing slaves brought to the colonies through the Atlantic slave trade. They also did not stop him from knowingly "partaking" in the Atlantic slave trade as a consumer of the various products tied to slave production and trade—a conscious participation of which he also accused Doolittle's

[52] Ibid., 31.

[53] Ibid., 31-32, 35.

[54] Ibid., 40.

[55] Ibid., 38.

[56] Ibid., 36.

[57] Ibid., 36, 44.

critics.[58] Put simply, Edwards' would not entertain the abolition of slavery, believing the enslavement of Black men, women, and children by white masters to be God's will.

His eager participation in slavery and the larger system of racial capitalism were not simply a product of his cultural context, as Edwards' profound investment in order—on both the local and cosmic scale—was tied to his own intricate teleological account of human history and development. Edwards believed that the racial degeneracy and deficient rational capacities often attributed to so-called "pagan" peoples from Africa, North America, and other "uncivilized" lands could be traced back to the many centuries their cultures endured without the grace and truth of God's word.[59] As we will see, Edwards draws on prophetic texts from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament in an effort to construct a grand narrative of God's redemptive hand guiding human civilization from creation to Christ's return. We turn now to Edwards' unfinished "great work," *A History of the Work of Redemption*.[60]

"A body of divinity in an entire new method"

Based on a series of thirty "lecture-sermons" that Edwards preached to his congregants in Northampton over the spring and summer of 1739,[61] *A History of the Work of Redemption* was to be a new method of theology that considered "the grand design of God, and the *summum* and *ultimum* of all the divine operations and

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[58] Ibid., 36.

[59] Wheeler, "Lessons from Stockbridge," 134; WJE 14:495-496.

[60] WJE 9:555.

[61] WJE 9:1, 5.

decrees…with regard to all three worlds, heaven, earth, and hell."[62] Looking to capture the "harmony of the whole," Edwards wanted to put forth a theological project that was tied much more closely to his millenarian, eschatological vision of creation by presenting theology and prophecy "thrown into the form of a history."[63] This was to be, of course, a universal history deeply influenced by Edwards' personal experience with local religious awakening and revival in New England. Evidence for Edwards' belief in the particular historical significance of his time and place can be found in his one-time prediction that the impending millennium was "probably to dawn in America," a land which bore "the first fruits of that glorious day."[64]

Although Edwards' died before he was able to adapt his sermon series into the fully realized *History of the Work of Redemption,* we should not question its centrality in his thinking and authorial intentions. As Edwards scholar John F. Wilson assures us that "the Redemption Discourse stands as a systematic elaboration of a grand theme that appears at a remarkable number of places and times and under many different headings in the storehouse of [Edwards'] essays."[65] Edwards expressed as much when he wrote of his desire to focus on developing the sermons into the fully fleshed *History of the Work of Redemption* in response to an invitation to serve as president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton).[66] Given Edwards' untimely demise in 1758, his great work would sit

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[62] WJE 9:555-556.

[63] WJE 9:555-556.

[64] Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Awakening, in Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 4*, ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 353-354.

[65] WJE 9:1, 17.

[66] WJE 9: 555-556.

for almost two decades until 1774, when Scottish theologian John Erskine endeavored to edit the sermons into a single treatise, based on the transcriptions provided him by Jonathan Edwards Jr.[67] From this effort emerged *A History of the Work of Redemption*—an enduringly popular synthesis of prophetic texts, theology, history, and personal longing that has appealed to as unlikely a trio of figures as Harriet Beecher Stowe, H. Richard Niebuhr, and John Piper.[68] Wilson describes *Work of Redemption* as being "a manual of Calvinistic theology suited for lay readers and popular preachers," adding that "[i]t may not be too much to suggest that Edwards' history [as adapted by Erskine] was as influential as any other single book in fixing the cultural parameters of nineteenth-century American Protestant culture."[69] As we will see, Edwards managed to bind the immense historical drama of creaturely redemption to his present moment of New England religious order and emerging American identity.

Edwards' meticulously constructed history is divided up into three main sections: "the fall of man to Christ's incarnation," "Christ's incarnation till his resurrection," and "from thence to the end of the world."[70] The period of the fall to incarnation is divided into six subsections, incarnation to resurrection into a pair, and resurrection to the end of the world is divided into two subsections with thirteen further divisions between them.[71] Edwards relied primarily on the his interpretation of events detailed in the Hebrew Bible

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[67] WJE 9:1, 23-25.

[68] WJE 9: 82-100; Sweeney, "Evangelical tradition in America," 230-231.

[69] WJE 9:1, 82.

[70] WJE 9:127.

[71] WJE 9:129, 294-297, 351, 79.

and New Testament when composing this history but he also consulted "profane history," suggesting that God's providence worked through these non-Christian sources to preserve the truth.[72] Where history—both sacred and profane—was lacking, Edwards turned to his interpretation of prophetic texts. He assures his reader that,

> [t]hough the Scripture don't contain a proper history of the whole, yet there is contained the whole chain of great events by which this affair has been carried on from the foundation soon after the fall of man to the finishing of it at the end of the world either in history or prophecy. And 'tis to be observed that where the Scripture account is wanting in one of these ways it is made up in other; where Scripture history fails, there prophecy takes place. So that the account is still carried on and the chain is not broken till we come to the very last link of it in the consummation of all things.[73]

Far from the metaphorical, symbolic, or speculative, the history that Edwards presents is meant to be read as a precise, factual account of the causative series of events linking every human history and every human being to God's specific redemptive acts and grander redemptive plan. Edwards carries out a cosmic, totalizing act of narrative autopoiesis that comes to define both the human and the divine through their mutual binding to a foreclosed history.

In his first sermon, Edwards provides a brief overview of the ultimate purpose of redemption so that his audience can see the divine design guiding and connecting each historical era.[74] He outlines five accomplishments that constitute the purpose of redemption: 1) "to put all God's enemies under his feet and that the goodness of God should finally appear triumphing over all evil"; 2) "to restore all the ruins of the fall, so

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[72] WJE 9:242-244.

[73] WJE 9:242.

[74] WJE 9:123.

far as concerns the elect part of the world, by his Son"; 3) "to bring all elect creatures in heaven and earth to an union one to another, in one body under one head, and to unite all together in one body to God the Father"; 4) "to complete and perfect the glory of all the elect by Christ"; 5) "[i]n all this God designed to accomplish the glory of the blessed Trinity in an exceeding degree."[75] The dominion and glory of God, Christ, and the elect is an unsurprising agenda given what we know of Edwards as a theologian, but let us linger on the fifth and final cause—what Edwards' describes as the ultimate end from which the other objects unfold.[76] God's desire for self-glorification is, according to Edwards, what created the conditions for the entire drama of creation, sin, and redemption. Edwards writes that "God having proposed this end," referring to God's self-glorification, "had then, as it were, the means to choose." If we are to take Edwards at his word, then existence, the joy and suffering of being, all of the struggling, questioning, reveling, wondering, all of it including eternal election and damnation and the sin and salvation that make them necessary, God chose it all because it best suited God's desire for self-glorification.[77] Edwards would certainly say that God is deserving of such glory, he would likely find it appalling that anyone would question it, but it is difficult for me not to see such a choice as one of the greatest acts of control imaginable.[78] The self-institution of God—specifically God worthy of all glory—as the ultimate end of creation through the narrative of redemption enacts total mastery over being in general, the

[75] WJE 9:123-125.

[76] WJE 9:125.

[77] WJE 9:125.

[78] WJE 9:341-342.

capacities and will of human beings, and the eternal fate of all living things. Yet the account of this divine self-institution is delivered by Edwards, whose own narrative autopoiesis is reciprocally enacted in his assertion of God's performance of the divine self. Once more, we find the distinction between the will of God and the white man's will on the verge of collapse.

Over the course of his thirty sermons, Edwards deploys the five-fold design of divine redemption as the central interpretive framework that helps weave histories, prophecies, theologies, and his own personal experience into a universal historical narrative. As we have observed, the logic of election is operative in every element of providence outlined by Edwards. An important manifestation of this logic is the assertion that a "true church" existed from the beginning of humanity and was set to endure until Christ's return.[79] This authentic group of believers was not a visible sect but a continuous lineage of the faithful who were never bound by the different institutional manifestations of Christianity—Edwards includes Judaism, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, and some misguided Protestant groups—and their various failings. Perpetually displaced, the true church exists in a near-constant state of persecution and suffering—such affliction was evidence of their faithfulness and election—with a few notable periods of reprieve.[80] It was the true church that kept the faith and spread the light of the gospel through the churning tides of history.[81] Edwards of course believed that among the Puritans of New England were to be found the inheritors of that true church.

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[79] WJE 9:443-444.

[80] WJE 9:371-374, 443-445.

[81] WJE 9:128-129.

Edwards recounting of the time between the fall and Christ's incarnation is focused primarily on God's gracious preservation of the true church and continual cleansing of the wicked from the earth through supernatural punishment, conquest, and enslavement.[82] Even with his abundant citation of scripture, Edwards ends up extending a lot of his theological positions to cover the blank spaces, as it were. For instance, Edwards speculates that the extremely long lives of humans attested to in the book of Genesis were limited by God so that humans would seek redemption from God and cast their gaze towards eternal life, rather than finding satisfaction in their mortal existence.[83] Edwards plucks countless other details and events from the pages of scripture to weave into his theological chronology and strengthen the ties binding the divine work of redemption to a linear timeline.

At one point he also presents what we might call both geographies and migrations of election, suggesting that in ancient times the devil led whole nations away from Jerusalem and its neighboring countries in an effort to keep them distanced from the gospel—depositing them in America and "northern cold regions."[84] The Mediterranean and Western Europe, what Edwards calls the "old world," he designates as the home of true religion, while the "new world" was "wholly the possession of Satan," until the moment of its conquest and colonization by European Christians.[85] In the interim centuries, the peoples in these regions were deprived of "[h]umanity, civility, common

[82] WJE 9:147-168.

[83] WJE 9:185.

[84] WJE 9:155, 178.

[85] WJE 4:354-356.

decency, and religion," leading to their decent into "beastly lusts," "brutish ignorance," wickedness, and barbarity.[86] This of course was done in accordance with God's will and to further the glory of God's redemptive work.

Perhaps unsurprising from a man who so thoroughly endorsed suffering as a mode of Christian life, Edwards has Christ's suffering and humiliation figure centrally from the fall until Jesus incarnation, death, and resurrection.[87] Christ suffered on behalf of the elect in order to pay the debt that was owed to God and suffered in order that God might be all the more glorified in Christ's resurrection. Time and time again Edwards invokes the severity and necessity of Christ's suffering and humiliation, as if each detail of debasement and torture revealed the shining glory of the Father that much clearer.[88] He provides, to put it crudely, a gleefully punishing account of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

Once Edwards arrives at the third era of his history, stretching from the resurrection to the end of the world, we begin to see how closely the divine work of redemption is intertwined with the progress of so-called Western civilization. Like two strands of the same cord, the Christian history of redemption and the enlightenment history of human development do not directly parallel one another, but are bound to the same pattern, wound around a shared trajectory. To begin, Edwards writes about the overturning of four great empires in preparation for the coming of Christ's almighty kingdom: Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. He broadly refers to these four as the

[86] WJE 4:496; WJE 9:380-381, 397, 433-435.

[87] WJE 9:175.

[88] WJE 9:306-332.

greatest kingdoms of Satan and suggests that their towering might and immense downfall all bring God glory—especially when compared to Christ's eternal reign.[89] But when he descends into the particulars of each empire he is not generally condemnatory, and he reveals a particular affiliation to both Greece and Rome. The Greeks he praises at length for disseminating their language throughout the "the greater part of the world" and paving the way for the spread of the gospel.[90] The Romans he compares to the English, citing the peace, unity, and sophisticated infrastructure that defined the Roman empire.[91] In both Greece and Rome, "learning and philosophy were risen to their greatest height in the heathen world," according to Edwards. While Christ's gospel would make foolish the wisdom of the philosopher, God would deign to make such wisdom "subservient to the purposes of the Christ's kingdom as a handmaid to divine revelation."[92]

Such subservience would characterize not only Roman thought, but also the political and military might of the empire. Edwards paints an extreme picture of Roman persecution of Christians, citing torture, martyrdom, and ultimately the execution of "thousands and millions" of believers.[93] But this apex of pagan strength would prove to be a kingdom of straw, built up only to be brought down for God's glory. The rise of Constantine, which for Edwards marks the fall of Rome, was "accompanied with a glorious spiritual resurrection of the bigger part of the known world in a restoration to a

[89] WJE 9:244-249.

[90] WJE 9:272.

[91] WJE 9:277.

[92] WJE 9:277-278.

[93] WJE 9:389-390.

visible church state from a state of heathenism."[94] The whole might of the Roman empire was given over to Christendom, with the messianic figure of Constantine arriving "like Christ's appearing in the clouds of heaven to save his people and judge the world."[95] Edwards goes so far as to say that "[t]his revolution was the greatest revolution and change in the face of things on the face of the earth that ever came to pass in the world since the flood."[96] A truly momentous occasion.

Edwards explains that there is much more to celebrate in the fall of Rome beyond Christendom's rise to power and Constantine's prefiguration of Christ's return. He seems especially enthusiastic about the shift in the dominant social and political order. Edwards reports that

> all heathen magistrates were put down, and only Christians were advanced to places of authority, all over the empire. They had now Christian presidents, Christian governors, Christian judges and officers, instead of their old heathenish ones. Constantine set up himself to put honor on Christian bishops or ministers, and to build and adorn churches; and now large and beautiful Christian churches were erected in all parts of the world instead of the old heathen temples.[97]

Although Edwards' does not explicitly draw the comparison, this is Calvin's Geneva writ large—a society where the state promotes the flourishing of Christianity and where Christians control the mechanisms of the state, not a theocracy but a "Christian nation." Edwards views this period as a golden age of "great peace and prosperity" for Christianity and as a clear model for Christendom. He compares the overthrow of Rome

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[94] WJE 9:352.

[95] WJE 9:394.

[96] WJE 9:396.

[97] WJE 9:396.

to "the devil's being cast out of heaven to the earth."[98] And in fact, he suggests that Satan was forced to build his kingdom in "meaner and more barbarous nations, lower parts of the world of mankind."[99] This is familiar territory in the politics of being, with Edwards drawing deeply from the narrative coding of the genre of Man and thus reproducing the continuous cultural field of coloniality. What is novel about Edwards approach is his conflation of histories, prophecies, theologies, and desires into a fixed, determinative, chronological cosmogony—he is forging an absolute narrative with a very long view from an exceedingly limited vantage point, and anything that isn't folded into his account of the past or vision of the future is cast aside, barred from history and the possibility of human experience. Link by link, being itself is shackled to Edwards' grand conception of the divine work of redemption.

The peaceful era of Constantine's reign would not long endure. Edwards recounts Satan's efforts to "infest the church with heresies" and thus overthrow Christendom from within. This devilish endeavor soon met with great success, as the true religion that marked Constantine's empire was supplanted by the rise of the Roman Catholic Church its papal "antichrist."[100] The medieval rule of the Papacy was, according to Edwards, "the darkest and most dismal day that ever the Christian church saw, and probably the darkest that ever it will see."[101] He notes that the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church in the

[98] WJE 9:397.

[99] WJE 9:397.

[100] WJE 9:404-410.

[101] WJE 9:409.

west was paired with the ascension of "Satan's Mohammedan Kingdom" in the east.[102] Citing prophesies from the book of *Revelation*, Edwards' tracks the providential rise of Muhammad and the Pope, demonstrating God's will that they oppress and persecute the true church in preparation for future glory.[103]

Redemption was found in the arrival of Luther, Calvin, and the Reformation. Although pockets of the true church persisted in England, Scotland, France and Germany, it was not until Luther's great war against the papacy that revival would spread across the continent.[104] Roundly condemning the heresies of Anabaptists, Quakers, Arminians, the Church of England, and Deists, Edwards heralds Calvin and Calvinists, tracing a pure line of true reformed Christianity from Geneva to the Puritans that fled persecution in England to colonize North America.[105] Edwards' Puritan "forefathers" found themselves amidst a slew of heathen nations in great need of the gospel.[106] So severe was their lack of the light of true religion, that Edwards' reckoned God guided "the mariner's compass" to the discovery of the Americas and would further guide discovery of the rest of the globe so that the gospel might be spread to all nations.[107] Towards that end, it was up to the true church to seize on "that remarkable pouring out of the Spirit of God which has been in this part of New England."[108]

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[102] WJE 9:410.

[103] WJE 9:410-416.

[104] WJE 9:418-422.

[105] WJE 9:422-433.

[106] WJE 9:429.

[107] WJE 9:433-435.

[108] WJE 9:436.

Casting his gaze towards the future, Edwards reminds his readers that the true church will persist in a state of persecution and suffering until Christ's return.[109] He predicts that a time will soon come when "there shall be the spirit of popery and the spirit of Mohammedanism and the spirit of heathenism all united" against the true church.[110] The church will war with the forces of evil and eventually triumph, crushing Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, Heathenism, and all the heretical sects of Protestantism.[111] With this great victory Christendom will spread across the globe and, as Edwards writes,

> [t]hen shall the many nations of Africa, the nations of Negroes and others—heathens that chiefly fill that quarter of the world, that now seem to be in a state but little above the beasts in many respects and as much below them in others—be enlightened with glorious light, and delivered from all their darkness, and shall become civil, Christian and an understanding and holy people. Then shall this vast continent of America, that now in so great part of it is covered with barbarous ignorance and cruelty, be everywhere covered with glorious gospel light and Christian love, and instead of worshiping the devil as now, they now shall serve the true God…So may we expect in will be in that great and populous part of the world, the East Indies that are now mostly worshipers of the devil, and so throughout that vast country, cruel Turkey. And then the kingdom of Christ will also be established in those continents that have more lately been discovered towards the north and south poles, where now men differ very little from the wild beasts—excepting that they worship the devil and beasts do not—and in many countries that never yet have been discovered.[112]

With this vision Edwards reveals quite clearly his assessment of the present state of the world and provides us with further insight into his investment in the existing order of things. In practice, his notion of the progress of redemption seems little different than the modern humanist understanding of the progress of the species. The global spread of

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[109] WJE 9:443-454.

[110] WJE 9:463.

[111] WJE 9:463-471.

[112] WJE 9:472.

gospel light appears to be indistinguishable from the global dominion of so-called Western Christianity and culture.

As a closed eschatology, Edwards' history would diverge sharply from the open-ended theory of human development through natural selection that arrived on the scene in the 19th century. With an end in sight, Christendom's reign of peace and near universal belief will be brought down, as the last battle between good and evil will herald the return of Christ and the final judgment of God.[113] As Christ gathers the few elect to his side, "[t]he bodies of the wicked that shall be then living shall be so changed as to fit 'em for eternal torment without corruption, and the bodies of the living saints shall be changed to be like Christ's glorious body."[114] The true church shall flock to the throne of God to marvel forever at the divine countenance.[115] Both the heavens and earth shall be put the flame and be transformed into a "great furnace, wherein all the enemies of Christ and his church shall be tormented forever and ever."[116] And so the end of history will come and the great work of redemption will be accomplished—the perfect enactment of divine mastery and performance of total control, all to the glory of God.

[113] WJE 9:494-501.

[114] WJE 9:497.

[115] WJE 9:499-502.

[116] WJE 9:505.

"There is no colonizer, civilizer, nor Christianizer like commerce"[117]

As we have observed in our study of previous epistemes, the so-called Modern Era does not mark the first instances of conquest, territorial expansion, enslavement, and capitalist accumulation being deployed as a means of mastery that grounds the enactment of masculine identities. The imperial *dominus* has a death-dealing lineage that can be traced back well beyond Western Europe's surge from provincial outlier to global terror. As usual, our interest does not lie in discerning a definite point of origin—an effort that often involves conceptual intricacies that distract from material histories—rather, we seek to further examine how control operates in the interdependence of slavery, settler colonialism, and so-called modern capitalism as they are accounted for in the entangled histories of the 18th and 19th centuries. In doing so, we will clarify how whiteness, mastery, manhood, and wealth are adaptively encoded in the narrative self-institution of the-human-as-man.

In his study of the history of Black revolt and the Black Radical Tradition, Cedric Robinson argues that "[t]he development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, so too did social ideology. As a material force, then, it could be expected that racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism."[118] This is not to say that the abstract concepts of racism and capitalism are essentially linked, but that the concrete, historical conditions of their emergence were inescapably intertwined. More specifically, Robinson writes that

[117] Matthew Maury, as quoted in Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 301.

[118] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 37.

"the Atlantic slave trade and the slavery of the New World were integral to the modern world economy. Their relationship to capitalism was historical and organic rather than adventitious or synthetic."[119] He makes it clear that we should not mistake the interdependence of capitalism and racism as a chance encounter or as the subsequent integration of slavery and the slave trade into an existing capitalist system. To put it simply, Robinson urges us to recognize that racism and capitalism are mutually constitutive in the so-called modern era.

Robinson develops his argument from two key interventions: first, that capitalism was not a radical interruption of feudalism as much as a global expansion of its stratified socioeconomic structures; second, that antagonistic racialized distinctions were essential to the rise of Western Europe and constituted an enduring mechanism internal to that geopolitical assemblage, not merely a reaction to external encounters with "foreign" others.[120] The diverse peoples, cultures, and languages of Western Europe—once grouped under the sweeping designation of "barbarian" by the Greeks and Romans—warred constantly in an effort to top the shifting hierarchy of power.[121] Amidst these dueling kingdoms and empires, the bureaucratic structures of statehood began to emerge along with an increasing sense of nationalist identity.

While this history may be well known, Robinson notes that we often fail to recognize that underlying this contested geopolitical landscape was a ubiquitous and

[119]Ibid., 39.

[120] Ibid., 43.

[121] Ibid.

enduring investment in slave trading and slave labor.[122] Citing Moses Finley's analysis of slavery in antiquity, Robinson argues that from the Greeks and Romans onward, "slave labor as a critical basis of production would continue without any significant interruption into the twentieth century."[123] As Finley asserts, slavery was a pervasive feature of society in antiquity—with Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians all utilizing slave labor—but it was the Greeks, and the Romans following in their stead, who first structured their economies around a permanent workforce of the enslaved.[124] It is this line of foundational economic dependence on slave labor that Robinson traces into the Modern era. During the humanist upheaval of the Renaissance, for instance, European peoples from across the continent were slaves in the households of many Italian and Spanish families, and worked the plantations and mines in Spain and in Italian colonies.[125] Slaves had universal exchange value across the histories and geographies of Europe. The capacity and propensity to designate enslavable others was, Robinson argues, integral to the factious relations that governed Western European social and political order well before its expansion to global power.[126]

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[122] Ibid., 44-45.

[123] Ibid., 44. One could reasonably question what Robinson might count as a "significant interruption," given the various abolitionist efforts undertaken throughout the 19th century. I would suggest that Robinson is pointing specifically to the function of slave labor as "a critical basis of production," rather than to slave labor generally speaking. Thus, the abolition of slavery would not necessary indicate the dismantling of the mechanisms of production that had slavery as their basis. While the institution of slavery might have come to an end in several different contexts, the economic structures built from slave labor did not.

[124] M.I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: The Viking Press, 1980), 17-44, 81.

[125] Ibid., 49.

[126] Ibid.

Robinson provides a concise account of this pervasive mechanism of simultaneously ontological and economic classification—an account that at this point should be of no surprise to us—writing:

> The tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into "racial" ones. As the Slavs [*sic*] became the natural slaves, the racially inferior stock for domination and exploitation during the early Middle Ages, as the Tartars came to occupy a similar position in the Italian cities of the late Middle Ages, so at the systemic interlocking of capitalism in the sixteenth century, the peoples of the Third World began to fill this expanding category of a civilization reproduced by capitalism.[127]

In summarizing Europe's persistent history of enslavement vis-à-vis the ideological mechanisms of racial differentiation, Robinson clearly demonstrates the "historic and organic" grounds of capitalism and racism's interdependence, as opposed to a theory of capitalism's adventitious adoption of racists logics.[128] This would confirm that racial capitalism is, as Robinson argues from the start, a development and expansion of an adaptive sociopolitical order that dominated the provinces of Europe, and subsequently allow us to focus our attention on the particular shifts in racial logics, economic terms of mastery, and nationalist identity that were achieved as a result of the rise of the Atlantic slave trade and the plantation economies of the North American colonies. Drawing further on the work of Robinson together with that of Eric Williams and Walter Johnson, I hope to clearly demonstrate how industrialization, the development of global finance, the rise in wage labor, and the universalized exchange value of money—all of these conditions of the narrative coding of Man_2 and elements of so-called modern

[127] Ibid., 59.

[128] Ibid., 39, 59, 61.

capitalism—are rooted in material relations of the plantation.[129] The plantation itself is here operating as a microcosm of a budding nationalist, and enduringly Christian, order of masculine control.

Land, Labor, and Wealth

In order to more clearly examine the central function of the plantation in the global linking of the modern capitalist system, we need to risk the repetitive gesture of a brief and partial account of the rise of the Atlantic slave trade and the unique character of slavery as it persisted in the plantation economy of the United States. To begin, the vast tracks of land that were violently seized through conquest, colonization, and the surge-and-creep of settler-colonial expansion on the so-called North American continent and the Caribbean islands were not stolen primarily with a design for large scale plantation agriculture in mind. From very early on, white colonists (many of whom were ex-indentured servants) from Spain, Portugal, Britain, France, Sweden, and the Netherlands laid claim to plots of land with the dream of small-scale farms that supported the needs of domestic family units and modest intercolonial trade. Certainly, there were ambitious miners and enterprising European plantation owners hoping to expand their profits in the so-called New World, but their dreams were not realized immediately.[130] As Eric Williams reports, it was not until the mid-17th century establishment of sugar plantations in the Caribbean, and the eager replication on the mainland by tobacco planters just a few decades later and cotton planters at the end of the 18th century, that the plantation

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[129] Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 87.

[130] Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 2-6; Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 64-72.

economy took hold and the demand for the Black men, women, and children sold as slaves in West Africa began to soar.[131]

Apart from the high demand they commanded in the emerging system of Atlantic trade, sugar, tobacco, and cotton all required great tracts of land, abundant irrigation, and intensive labor to grow at a commercial scale. Adding to this difficulty, all three plants had the potential to severely deplete the soil in which they were grown—without proper crop rotation fields were left barren—and served little material purpose outside of their commodity value.[132] Yet, that value offered enormous prospective earnings and such earnings in turn promised the diversification of wealth in an increasingly globalized market; but only if there was ample product to drive demand and sustain the increasingly complex systems of capitalist trade. In order to bring this potential to fruition and enrich planters and merchants—a short list that would grow right along with said riches to include clerks, bankers, shipping companies, insurance salesmen, financiers, and many more—there would need to be a near-endless supply of fertile land and cheap labor.[133] As Williams notes, these problems were answered by persistent territorial expansion and an acute rise in demand for slaves from West Africa.[134]

As Robison points out, slavery was hardly a new practice in the provinces of Western Europe as "racialism and its permutations persisted, rooted not in a particular era

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[131] Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 64-65.

[132] Ibid., 38-39. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 155-159, 180-185.

[133] Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 85.

[134] Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 36-39.

but in the civilization itself."[135] Knowing this, we are left to determine how the turn away from white slaves and indentured servants to the piecemeal enslavement of indigenous peoples in North and South America and the systemized enslavement of African peoples marks a particular and deadly focusing of the racial and economics logics of mastery and their enactment of white masculinities.[136] The sharp increase in the population of Black slaves working Caribbean sugar plantations in the late 17th century and tobacco and cotton plantations in the mainland colonies in the early 18th century reflects the singular demand for Black slaves and the attendant emergence of a highly lucrative system of slave trading that connected the burgeoning centers of a transatlantic network of capitalist exchange.[137] As Wynter suggests—extending from the narrative coding of irrationality to that of evolutionary dysselection—the emerging classificatory metric of whiteness under which blackness burned as a sign of racial inferiority was instantiated by the subservient economic status of the enslaved, simultaneously enacting and reproducing the expedient lie that African peoples were "slaves by nature."[138] Upon countless racist theories seeking to rationalize the trade in Black men, women, and children as wholly natural was then built a system of enslavement, labor, and exchange that drove the entire complex of production, trade, and finance in the Atlantic world.[139] What emerged was a blood-

[135] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 61.

[136] Ibid., 49-50.

[137] Williams, *Slavery and Capitalism*, 65-72, 78-79.

[138] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 320-325.

[139] Williams, *Slavery and Capitalism*, 69-73, 79-81; Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 151.

drenched economic assemblage where credit, capital, and currency alike were "backed by flesh rather than gold."[140]

As our efforts at contextualization lead us closer to the plantation economy, where beyond the emergence of the Atlantic slave trade do we need look in order to demonstrate that, as Johnson writes, "in actual historical fact there was no nineteenth-century capitalism without slavery"?[141] Williams would point us first to the immense wealth accrued in the 18th century by the British empire through its domination of the triangular trade. More specifically, a trade that purchased slaves from the West African coast, delivering them to the planters in the so-called West Indies and American colonies, where those enslaved where forced to cultivate the raw materials that would then be transported to manufacturers in Britain, which produced the finished goods that would in turn be used to purchase slaves and maintain the machinery of capitalist production, labor, and trade.[142]

While France and the American colonies also grew richer from the trade, Williams writes that "[b]y 1750 there was hardly a trading or manufacturing town in England which was not in some way connected with the triangular or direct colonial trade."[143] Among the British manufacturing and trade centers of Lancashire, Manchester, Liverpool, and Bristol, not one stood even remotely apart from the slave trade. It was said of Bristol, "there is not a brick in the city but what is cemented with the blood of a

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[140] Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 86.

[141] Ibid., 254.

[142] Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 108-110.

[143] Ibid., 110.

slave,"[144] and of Liverpool that "the walls of the houses [were] cemented by the blood, of the African slaves."[145] Shipping, textile manufacturing, sugar refining, the distillation of spirits, the production of fine goods, banking, and metallurgy, all the different sectors of nearly every other sphere of the booming 18th century British economy were deeply entangled with the massively lucrative Atlantic slave trade.[146]

It is near the end of the 18th century that the geopolitical configuration of the Atlantic slave economy begins to shift significantly. The influx and diversification of wealth in Britain prompted further growth of industrial sectors, which steadily coalesced towards the end of the century to mark a technological and economic tipping point that historians typically refer to as the Industrial Revolution.[147] A great many intersecting factors led to the increased industrialism of Britain but I will seek to identify the most pertinent.

To begin, Britain's efforts to maintain dominance over the sugar market dwindled as French sugar colonies in the Caribbean far outstripped British in production. In light of this, the American Revolution in 1776 came as a death blow to any hopes British planters still held for sugar in the West Indies and forced a general reconsideration of the British role in Atlantic trade.[148] Part of this reconsideration involved the immense investment in

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[144] Ibid., 124.

[145] Ibid., 128.

[146] Ibid., 109-162. Williams treats this entanglement in detail in a chapter titled "British Commerce and the Triangular Trade."

[147] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 64. Robinson convincingly argues that the so-called Industrial Revolution extended far beyond the uniquely British character normally attributed to it and that it was far too incremental in the slow historical development of key technologies to be considered revolutionary.

[148] Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 212-226.

banking, insurance, and heavy industry that shaped the British economy over the course of the 18th century and provided a much more optimistic outlook on internal production and development.[149] The final shift would come in 1783, with the declaration of free trade between the United States and Britain—an embrace of the *laissez-faire* prioritization of expansion and innovation in the free market.[150]

This link between Britain and the U.S. only grew stronger in the ensuing years, sparking a mutually lucrative resurgence in the slave trade with the invention of the cotton gin in 1792.[151] The promise of a quick and efficient way to process cotton in bulk hinted at profits limited only by the rate of production. Demand for slave labor skyrocketed as cotton plantations spread to encompass huge swaths of the southern United States.[152] The burgeoning juggernaut of British industry and the newly revitalized production of cotton in the U.S. —both utterly dependent upon the capital and labor extracted from the slave trade—together formed an immense flow of capital across the Atlantic. As Johnson writes, "[t]he fortunes of cotton planters in Louisiana and cotton brokers in Liverpool, of the plantations of the Mississippi Valley and the textile mills of Manchester, were tied together through the cotton trade—the largest single sector of the global economy in the first half of the nineteenth century."[153]

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[149] Ibid., 185-194.

[150] Ibid., 226-227.

[151] Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 255-256.

[152] Ibid., 32.

[153] Ibid., 10.

It is important to note that the first half of the nineteenth century was also witness to the greatest successes of the British abolitionist movement. While this could be seen as a detriment to the vital partnership between British finance and America cotton, the British abolitionist in fact posed no threat to the ties binding Mississippi plantations and Liverpool banks. As Williams demonstrates, British abolitionists such as William Wilberforce were generally focused on slavery in the British West Indies, and particularly on ending the slave trade in those parts. Previous to 1823, Wilberforce and company were vocally against the emancipation of slaves, seeking only to bring a close to the slave trade.[154]

While emancipation was eventually grafted into the abolitionists' goals and was part of the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, a narrow focus was maintained on the issue of slavery in the British West Indies. British abolitionists did not attempt to address their country's utter dependence on the cotton industry and transatlantic trade that was fueled by chattel slavery in the United States.[155] A longtime co-conspirator of Wilberforce's and leader in the British abolitionist movement, Henry Brougham argued that slavery in the United States was wholly independent from the African slave trade and therefore not to be resisted—as slavery in the U.S. was dependent upon the organic process of reproduction rather than the seizure of peoples from a foreign land.[156] In the end, the British abolition of slavery did no harm to British investments in American slavery, the cotton industry, and the transatlantic trade, while also allowing the British to undermine

[154] Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 35-352.

[155] Ibid., 353-377.

[156] Ibid., 371.

their rivals on the continent who were still dependent on the Atlantic slave trade as a source of labor and medium of credit and exchange.

A Kingdom of Cotton

The particularly despicable nature of chattel slavery in the United States was centered in the southern cotton plantations and extended outwards into nearly every facet of the economic and social order in the U.S. Cotton and slaves may have been the business of New Orleans, Charleston, and the greater Mississippi Valley in the 19th century, but they were also the lifeblood of northern finance, trade, and industry. Manhattan, Boston, Philadelphia, and Newport all wrapped their roots tightly around the profitable capitalist networks of the slave trade and slave labor, happy to insure slave ships, credit planters, and funnel slaves from their own ports down into the Southern states. Contrary to popular assumptions, slavery was not a contentious issue dividing North and South—it was the economic foundation of the United States and the primary source of capital in the Atlantic trade.[157] Beyond Manhattan and New Orleans, the promise of cotton drove manufacturing in Manchester, drew huge investments from the financiers in Liverpool, and fueled the further diversification of industry and trade in the Atlantic market.[158] This constituted what Johnson describes as "[t]he repatterning of the global economy—American cotton, British capital."[159]

It was not just the global economy that underwent a transformation with the rise of cotton; the geography of the Mississippi Valley itself was forcibly reshaped in service

[157] Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 10.

[158] Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 230-232.

[159] Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 86.

to the emerging "Cotton Kingdom."[160] The Mississippi River was subject to constant engineering efforts—levees, cutoffs, dredging, and straightening—leading to flooding, swamps, and irreversible alterations to the river's flow.[161] These efforts at mastering the mighty river brought with them widespread deforestation across the entire valley and the ensuing erosion of the Mississippi's banks.[162] The very soil of the Mississippi Valley was sapped of its nutrients by the mono-cropping that channeled the singular focus on profits driving the plantation economy—food staples struggled to grow in the increasingly barren soil and indigenous plant life was steadily cleared away to make room for cotton fields.[163]

These eager attempts to master the land were dependent on planters' control over the enslaved and their labor. Treated as the embodiment of production, slaves were measured "to the hand," a quantification of the cotton that they could pick and the potential yield of an acre.[164] The labor of an enslaved person was tightly regulated and brutally enforced on plantations that were organized around maximizing the output of cotton and fulfilling the desires of the planter. Johnson describes this as "the reduction of landscape to cotton plantation and of human being to 'hand.'"[165] The cotton kingdom was an enactment of the narrative coding of racial difference on the horizon of natural

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[160] Ibid., 8.

[161] Ibid., 88-90.

[162] Ibid., 90 ,94.

[163] Ibid., 8.

[164] Ibid., 153-154.

[165] Ibid.

selection and a reproduction of the material relations that constituted the economic networks of power linking imperial interests across the Atlantic: a hyper-focused articulation of the dominant politics of being.

Slaves were treated as an appendage of their master's will and as both measure and object of his general desire for wealth and immediate lust for control. Parsing the technologies of violence that constituted both the plantation economy and the performative formation of the master, Johnson writes "[a]s their slaves were pieced out in the market, deployed in their houses and their fields, and degraded before their eyes, slaveholders were defining the human condition of mastery: the condition of gazing, claiming, supervising, delighting, penetrating, climaxing, and maiming at will—the human condition of owning."[166] An essential element of enacting and maintaining this "human condition of owning" was plantation owners' rape of the Black women they enslaved.

Addressing the institutionalization of rape in American slavery, Angela Davis notes that "[r]ape, in fact, was an uncamouflaged expression of the slaveholder's economic mastery and the overseer's control over Black women as workers."[167] Davis' notion of economic mastery helps us to identify rape (and the threat of rape) as a tool for discipline and a method for coercing labor, but it also illuminates the reproductive economy of slaveowners' sexual production of their enslaved labor force. Traci West notes the horrific operations of "forced breeding" programs instituted by slaveowners, wherein enslaved women were "made to submit to black slave men who were chosen by

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[166] Ibid., 171.

[167] Angela Davis, *Women, Race, & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 16, 49.

the master for breeding purposes."[168] Slave owners oftentimes took a more direct role in forced breeding, choosing to rape their female slaves both for pleasure and for the production of offspring.[169] And, as Pamela Bridgewater has detailed, forced breeding of enslaved people was not an anomaly but a "formal practice," that "some posit…was a critical commodity on par with other slave industry commodities such as tobacco and cotton."[170] In this context, rape was not simply a performative enactment of mastery-as-masculinity, but the material production of the master through the biological reproduction of those enslaved.

While it was essential to the plantation, the desire for control extended far beyond the small, hyper-wealthy planter class. The majority of white men in the Mississippi Valley—those who fancied themselves masters of their households but labored under the inferior status of nonslaveholder and struggled against the economic scarcity stemming from cotton's totality—were still in thrall to the promise of mastery and thus bound by their desires to those who had already laid claim to such eminence. Johnson suggests that "[a]s long as they did not go so far as to diminish the value held by actual slaveholders, nonslaveholding white men were baited by the hope that they might one day accede to a full share in slavery—that they might one day be men in full."[171] Just as Wynter suggested, we see how the self-institution of the genre of *homo economicus* both enacts

[168] Traci C. West, *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 14-15.

[169] Pamela D. Bridgewater, "Ain't I a Slave: Slavery, Reproductive Abuse, and Reparations," *UCLA Women's Law Journal*, 14.1 (2005): 121.

[170] Ibid., 122.

[171] Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 373. The temporarily embarrassed billionaires of their day?

and reproduces dominant material relations at the intersection of race, class, gender, and culture.

The microcosm of the planter's mastery also extended out into a much broader cosmology of the plantation society that helped in shaping the U.S. empire. Examining this pervasive ideological influence, Johnson treats at length the immensely popular work of paradigmatic "Louisiana slave doctor and racial theorist" Samuel Cartwright.[172] In his efforts to cast race as the driving force of natural history and the primary interpretive framework of human development, Cartwright put forth a whole host of theories explaining the physiological distinctions that separated the different races of humanity—theories that we should rightly deem ridiculous but were well respected in his day. Among these were the idea that white men's physical senses were sophisticated and discerning in comparison to the animalistic strength of the Black man's; that Black slaves have hardier digestive systems and unrefined palates; that the lungs of Black people are smaller and require less oxygen than that of white people; that his reduced consumption of oxygen is reflected in an innate lack of internal motivation and thus an intrinsic need for the driving will of the white man.[173] Cartwright gathered evidence for his theories by observing daily life on cotton plantations and testing his empirical observations through the scientific method, all in full view of his intellectual community. His findings were quickly disseminated and roundly celebrated.[174]

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[172] Ibid., 200.

[173] Ibid., 200-202.

[174] Ibid., 201.

For Cartwright, the organic necessity of slavery involved the global history of human development. His empirical research led him to the conclusion that the advancement of humankind in general was dependent upon the tremendous power of will that had been granted to 'the white man' in particular.[175] He wrote that "[t]he African will starve rather than engage in a regular system of agricultural labor, unless impelled by the stronger will of the white man."[176] Continuing the autopoietic reproduction of the white man as master, Cartwright goes on to explain that,

> However disinclined to labor the Negroes [*sic*] may be, they cannot help themselves; they are obliged to move and exercise their muscles when the white man, acquainted with their character, *wills* that they should do so…No other compulsion is necessary to make them perform their daily tasks than *his will be done*…The same ordinance which keeps the spheres in their orbits and holds satellites in subordination to the planets, is the ordinance that subjects the Negro [*sic*] race to the empire of the white man's will.[177]

With profound echoes of Aristotelian cosmology, Cartwright draws on a near-transcendent conception of 'the white man's will'—his language invoking the Lord's Prayer—and its powerful place among the driving forces of history. We can observe the immense enactment of control in the naturalized self-institution of an upper-class, white, masculine identity that fits perfectly the narrative coding and descriptive statement of the dominant politics of being. Mastery is narratively and materially conflated with manhood, with whiteness, with the administration of labor, dominion over land, household, and property—specifically in the domination of Black women, men, and

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[175] Ibid., 201-203.

[176] As quoted in Johnson, 203.

[177] Ibid., as quoted in Johnson, 202.

children. Cartwright writing provides us with a record of the intersecting technologies of control operating within the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom.

Johnson also recounts the work of Cartwright's intellectual peer, Chancellor Harper, whose writings were published alongside Cartwright's in E.N. Elliot's infamous *Cotton Is King*.[178] Harper believed slavery to be the bedrock of civilization, and forced labor to be the primary tool with which a brighter, more sophisticated and enlightened future was built.[179] This vision of the future was shaped by a teleological conception of the created order, as Harper saw attested to in Christian scriptures.[180] He treated labor, particularly slave labor, as the ideal fulfillment of God's command and proper stewardship of God's creation.[181] Thus, the plantation was for Harper the ideal manifestation of divine order and of proper Christian life—as Johnson puts it, Harper gloried in "the plantation as Providence."[182]

His vision of the divinely ordained plantation was so lofty that even the persistent rape of slaves by their masters could not tarnish it. Harper was blatantly unbothered by the sexual violence of slaveowners, arguing that the vast difference in human capacity meant that slaveowners were barely committing the act at all and the slaves they raped were unlikely to feel what was transpiring in any meaningful way.[183] Witness how this

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[178] Ibid., 203.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Ibid., 205.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Ibid., 206.

[183] Ibid., 204-205.

horrific abuse functioned as performance, product, and proof of slaveowners' mastery, masculinity, and humanity—revealing a grotesque conflation enacted in the planter's self-institution. In as much as it reflected the white man's will for Cartwright, the violence and mastery of the plantation was for Harper the perfect expression of God's will—a convergence that only served as further evidence for the belief that the two were indeed one and the same.

As the 19th century wore on, the market dominance of cotton fluctuated but did not fall, until the industrialization of the northern states and ensuing conflicts over the economic viability of the plantation economy. By the latter half of the century, Northern industrial capitalists were not keen on bending the knee to southern planters and no longer felt that they should depend on southern cotton and the slave trade to fund the expansion of industry. They saw in the planters' localized mastery of flesh a limitation to economic growth, having discovered infinitely more versatile currents of wealth flowing from the universal exchange value of currency—money's promise of globalized mastery.[184] Thus, the "white man's will" that so violently governed the "plantation as Providence" did not merely fade into the latter half of the century; rather, the mastery enacted in the self-institution of masculinity and whiteness extended out into new mechanisms of dominance in the providential realm of the free market. While neither Cartwright nor Harper's plantation cosmology was brought to fruition, their work illustrates the entangled narrative coding and material relations that structured the social order and drove the economic expansion of the United States in the first half of the 19th century.

[184] Philip Goodchild, *Theology of Money* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 56-57.

At Millennium's Edge

The goal of this chapter is not to fold Edwards, the genre of Man_2, and the material conditions of racial capitalism together in a tidy culminating move. While Edwards certainly exhibits many of the elements of mastery that we have traced through this continuous cultural field of control, he presents a distinctively narrative enactment of Man-as-the-human in his story of redemption—an account that is uniquely suggestive of the narrative coding that would structure the genre of Man_2 and shape the surge of racial capitalism soon after his death. Edwards the renowned preacher was clearly aware of the power of stories, given his drive to rearticulate Christian theology through the multiple narrative frameworks of Biblical stories, secular histories, prophetic texts, theological tradition, and contemporary events—weaving these different narrative threads together into one grand, hyper-detailed, chronologically exacting account of the purpose of created being. That his storytelling work was carried out through the performative enactment of mastery in the context of colonialism, slavery, and a patriarchal, Christian supremacist community reveals a dense point of contact between multiple technologies of control.

The eerie resonances between Edwards' theological method and our own analysis of the productive power of storytelling codes and narrative autopoiesis in the politics of being is what drew me to his *History of the Work of Redemption* in the first place. While a disturbing appeal to divine control might be present in his infamous fire and brimstone sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," *Work of Redemption* is doing significantly more. In struggling to discern where he fits as a New England preacher, a revivalist, and member of the true church awaiting the dawning of the millennium in the New World, Edwards creates this simultaneously immense and hyper-localized narrative

that draws together all of these different mechanisms of control that help to define his own purpose and the purpose of his fellow believers. By default, the existence of everyone outside the bounds of the true church comes to be defined in Edwards' attempt to articulate the ultimate end of being. The many layers of mastery that are folded together in this expansive work of self-institution become markers of providential will and manifestations of divine grace. While certainly not identical in content to the theory of natural selection that would soon emerge, this logic of election clearly functioned in a complimentary manner with the narrative coding of evolutionary selection/dysselection—maintaining, despite ideological conflicts between the positions, the necessity of a hierarchical order that was naturalized by the totality of both capitalist and Christian histories.

In casting this grand narrative of redemption out from his specific point in the timeline of God's saving work, Edwards locks the present moment into a predetermined order of events. As we have observed, this reinforces for Edwards the importance of maintaining a certain trajectory for the terms of order, as they are a product of the divine will and a necessary grace that enables the passage forward into Christ's impending return. So Edwards' ecclesial authority, social influence, general wealth, mastery over his wife and children, ownership of slaves, evangelical empowerment of settler colonialism—all of these technologies of control, so many of them constitutive of the overrepresented genre of Man_2 that are part and parcel to Edwards' practice of being human—are narrated as providentially ordained and an important part of furthering God's redemptive plan. These localized enactments of narrative coding and genre also operate as part of a reciprocal production and reproduction of the global politics of

being—a network of power structured around geographies of "colonial difference."[185] We see the reality of this in plantation cosmology its broader entanglement with the currents of capital exchange driving the Atlantic world in the 19th century. While Edwards' *History of the Work of Redemption* begins with the creation and fall of humanity, it actually originates in and emanates from the storytelling codes that give shape to Edwards' performative enactment of his identity as a preacher, husband, slaveowner, father, and wealthy, white male participant in the settler-colonial experiment that would become the United States. In this sense, what Edwards saw as the links "of divine providence" leading from and returning to God were constituted by the very real links of chain that governed the material realities of racial capitalism in Edwards' New England colony and across the Atlantic world.

[185] Walter D. Mignolo, trans. Michael Ennis, "Coloniality at Large: The Western Hemisphere in the Colonial Horizon of Modernity," *The New Centennial Review,* Vol. 1, No. 2 (fall 2001): 20-30.

CONCLUSION

TO BE SOFT, TO BE OTHERWISE

> there have been so many times
> i have seen a man wanting to weep
> but
> instead
> beat his heart until it was unconscious.
>
> —nayyirah waheed, *salt.*

> The only ways that a decolonial project may avoid its own demise are by engaging the conditions of the invention of blackness, how that invention produces the manifold conditions of unfreedom, and how those conditions produce various genres of the human that are continually defined against blackness.
>
> —Rinaldo Walcott, *The Long Emancipation*

> We have to figure out how to exist on the earth with a kind of buoyancy and delicateness, a way that honors the fact of our creatureliness as in relation to all that is. This lightness and vulnerability of being, this caring for the earth by inhabiting otherwise worlds—not as places but as modalities of existence—is what Black and indigenous and queer folks *beeeeeen* been doing. And this because we never submitted to the idea of a "*the* world" as a kind of individual thing, an only thing.
>
> —Ashon Crawley, *The Lonely Letters*

I fear that what follows will fail to deliver the satisfaction of a concluding flourish, offering instead a return to our earliest questions and the possibility of a clearer, more precise re-articulation of the issue of men's violence and masculinities. Rather than drawing to a close, I want to spend these final moments working to draw together various connections from the historical analysis of the preceding chapters and to glance ahead towards the way these connections might help us to more clearly theorize how power, violence, and mastery continue to shape the performative enactment of masculinities and

to respond to these limitations imposed on the practice of being by the enduring self-institution of Man-as-human. While this work has been, by and large, an effort to account for the interdependent operations of control across multiple histories—descriptive work that I don't think needs the justification of a prescriptive turn—it is my hope that these accounts of control might help us to initiate some form of response. As preliminary as it needs be at this stage, "response" perhaps overstates what we can accomplish here. "Reorientation" may better suit our goals—making from this particular end a kind of passageway into a new beginning.

The interest in examining different histories of control has, from the onset, been motivated by a desire to account for the interdependent operations of power, violence, and identity in relation to the contemporary concerns of men's violence and masculinities in the U.S., and, more specifically, in the context of Christian beliefs and practices. Theorizing control and tracing its operations across a constellation of multiple, related-but-not-consecutive histories provides the opportunity to test the usefulness of control as an analytic and to deepen our understanding of various technologies of control in different contexts. There are, as we will see, certain claims we can make in light of this work concerning the operations of control and how we might seek to confront them. This look ahead will not get us all the way there—to a full-fledged strategy for confrontation—but I hope that it will clarify some of what is needed to move forward and provide key markers to guide the next steps. Much of the provisional nature of these concluding thoughts stems from the lingering need to address the one hundred and seventy years that span the historical gap between the last chapter and the present moment. These histories need to be bridged—will be bridged as the work progresses—

but for the time being we will only hint at the contours of that arching interplay. Please do forgive, then, what is certain to be a close and anticipatory interplay of the tentative, conclusive, suggestive, and inquisitive.

The Intervening Years

A great many histories crowd the span of nearly two centuries separating the cotton-fueled industrial surge of the 19th century and the late stages of 21st century global corporatization and neo-liberal capitalist imperialism. Of course, we should not hope to account for every twist and turn of control's mechanisms in the past two hundred years, but we also cannot afford to dance lightly over the decades where mastery-as-masculinity underwent such intense adaptation amidst immense social and geopolitical upheaval. To put it lightly, a lot has happened in the interval. Our initial goal in the opening of this concluding-yet-inconclusive turn is to establish a historical focus that will guide the work to come.

As our interrogation of control approaches the present moment, my hope is to draw together many of the disparate lines of connection that run between and across the multiple histories we have encountered. It should be noted that this convergent point of focus will simply be one of many possible ways to link pasts and presents, not an attempt to turn a specific course of study into some kind of general revelation. With that in mind, my eventual hope for the culminating phase of our confrontation with control is to center our attention on the functions of mastery-as-masculinity within the development of Christian nationalism in the United States. Specifically, I want to examine the co-operations of control at work in the rise of Christian nationalism and the different theo-political orientations—conservative Christian, liberal Christian, and "secular"—that

develop self-consciously disparate, if not opposed, positions while sharing underlying commitments in the politics of being.

It is Cedric Robinson who points out the immense, and often overlooked, significance of nationalism as a global, historic force.[1] Although he notes its potential for fueling revolutionary uprising, Robinson also argues that the rise of "modern nationalism" in nineteenth century Europe was essential to the cultural conservation of racialism, the virulent spread of capitalism, and the instability of class consciousness.[2] Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry's specific study of Christian nationalism in the United States resonates strongly with Robinson's broader insights concerning the multiple intersections operating in nationalist ideology. Whitehead and Perry explain:

> we mean "Christian Nationalism" to describe an ideology that idealizes and advocates a fusion of American civil life with a particular type of identity and culture. We use "Christian" here in a specific sense. We are not referring to doctrinal orthodoxy or personal piety. (In fact, we find some Christian nationalists can be quite secular.) Rather, the explicit ideological content of Christian nationalism comprises beliefs about historical identity, cultural preeminence, and political influence. But just as important, it also contains ideological content that is often implicit. This includes symbolic boundaries that conceptually blur and conflate religious identity (Christian, preferably Protestant) with race (white), nativity (born in the United States), citizenship (American), and political ideology (social and fiscal conservative). Christian nationalism, then, provides a complex of explicit and implicit ideals, values, and myths—what we call a "cultural framework"—through which Americans perceive and navigate their social world.[3]

While there is much still to uncover, Whitehead and Perry's illumination of the fabric of Christian nationalism reveals profound resonances with a certain continuous cultural field

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[1] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 97.

[2] Ibid., 61.

[3] Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism In the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 11-12.

that we have involved ourselves in tracing up to this point. It is my hope that a close examination of Christian nationalism and its entanglements with conservatism and liberalism in America will help to reveal the ways in which the narrative coding of Man_2 has been adapted to the specific context of the United States through the interlocking of multiple technologies of control that we have traced across different histories—constituting a final point of contact in our broader constellation of control.

Supremacy by Nature

If there is any obvious, sweeping insight to be gleaned from our investigation of power, violence, and masculine identities through the analytic of control, it is that the function of gender—a socially constructed category variously naturalized as ontologically necessary, biologically determined, and teleologically definite—has historically been that of an enduring and expansive mechanism of mastery. In every single context we have studied, from ancient Greece to the height of the plantation economy and industrialization in the U.S., gender's categorical distinction has enabled the pervasive and adaptive enactment of patriarchal structures of masculine supremacy. Further, and of more immediate interest to our focus on control, the narrative coding of naturalized gender has long functioned as fertile grounds for the development and adaptation of co-constitutive categories of hierarchical distinction—technologies of control. As we have seen, the performative enactment of masculine identities has historically been interdependent with the narrative self-institution of rationality, bodily inviolability, ownership, Christian spirituality, election/selection, European culture, citizenship, wealth, and whiteness as dominant descriptive coding of the human.

The histories we have engaged, the different points of contact we have made with that "continuous cultural field"[4] and the philosophical, theological, political, and social instantiations of control found therein, are all significant moments in the narrative construction of the so-called Western World. As Ashon Crawley puts it, "there is an overrepresentation of one genre, or kind, of world as *the only* world,"[5] and we have gone in search of control at the narrative foundations of that global fabrication—ancient Greece, the rise of Christianity in the Greco-Roman world, Latin-Christian Medieval Europe, the Renaissance and Reformation, the so-called Age of Discovery, and the rise of capitalism and industrialization in the Atlantic world. Within these different moments of significance for the Western mythos of a singular world, mastery appears to have functioned centrally in the performative formation of masculine identities. More precisely, it seems that in these specific contexts masculinity and manhood were inseparable, at times indistinguishable, from mastery. And the performative enactment of mastery-as-masculinity proved a durable lodestone capable of holidng myriad overlapping technologies of control—from rationality and whiteness to property and election—across the years of expansion and adaptation of the overrepresented genre of Man.

This *mastery-as-masculinity* is unmistakable in the overt and direct violences of the Greco-Roman *paterfamilias*, the Western European colonizer, the Atlantic slaver, and Southern plantation owner, but we have also observed more indirect, structural, and

[4] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (fall 2003): 318.

[5] Ashon T. Crawley, *The Lonely Letters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 27.

covert forms of control enacted through Christian cosmogonies and church doctrines, the narrative coding of rationality and evolutionary selection, the logics of providence and election, and the multiplicity of technologies of control have operated in conjunction with the overrepresentation of the genre of Man. And, although we are still just preparing to examine the present moment, I believe that we will uncover myriad ways in which these technologies shape contemporary adaptations of control. Across these different contexts, the performative enactment of legible masculinity is constituted in the violences of mastery; the self-institution of "legitimate" manhood depends most fundamentally on the exercise of mastery over the self and others, engendered by the ideological and material production that constitutes collective narrative autopoiesis. In this way, control encompasses the formative operations of masculine identities and exceeds the individual enactment of mastery, functioning as central to the configuration of material relations, social order, operative ideological frames, and dominant genres of the human—shaping many of the practices and relations that are co-constitutive of identity and sociality.

Lest we forget, this collective process of autopoiesis produces and is reproduced in myriad forms of violence across multiple scales. At the global level, Western European conquest, colonization, and enslavement drenched the Atlantic world in blood from the fifteenth century onwards. The creation and maintenance of these transatlantic systems of domination depended upon the adaptation of naturalized distinctions between groups of humans harkening back to the categorization of "slaves by nature" in ancient Greece. Extending through all those centuries in the continuous cultural field that we have observed, the jointly collective and individual enactment of mastery through property ownership, rational capacity, and male supremacy instantiated these by-nature

distinctions through the constant threat and exercise of physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological violence. As we know, this self-institution of the literal "master" was entangled with the performative formation of the husband, the father, the (political, economic, and spiritual) head of the household, and thus entailed a patriarchal regime of dominance and subordination in which *the man* was made through all manner of intimate and unwitnessed acts of control. In this sense, the violences we have endeavored to uncover and bear witness to in these preceding pages have been both immense and deeply personal—the vast horror of genocide and the hidden terror of abuse being inextricably bound in the figure of Man and his mastery-as-masculinity.

As we consider the contemporary issues of men's violence and masculinities in the U.S.—or, at least, as we strategize an approach to that consideration—we are faced with these histories of control and the numerous ways that mastery-as-masculinity has shaped and been shaped by American white supremacist capitalist cisheteropatriarchy.[6] As we established from the very beginning of this work, addressing contemporary masculinities and their performative enactment through an analysis of control entails a shift from the evaluation of different gender identities or forms of masculinity, to the examination of power and violence in the performative formation of gender. Having utilized this approach in our analysis of multiple histories of control, I suggest that we can now benefit from an effort to connect this body of historical work to the interrogation of control's contemporary, interdependent intersections with racism, capitalism, cisheteropatriarchy, Christian nationalism, and the underlying politics of being. What we have attempted to assemble over the course of this project is an initial account of the

[6] Riffing on Crawley's formulation, *Lonely Letters*, 27.

histories that shape the operations of these systems of domination in the present moment. Our efforts have certainly not yielded an exhaustive account of control, but they might prove solid enough footing to inform and support a posture of resistance. We may then be prepared for a more overt engagement with an implicit concern that has been woven throughout this work: how to unsettle the expansive technologies of control that we have uncovered and the central role they play in the autopoietic enactment of mastery-as-masculinity in U.S. society broadly speaking, and in the particular context of Christian belief and practice?

I recognize the enormity unfolding in this new line of inquiry, but again, I do not hope to find resolution in these final pages but to frame the questions that will guide further thinking with these issues. At the most general level, if we are to learn to effectively confront control we will need to avoid any transformative impulse that would simply lead to another rearticulation of Man and reordering of the practices of mastery-as-masculinity. Our primary goal cannot be the preservation of masculinities and masculine identities—although we need not foreclose on this possibility—but to ask if it is even possible for existing forms of masculine performativity to be separated from the desire for mastery, and what kind of practices and modes of performativity can be cultivated beyond/against control? This kind of reckoning with and refusal of mastery would, given the histories we have examined, demand alignment with equally profound and ongoing reckonings with and refusals of white supremacy, capitalism, coloniality, Christian nationalism, cisheteropatriarchy, and liberal monohumanism—interpersonal practice joined with collective political and social action against these interlocking systems. As Rinaldo Walcott reminds us, personal transformation does not constitute a

decolonial project; for any effort to be so named it must wrestle with the prevailing "conditions of unfreedom," along with those conditions that gave rise to and emerge from the racialized production of genres of the human "defined against blackness."[7] Thus, confronting control requires we be attentive to the historical processes by which the intersecting supremacies that co-constitute Man through the performative enactment of mastery-as-masculinity are naturalized in the collective work of narrative self-institution.

Given our examination of the operations of control within various histories of Christian social order, theology, belief, and practice, we are also prepared the ask the more particular question of whether control can be confronted in Christian contexts and what kind of posture and practices might create the conditions for that possibility? It is clear that—in the various points in the history of Christianity and Christian theology we have examined—Christians have operated within the continuous cultural field of control that shaped the dominant politics of being within a given episteme. Obvious examples of this include the Gospel writers' critical and capitulatory response to Greco-Roman masculine inviolability, the imperialism of Constantinian Christianity, Aquinas' patriarchal and misogynistic formulations of the created order, de Sepulveda's invocation of "slaves by nature," Calvin's misogyny, paternalism, and coloniality, and Edward's paternalism, patriarchy, ownership of slaves and defense of slavery. But our examination thus far would suggest that the operations of control within Christianity were clearly not limited to proximal involvement in and maintenance of the order of things; rather, technologies of control have proven to be deeply and enduringly embedded in Christian

[7] Rinaldo Walcott, *The Long Emancipation: Moving Toward Black Freedom* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 56.

theology, belief, and practice across multiple contexts. As we observed early on, the embeddedness of control is exemplified in multiple interpretations of the Christian cosmogenic movement from creation to incarnation and salvation—God the Father, Christ the mediator, and sinful humanity bound together by an unassailable, transcendent mastery that draws being itself into the total authority of the divine will. The self-institution of mastery-as-masculinity is clear in these dominant formulations: God is Godself, and the "itself" of all created beings is maintained, because *He is in control*.

If control is, as I believe the preceding pages demonstrate, operating at the heart of doctrines central to Christian belief and practice as well as structuring dominant Christian social orders and Christian histories, our primary concern becomes whether or not a contemporary Christian belief and practice can develop beyond the operations of control and how would that belief and practice situate itself in relationship to the history of Christianity and Christian theology? A simpler way to phrase the question I think an examination of control requires us sit with is: can Christianity exist without control? And if the answer is yes, what *kind* of Christianity can persist beyond the desire for mastery? Divine mastery, human mastery, mastery-as-masculinity, and the collusion between these three: can they be exorcised from Christian theologies, beliefs, and practices and leave anything more than shattered pieces in their wake? What does confronting control consist of when mastery is seemingly essential to the logic of Christianity—at least in its most culturally dominant, enduring, and widely accepted expressions, in its orthodoxies?

I do not pose this series of questions as a rhetorical device meant to pulverize Christian belief and practice till nothing recognizable remains—these are sincere concerns that are not easily answered and I mean to examine them with care and

attention. There are Christians who understandably answer "of course, look at what we do" to the litany above—for instance, those whose practice is oriented around womanist, liberationist, and queer modes of Christianity—but that does not diminish the broader importance of the question. Certainly, there are polydox Christianities that have adapted and developed storytelling codes and relational practices that are oriented towards anti-mastery—some that arose in the face of mastery—but even these liberative theological traditions still face the ongoing challenge presented by the pervasive presence of control in the most culturally dominant forms of Christian belief and practice. What becomes of God, the Father, the Son, the Church, the pope, the bishop, the priest, and the pastor, the kingdom of heaven, Christ's kingdom on earth, election, salvation, and redemption, without the co-constitutive enactment of mastery? In light of our examination of control, I contend that these are the questions communities of faith need to be asking if they are interested in developing anti-mastery practices. Small groups, churches, denominations, and ecumenical organizations need to be self-consciously engaging the following challenge: what is our Christianity without control?

I conclude the foregoing deluge of questions with an intentionally reductive flourish, not for cheap rhetorical effect, but to emphasize the foundational challenge of this work. I don't want to center this question, returning to it time and time again over the next several pages and in the work that will unfold from them, but I do want to think with it as a kind of limit or horizon—a boundary that might prove impermeable or a threshold that leads from the "known world" into otherwise possibility. And perhaps we will discover that these functions are not mutually exclusive? Moving with this limit as horizon as threshold, I will not endeavor to answer all of the questions that I have just

posed and bring calm to all that might be unsettled (as if I could, in these last pages), but I do want to think about practices of anti-mastery, about softness, wonder, and masculinities in the mode of otherwise being. I don't want to present this as a hopeful turn—because I'm not sure hope is something that can enter the uncertainty of a limit, a horizon, a threshold—but as an exercise in desire and longing. I long for softness, for wonder, for the practice of otherwise being, but I will work towards them without holding any certainty of precisely what that search for the softness of otherwise will bring about. What follows is certainly embryonic—a generative interplay of poetry, theory, self-reflection, and anticipatory intention meant to spark points of creative focus for the work that lies ahead.

Refusing Mastery, Renouncing Man

I return here to the opening of chapter 1 and an epigraph that acts as a kind of wary desire holding unlikely possibility alongside the critical edge of this work. In that passage, Ocean Vuong writes "[p]erhaps one day, masculinity might become so myriad, so malleable, it no longer needs a fixed border to recognize itself. It might not need to be itself at all."[8] The unsettling and undoing of the "itself" of masculinity that Vuong hints at with tentative longing resonates with the extensive (and, dare I say, arduous) work of critical historical analysis that we have undertaken in our interrogation of control and masculine identities. That enduring, autopoietic "itself" of masculinity is central to the power and violence of mastery and the adaptive technologies of control. The historical

[8] Ocean Vuong, "Reimagining Masculinity," *The Paris Review* (June 10, 2019), https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2019/06/10/no-homo/.

contours of this totalizing self-institution are spread out in our wake, we have intimately acquainted ourselves with the "itself" of masculinity, and what lies before us is the task of refusing mastery-as-masculinity and renouncing the overrepresented genre of Man as the primary mechanism of its historical embeddedness.

Our work thus far suggests that the historical, ideological, and material processes that constitute what Wynter names the "coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom" are central to a disastrous proliferation of the performative enactment of mastery-as-masculinity. If coloniality is at the heart of the particular histories of control that we have examined and that shape the contemporary operations of control, then decolonial thought and practice might prove to be effective (some might argue, necessary) in strategizing modes of anti-mastery. In moving this direction, our interest lies in continuing to address the particular ideological and material complex of coloniality that extends from the histories that we have examined thus far and in developing specific decolonial strategies for dismantling it.

Following Ronaldo Walcott's assessment of the possibility of decolonization at the opening of this conclusion, we need to discern what kind of decolonial orientation and action might shape a confrontation with control? To begin, I believe that we need to be working at the expansive and underlying level of the politics of being, since we know that resistance to these technologies of mastery demands that we cast off the fiction of individual transformation as the source of social change. Given Wynter's account of narrative autopoiesis, we know not to disregard the role of irreducible personhood within the reproduction and adaptation of the continuous cultural field that carries the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom into our present moment, but we also dare not risk

reinscribing a sense of separation between persons and the different relational networks they are entangled in. Just as control shapes collective material relations through the performative enactment of shared narratives of identity—even if those identities claim a belligerent independence—so a confrontation with control will need a collective critical consciousness and political alliance that can attend to the way that the fantasy of the singular individual is born out of a unifying desire cultivated by authoritarian political and social order that claims to privilege independence, freedom, and agency.

There are many different approaches we can take in the development of a decolonial and anti-mastery posture of resistance to control. Envisioning particular elements of this future work, one significant point of focus might be the mutually reinforcing adaptations of the coding of Man_2 found in evangelical Christians' logic of election, liberal Christians' narratives of transformation, and secular monohumanist visions of progress. Exploring the manner in which these seemingly opposed positions function to uphold a shared social order and conserve a shared genre of the human might help us to better understand the enduring operations of coloniality with respect to the performative formation of masculinities. Strategizing this renunciation of Man would likely entail further critical analysis of the history of Christian nationalism, contemporary mechanisms of racial capitalism and exchange value, and the enduring violences of settler colonialism, as well as close study of the patterns of resistance that have emerged in opposition to these mechanisms of control. Towards this end, we are already engaged with anti-colonial, decolonial, decolonial feminist, and Black Radical thought—areas of study that have much to teach us about resisting control—and other promising areas of theorizing include queer and decolonial queer studies, Black feminist thought, and

indigenous anti-capitalist and abolitionist scholarship. As Julietta Singh puts it, "resistant collectivities are in reach…a seemingly impenetrable 'system' of mastery has *already* been breached."[9]

Within the interrogation of the structural and cultural violences that make up the systemic architecture of mastery, there is also a need for closer examination of the more direct and intimate modes of interpersonal violence that are produced by and serve to reproduce the violent networks of white supremacist capitalist cisheteropatriarchy in the U.S. From mass shootings and murders by police to domestic violence and sexual assault and abuse, the enactment of direct and interpersonal violences of control are inextricably linked to the production of collective ideological and material systems. There is also something of the cruel intimacy of mastery that needs to be thought more clearly in the relationship between the structural and interpersonal here. Something that is brought to mind in nayyirah waheed's poem, "the release":

> decolonization
> requires
> acknowledging
> that your
> needs and desires
> should
> never
> come at the expense of another's
> life energy.
> it is being honest
> that
> you have been spoiled
> by a machine
> that
> is not feeding you freedom
> but
> feeding

[9] Julietta Singh, *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 1.

you
the milk of pain.[10]

Austere and unequivocal, waheed's verse puts us face to face with a sensuality that often goes unnamed—the needs, desires, and pleasures that can only be satiated under the reign of death-dealing regimes that enact endless violence and exact constant pain and suffering. She does not allow us to pass over the most sordid and self-interested commitments we have made to the machine of supremacy and empire.

If we are to combat the power and violence at work in the self-institution of mastery-as-masculinity in all its multivalence, I would argue that we need to explore the possibilities of different modes and practices linked to the collective operations and exercise of power. Such an exploration also warrants, I suggest, a reconsideration of the possibilities of certain modes of violence functioning in conjunction with the collective exercise of power towards liberation and in resistance to the violences of control. Can the productive operations of power and violence be harnessed for change? While this line of questioning certainly requires an abundance of care, especially in light of all that we have uncovered in our investigation of control, the risk inherent in the invocation of violence does not diminish the possible necessity of collective action that exercises directed power and violence to disrupt networks of dominance. There is both risk and potential to be parsed in thinking with this further, but we have dwelt for many pages now on power and violence—I want to make time here, at this end, to seek beauty, joy, perhaps even rest, as we find space to imagine something altogether different.

[10] nayyirah waheed, *salt.* (2013), 85.

Longing for Softness

flower work
is
not easy.
remaining
soft in fire
takes
time.
—nayyirah waheed, *salt.*

My first thought was softness as a kind of queer failure—a failing under, through, and beyond the inviolability of mastery-as-masculinity—a jetè through that narrow window of the self and out into something much more expansive, vulnerable, energetic, and connected.[11] And I think something of that desire is worth nurturing, but I also worry that queer failure—and perhaps even queering in the studious and scholarly sense that has been developed by theorists in the academic context—binds itself to that which it seeks to overturn and unsettle, sets its own limits as a reactive force that is dependent upon that which it reacts against. Can something otherwise come from queer failure, or is such a practice inevitably held in proximity to the normativity it seeks to subvert?

In his polyvalent studies of blackqueer life and "the Blackpentacostal world,"[12] artist, scholar, and musician Ashon Crawley offers his readers an invitation to think with him as he "seeks ways of existence otherwise."[13] Among the many themes that Crawley

[11] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 147-173. Muñoz is, of course, thinking closely with Jack Halberstram's *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

[12] Crawley, *The Lonely Letters*, 6

[13] Ibid., 7.

lingers with, practicing an intentionally repetitive intimacy of thought,[14] are the kinds of relationality, consensuality, vulnerability, and refusal that might create conditions for "non-coercive, reciprocal life."[15] In a passage deserving of its own intimate repetition, Crawley writes that:

> We have to figure out how to exist on the earth with a kind of buoyancy and delicateness, a way that honors the fact of our creatureliness as in relation to all that is. This lightness and vulnerability of being, this caring for the earth by inhabiting otherwise worlds—not as places but as modalities of existence—is what Black and indigenous and queer folks *beeeeeen* been doing. And this because we never submitted to the idea of a "the world" as a kind of individual thing, an only thing. (And in the case of indigeneity, I am heartened by the concept of refusal that Leanne Betasamosake Simpson talks about: refusal, for her, is about refusing colonial domination, refusing heteropatriarchy, and refusing to be tamed by whiteness or the academy; and she says that these refusals center ourselves in generating the alternatives. I've learned a lot about refusal and think of it as also a blackqueer possibility enacted in worlds otherwise.)[16]

Thinking with Crawley, I want to consider the cultivation of softness as a kind of refusal of control and a non-coercive practice of relation, consensuality, and vulnerability.

As Crawley notes above, these kinds of otherwise "modalities of being" have long shaped the life of Black, indigenous, and queer communities. In seeking softness as a refusal of control, I would argue that we can participate in continous learning from Black, indigenous, and queer communities in terms of practices and postures of refusal. What concerns me, and what I think we should continue to concern ourselves with moving forward, is how we can commit time and attention to learning from Black, indigenous, and queer communities and thinkers without seizing or mastering or dominating these

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[14] Ibid., 5.

[15] Ibid., 4.

[16] Ibid., 28.

otherwise epistemologies and practices; without enacting additional mechanisms of control, as is so often the case when settlers, white people, cismen, and academics (I am entangled in all of these networks of power) "engage" work that they find interesting and exciting. In refusal of further acts of colonization, I suggest that an anti-mastery approach to listening, learning, and thinking with these otherwise traditions requires a commitment to accountability, humility, and wonder—precisely the kinds of postures that might be tended as we cultivate habits and practices of softness and consensuality. In a sense, we must be both committed to the work of anti-mastery and aware that when it comes to practice we will have to try, and fail—being clear in our failings—and learn along the way.

In the epistolary exchange that structures Crawley's *Lonely Letters*, A writes to his interlocutor Moth, "I do not want to control you. Your consent is more necessary than my desire."[17] With this admission, A invites us to consider the fraught nature of desire in relation to control. Desire in the mode of mastery is objectification—the violent fabrication of the self and the other. As we will soon see, desire that refuses to conform to control's register plays within an expansive mutuality and wonder, not a contest but an energetic encounter with irreducible difference and possibility and change. It's a form of relation that, in the softness of consentuality, denies the absolute separation of subjugation. Or, at least, I think it might.

Crawley returns time and again to multiple senses of the consensual, drawing them together in consideration of "noncoercive communion"[18] shaped by the plurality

[17] Ibid., 135.

[18] Ibid., 4.

and mutuality that, for him, are the "*grounds of existence*."[19] He invokes a reciprocal holding and being held, the collaborative possibility of entanglement, habitual recommitment to relationality, the renunciation of the individual for the social, and the joy, pleasure, and struggle found therein.[20] Crawley gives us so much to consider and invites us to see the constraints of our normative desires and practices of desiring alongside the excess, the overabundance of unfolding worlds of otherwise possibility. Accustomed as I am to a defensive posture and an expectation that I will experience violation, I find a kind of frightening consensuality in those desires that are fostered outside the strict boundaries and tight clutches of mastery. A longing that might open one up to others in ways that are far from inviolable but also might create the possibility for joy, for care, for tenderness and the marvel and wonder of feeling and thinking difference and relation beyond coercion.

I can only long for the unfolding of this kind of difference, and work longing into practice, and hope that practice transforms. I do not know and do not dare proscribe what softness, what wonder, what feeling and thinking critically together and with joy and accountability and desire might help to create. I do know that I don't want to stay with control—mastery and masculinity ring with a hollow *sensation* of power that is far, far, far from the rich energy and relation of *feeling*.

Touch, intimacy, vulnerability, interconnection, these are such difficult things to invoke in the context of power and violence, of the histories of violence and mastery filled overwhelmingly with white men who have worked so hard to make such practices

[19] Ibid., 35.

[20] Ibid., 11, 122, 10, 135, 131.

of softness and desire impossible because they have chosen to believe the narrative that reduces all relation to "ownership and property relations."[21] I am hesitant of the risk involved here, both as someone who spent decades bent low by the whims of violent men and who in turn desperately sought out mastery of my own to keep hold of myself in answer to their violence, because reform will only serve to reorder control—what is needed lies beyond, is some otherwise enactment that refuses mastery but in that refusal must face and be accountable to and grieve all the violence already done. As in internet figure of the manipulative "softboi leftist," we do not need masculinity that has softened and turned that softness into another technology for control, a weaponized insecurity—I long for a softness that is unacceptable and unmanned, that might help me free myself, and maybe help some form of "us" free ourselves, from the desire and demands of dominion and its cold, rational isolation.

Wondering Towards Otherwise

I am slightly distrustful of my own invocation of "otherwise." There is a worry that in drawing this tradition of thinking the plurality of worlds and possibilities beyond the world of Man into an encounter with the very men and masculinities that have sought to subdue it, I will not have created a bridge but effected a kind of capture. I will have helped enable the appropriation of otherwise possibility into another trite promise of personal growth and transformation. But I also think that this concern may be tied to the logic of coloniality, to an epistemological frame where a concept and a practice can "belong" to someone in an abstract and immaterial way, can be mastered by the rational

[21] Ibid., 99.

mind. The excess of otherwise being, in its thorough materiality, may help to undue this kind of possessive conceptualization and reorient the question of belonging to relations of accountability.

I have spent a lot of time wondering at beauty, at difference, at moments of joy—a celebration of the mundane, not an affectation of artistic talents or creative vision. The flowers I encounter as I walk, the smiles that seem to come from nowhere and need no particular reason to shine, the small, quiet kindness that sinks bone deep—founts of joy and deep wells of wonder. Critiquing normativity certainly provides us with language to diagnose its violent inadequacies, but I think it can also keep our attention bound within the narrow limitations of those normative structures that we seek to disrupt. Encountering the occurrence of possibility, the promise of what-could-be unfolding in the present, has struck in me a wonder that takes me beyond the cracks in the wall and allows me a glimpse of the endless worlds of what could be. Under the sway of this wonder and in my fumbling practice of softness, I have begun to question whether the boundaries of gender conformity and of heterosexuality (the idea of opposite sex, of exclusive and neatly categorized attraction, and its reinforcement of the binary and of gender as a static and definitive category—in all its rigid, linear straightness) are anything other than vestiges of control, attempts at some kind of mastery—defuse and diverse as it may be made out to be in some cases.

I keep thinking about Crawley's epistolary A writing to Moth and asking, "What would it mean for you to say you're straight if straightness is an operation of the western regime of epistemological problems?"[22] Are these conventions of gender conformity and

[22] Ibid., 139.

compulsory heterosexuality anything other than the tired, deadening, perhaps even unwitting violence of gripping too hard a certain sense of power that accompanies such narrow acts of identification? Or simply an impoverished imagination bound tight by enduring systems of control? Can they then escape the heteropatriachal, mysognynist, transphobic, nationalist, imperial, colonial structures they are manifestations of and serve to uphold? I wonder and I imagine that they cannot.

So, can masculinities be re-imagined within these controlling frames? Do heterosexuality, gender conformity, and their attendant "isms" preclude any significant confrontation with control? Does this mean that any attempt at some mode of masculinity becomes a game of reforming power and re-concealing violences? What kind of imagination is required to cultivate anti-mastery practices and foster an otherwise being, and can that imagination flourish within the narrow frames of gender conformity and heterosexuality? I long for something beyond the coercive and singular—the joy and care of consensuality chosen time and time again, consensuality made habitual among the plurality of relational possibilities beyond mastery and control. As waheed writes,

> i want more 'men'
> with flowers falling from their skin.
> more water in their eyes.
> more tremble in their bodies.
> more women in their hearts
> than
> on their hands.
> more softness in their height.
> more honesty in their voice.
> more wonder.
> more humility in their feet.
>
> — less[23]

[23] waheed, *salt.*, 47.

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