



# FICTIONS OF LAND AND FLESH

BLACKNESS, INDIGENEITY, SPECULATION

*Mark Rifkin*



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## INTRODUCTION

In a statement of support for the protestors seeking to stop the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline on land near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, members of the Black Lives Matter network describe it as “a movement for all of us” by those “Indigenous peoples who are putting their bodies and lives on the line to protect our right to clean water.”<sup>1</sup> The statement goes on to insist, “[T]his is not a fight that is specific only to Native peoples—this is a fight for all of us and we must stand with our family at Standing Rock,” later adding, “We are in an ongoing struggle for our lives and this struggle is shaped by the shared history between Indigenous peoples and Black people in America, connecting that stolen land and stolen labor from Black and brown people built this country.” Black and Indigenous struggles appear here to coincide as they emerge out of a “shared history” of white supremacist violence, exploitation, and expropriation.<sup>2</sup> From this perspective, Native actions and intentions in fighting the Dakota Access Pipeline (opposition to which coalesced and circulated under the hashtag #NoDAPL) take part in a united movement whose subjects form a “we” that exceeds the specificity of Native peoplehood, since the trajectory of such opposition is shaped by, in the statement’s terms, “a critical fight against big oil for our collective human right to access water.” Since Black people also are subject to environmental racism, which “is not limited to pipelines on Indigenous land,” they, too, are represented within the efforts



at Standing Rock; thus, Black Lives Matter's solidarity with Native activists emerges from a sense of mutual subjection as people of color to environmental degradation and abjection by the racist policies of the U.S. state.

However, to what extent does this framing reflect Indigenous understandings? As described by Nick Estes, an Indigenous studies scholar and citizen of the Lower Brule Sioux, the current conflict arises out of "the longer histories of Oceti Sakowin (The Great Sioux Nation) resistance against the trespass of settlers, dams, and pipelines" across the Missouri River, itself understood as unceded Oceti Sakowin territory—recognized as such under the treaty of 1851 with the U.S. government. Moreover, in the introduction to a series of articles on #NoDAPL, Estes and Jaskiran Dhillon present the pipeline as "a continuation of the nineteenth-century Indian wars of extermination" while also posing the question, "How do we situate Standing Rock within a social, political, cultural, and historical context of Indigenous anticolonial resistance against occupation and various forms of state violence inherent to settler colonialism?"<sup>3</sup> These articulations conceptualize the struggle at Standing Rock as an expression of Oceti Sakowin sovereignty and self-determination as Indigenous peoples, rightfully exercising jurisdiction and stewardship over their homelands while being assaulted in ways consistent with an ongoing history of settler colonial theft and refusal to acknowledge the political authority of Native nations. Although the Black Lives Matter statement notes that "there is no Black liberation without Indigenous sovereignty," such sovereignty does not feature as a meaningful part of the analysis offered, either in terms of what is at stake in Indigenous opposition or what might be at play in imagining and negotiating an "our" in which non-natives might participate. While the statement suggests a convergence around the kinds of materials used for the pipeline and the failed water pipes in "Black communities like Flint," as well as the fact that many of the same companies funding the pipeline also sponsor "factories that emit carcinogenic chemicals into Black communities," the political imaginary at play in Indigenous opposition gets translated and refigured within an alternative set of conceptual, political, and historical coordinates. That process allows the rhetorical emergence of a "we" who have a "shared" set of rights/claims to the space of "this country" in ways fairly disconnected from the question and practice of Indigenous sovereignties. If the actions at Standing Rock and in Flint might be brought into relation around access to water, does such a conjunction provide a basis on which to connect them? Or, perhaps more usefully, what kinds of relation does it engender, and what dangers lie in presuming that this apparently shared object or set of concerns bespeaks an underlying unity in the movements' frames and aims? As Dipesh Chakrabarty



cautions in *Provincializing Europe*, “The Hindi *pani* may be translated into the English ‘water’ without having to go through the superior positivity of H<sub>2</sub>O,” and this movement across languages “appeal[s] to models of cross-cultural and cross-categorical translations that do not take a universal middle term for granted.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, while water may provide a basis for mutual engagement and solidarity, the significance of water—the political geographies, collective histories, and constellations of meaning in which it and sustainable access to it are enmeshed—cannot be presumed to be the same. How might water, as an example, provide a site for translation among disparate political imaginaries and trajectories in ways that do not seek to efface their difference in the process?

Rather than seeking to diminish the gesture of solidarity by members of the Black Lives Matter movement, then, I want to underline the ways that, even in good faith efforts toward meaningful engagement, the assumption of a shared set of terms, analyses, or horizons of political imagination between Black and Indigenous struggles may be premature or may obfuscate significant distinctions.<sup>5</sup> The question of how to understand the specificity of political movements appears as a central issue in the articulation of the aims of the Black Lives Matter network. The Black Lives Matter movement began as a response to the state-sanctioned murder of Black people (particularly by the police), with the hashtag arising specifically in 2013 in response to the failure to hold George Zimmerman legally accountable for his killing of Trayvon Martin. Since then, it has grown into a broader mass movement focused on challenging various institutionalized systems of antiblack oppression.<sup>6</sup> As part of “A HerStory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement,” the three creators of the hashtag—Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors—observe, “Progressive movements in the United States have made some unfortunate errors when they push for unity at the expense of really understanding the concrete differences in context, experience, and oppression. In other words, some want unity without struggle.” The aim here lies in challenging the appropriation of Black activist and intellectual work by others in ways that do not acknowledge the significance of antiblack oppression, how Black lives “are uniquely, systematically, and savagely targeted by the state.” However, this emphasis on the particularity of the forms of domination to which Black people are subjected and their struggles against such domination—the push against, in the creators’ terms, “the worn out and sloppy practice of drawing lazy parallels of unity between peoples with vastly different histories and experiences”—can also apply to the process of seeking to put Black and Indigenous movements into relation.<sup>7</sup> Garza, Tometi, and Cullors’s cautions here apply not only to the imagination of an inherent “we” or



“us” that unites these struggles but to the ways “concrete differences in context, experience, and oppression” can be displaced when positing a given analytical framework as necessarily providing the encompassing conceptual structure in which to situate Black and Indigenous histories, political imaginaries, and efforts to realize justice. What difficulties arise in trying to resolve these differences by incorporating them into a unifying, singular model, and what other possibilities might there be for movement between and among such differences other than merger or triangulation within a putatively supervening structure that supposedly can envelop and explain them?

From this perspective, we might understand Black and Indigenous struggles less as incommensurable than as simply nonidentical, as having distinct kinds of orientation shaped by the effects of histories of enslavement and settler colonial occupation.<sup>8</sup> To describe movements and the political imaginaries to which they give rise and that animate them as *oriented* suggests that they are given form, trajectory, and momentum by the particular histories of domination to which they respond, as well as the visions of liberation that emerge to contest the dominant terms of subjugation and subjection. As Sara Ahmed suggests, “[W]e do not have to consciously exclude those things that are not ‘on line.’ The direction we take excludes things for us, before we even get there.” She further observes, “[A] background is what explains the conditions of emergence or an arrival of something as the thing that it appears to be in the present,” adding, “Histories shape ‘what’ surfaces: they are behind the arrival of ‘the what’ that surfaces.”<sup>9</sup> Characterizing movements as having disparate backgrounds indicates that they have distinct “conditions of emergence” that shape the “what” of the movements themselves: the kinds of subjects and subjectivities that they represent, the particular institutional conjunctures that they contest, and the aims toward which they move.

In this vein, we might quite roughly schematize the distinction between Black and Indigenous political imaginaries as that of flesh and of land, a contrast between a focus on the violence of dehumanization through fungibility and occupation through domestication.<sup>10</sup> In “Fugitive Justice,” Stephen Best and Saidiya Hartman argue, “A ‘plan’ for the redress of slavery is what is urgently needed, but any plan, any legal remedy, would inevitably be too narrow, and as such it would also prove necessarily inadequate,” and they further suggest, “We understand the particular character of slavery’s violence to be ongoing and constitutive of the unfinished project of freedom,” adding that “the kinds of political claims that can be mobilized on behalf of the slave (the stateless, the socially dead, and the disposable) in the political present” illustrate “the incomplete nature of abolition.”<sup>11</sup> The legacies of enslavement continue to shape



the possibilities for Black life in the present, an inheritance and contemporary force that exceeds the potential for formal legal redress through enactments of equality due to the ways that Black people continue to be made “socially dead” and “disposable” within structures of state racism—particularly in terms of criminalization and mass incarceration. Similarly, in “The Case of Blackness,” Fred Moten argues that “[t]he cultural and political discourse on black pathology has been so pervasive that it could be said to constitute the background against which all representations of blacks, blackness, or (the color) black take place.”<sup>12</sup> This widespread understanding of blackness in terms of aberrance and anomaly gives rise to “fugitive movement in and out of the frame, bar, or whatever externally imposed social logic—a movement of escape, the stealth of the stolen,” a “fugitive movement [that] is stolen life” and that is the “special ontic-ontological fugitivity” of “the slave.”<sup>13</sup> The continued remaking of bodies via blackness as malleable and disposable flesh extends the dynamics of chattel slavery, engendering a ubiquitous pathologization for which flight from the enclosures of the law—stolen modes of individual and collective subjectivity—provides the principal recourse.

By contrast, Native political imaginaries tend to turn on questions of collective territoriality and governance. Even while speaking in the critical idiom of flesh and of the violence done to Native women’s bodies, Audra Simpson highlights in “The State Is a Man” how “[a]n Indian woman’s body in settler regimes such as the US . . . is loaded with meaning—signifying other political orders, land itself, of the dangerous possibility of reproducing Indian life and most dangerously, other political orders.”<sup>14</sup> As Jodi Byrd notes of efforts to cast Native self-determination as a project of contesting racist exclusion, “American Indian national assertions of sovereignty disappear into U.S. territoriality as indigenous identity becomes a racial identity and citizens of colonized indigenous nations become internal ethnic minorities within the colonizing nation-state.”<sup>15</sup> Emphasizing the existence of Native peoples as landed polities who exercise their own modes of sovereignty functions as a central animating principle of Indigenous movements, in ways at odds with the foregrounding of statelessness, social death, and fugitivity in Black political and intellectual framings.

Approaching Black and Indigenous political struggles and imaginaries as oriented in different ways—as following their own lines of development and contestation that are not equivalent to each other—does not mean understanding them as utterly dissimilar or as having no points of intersection or mutual imbrication. Rather, foregrounding such orientations and how they militate against a priori incorporation into a singular account enables a more



searching consideration of the processes by which they might be brought into meaningful and productive relation so as to avoid forcing them into alignment and, thereby, generating an illusory and misleading sense of “unity without struggle.” In discussing her relation as a non-Indigenous person with Quechua intellectuals, Marisol de la Cadena observes, “Our ways of knowing, practicing, and making our distinct worlds—our worldings, or ways of making worlds—had been ‘circuited’ together and shared practices for centuries; however, they had not become one.” Describing the movement between those “worlds” as a process of *equivocation*, she further argues, “Controlling the equivocation means probing the translation process itself to make its onto-epistemic terms explicit, inquiring into how the requirements of these terms may leave behind that which the terms cannot contain, that which does not meet those requirements or exceeds them.”<sup>16</sup> This approach highlights the potential for Black and Indigenous political imaginaries to be “circuited together” yet still distinct while aiming to trace processes of translation among them in ways that address the transformations of meaning that occur in such transits.<sup>17</sup>

Before describing the arc of the project in its turn to the speculative as a basis for approaching Black-Indigenous relations and translations, though, I should note my own positioning within these scholarly and political conversations. I enter into these processes of translation as a non-native, white scholar who has sought over many years to develop sustained, respectful, and accountable relations with Indigenous scholars and to generate intellectual work through ongoing dialogue with and critique by them. I approach the questions and concerns of this project, then, as a white ally whose own primary intellectual coordinates are those of Indigenous studies and who seeks to engage work in Black studies and Black social and political movements from this position, while also having long-term commitments to challenging forms of antiblackness (as well as white privilege) as a scholar, teacher, and activist. I neither seek to position myself as speaking for Indigenous people(s) nor as offering a neutral location from which to assess Black-Indigenous discussions, debates, tensions, and negotiations. To do either would involve evading the significance of my whiteness by implicitly using it to present myself as transcending what would by contrast appear as the located particularities of blackness and indigeneity.<sup>18</sup> Rather, my aim, as a scholar of Indigenous studies, is to engage the prominent and pressing issues of how Black and Indigenous movements might engage each other by questioning the value of triangulation as the vehicle for doing so, including the ways that the attempt to bring Indigenous and Black movements into alignment as part of a single struggle tends to center whiteness as the mediating principle. While foregrounding whiteness as a shared object of critique and a



shared source of various modes of structural violence can create a basis for coalition, whiteness then remains the medium for relation among people of color instead of attending to how their experiences of collectivity, analyses of past and present domination, and visions for a more just future may be meaningfully discrepant from each other. I therefore am not so much aiming to specify the precise forms that Black-Indigenous dialogue and relation should take as pointing to certain impasses that arise in seeking to think and enact such relation and suggesting the value of holding on to a sense of the differences between these movements (instead of seeking to resolve them into a single structural formula).

*Fictions of Land and Flesh* turns to futurist fiction as a means of exploring some of the central conceptual framings employed within Black and Indigenous political imaginaries in order to illustrate the often unrecognized forms of translation through which they encounter and engage each other. How might we understand the movement between Black and Indigenous political formations as something of a speculative leap in which the terms and dynamics of the one are disoriented in the encounter with the other? How can recognizing such translations between and among historical and political framings, orientations, and imaginaries help generate critical modes that can address those processes (rather than efface them through attempts at unification)? In this vein, futurist fiction provides a compelling site for exploring such potential disjunctions while refusing to resolve them into a singular, systemic account. If both Black and Indigenous political imaginaries make powerful claims on how to narrate and navigate the actual, turning to speculative writing enables those forms of narration and conceptual/perceptual approaches to be made more visible as such, highlighting how these ways of accounting for reality are shaped by particular modes of analysis and visions for liberation/decolonization/abolition. Not only does futurist fiction generate “what if” scenarios that enable forms of conceptual and representational experimentation; its constitutive break from concrete events and experiences, in the sense of a setting that is neither in ostensibly known historical reality or the contested dynamics of the present, allows its imaginative spaces and relations to be understood as something other than a referential account of reality. Instead, futurist narratives allow us to see divergent ways of conceiving and perceiving, variable frames of reference through which to understand how things work in the world. Seeing them as framings—as *possible* ways of describing what was, is, and could be—allows for the potential for there to be multiple modes of understanding that all may be true while also being nonidentical. Engagement with Afrofuturist and Indigenous futurist fiction provides a means of tracking disparate orientations and



the kinds of mutual (mis)translations that they engender. Thus, the speculative is less a specific genre for me than a mode of relation (which I also refer to as the subjunctive, in ways discussed in chapter 1). It opens the potential for acknowledging a plurality of legitimate, nonidentical truth claims, none of which should be taken as the singular and foundational way that the real is structured. The speculative as a mode opens intellectual, political, and ethical possibilities for thinking and valuing the differences among Black and Indigenous political imaginaries, which is what motivates my turn to futurist fiction as the principal site of study.

Each of the main chapters (after the first, largely introductory one) takes up a widely employed set of tropes for mapping and contesting antiblackness—fungibility, carcerality/fugitivity, and marronage—in order to explore the ways they shape figurations of domination and freedom, moving from least to most engaged with questions of place and collective inhabitation. My choice to foreground Afrofuturist texts speaks to their greater prominence popularly and critically, bringing questions of indigeneity and settlement into a well-established conversation and aiming to speak to those scholars who are part of that conversation. My aim also, as an Indigenous studies scholar, is to engage in sustained ways with these texts, these conversations, and the framings they raise—tracing the contours and trajectories of Black sociopolitical imaginaries while exploring the ways indigeneity enters into their modes of worlding. In other words, I seek to understand and appreciate the texts' ways of analyzing and critiquing antiblackness and their ways of envisioning possibilities for freedom, and doing so enables an exploration of, in de la Cadena's words, "how the requirements of these terms may leave behind that which the terms cannot contain"—an exploration that is neither dismissive nor condemnatory. In studying the kinds of analytical and oppositional possibilities these tropes offer, I engage with the ways they affect how important elements of Indigenous peoplehood and self-determination (such as collective placemaking, enduring connections to particular lands and waters, and exertion of sovereignty as autonomous polities) emerge within Black imaginaries. For this reason, Indigenous futurist texts appear largely as a counterpoint to help highlight the impasses that can arise when trying to engage indigeneity through the main texts' governing tropes.

To clarify, though, rather than marking something like a failure to engage indigeneity or the need for a more expansive or integrated kind of sociopolitical imagination, I seek to illustrate how the framings or orientations at play in these fictions provide the context in which indigeneity gains meaning, or not. My aim is to explore the relational capacities and opacities of various framings,



not to declare certain framings suspect or verboten in light of the ways they may orient away from other issues (such as place-based peoplehood and Indigenous dispossession). I am not advocating a zero-sum logic whereby Indigenous futurist texts are envisioned as getting it *right* at the expense of Afrofuturist ones. Such an approach would create a *damned if they do, damned if they don't* dynamic with respect to indigeneity. Instead, I want to address how legitimate and powerful modes of Black analysis *also* are oriented in ways that can create difficulties for engaging with Indigenous projects of self-determination. Moreover, the possibilities of the speculative as a mode do not mean that any given (set of) text(s) of speculative fiction can resolve the tensions between those movements or necessarily offer a way through/beyond such tensions. For this reason, for each of the main texts, I seek to trace both its own political investments and imagination and to address how its orientations affect how it engages with or translates Indigenous framings. The larger goal is to consider the implications of such engagements and translations for relations among Black and Indigenous political movements and imaginaries in their ongoing differences from each other. The readings in the chapters, then, can be understood less as critique on my part (an effort to indicate where texts have failed to do or to be what they should) than as an effort to consider what certain conceptual and political framings enable and what they frustrate. How do differences in background principles, historical experiences, and directionalities of collective struggle affect the ways indigeneity enters into Black imaginaries, helping shape the dynamics of Black-Indigenous relation? How do disparate political analyses and envisioned horizons of liberation arise out of varied historical trajectories? What is at stake in refusing to see those frameworks as inherently needing to be brought into unifying alignment, and what problems, then, arise in the necessary and inevitable translation that occurs among nonidentical movements?

The first chapter, "On the Impasse," takes up these questions, laying out the project's theoretical and methodological itineraries. It explores the difficulties generated by seeking to bring blackness and indigeneity into an overarching structural account(ing), including the ways doing so can situate disparate movements within a set of background principles that are at odds with the movements themselves or can privilege one movement's animating terms at the expense of the other's (or others') in implicitly exceptionalizing ways. As against the effort to resolve apparent contradictions in articulations of Black and Indigenous struggle by illustrating how they are expressive of differentiated strands of an encompassing system or logic, I turn to Black feminist theorizations of difference that see it less as a distinction to be sublated within an



enveloping structural dialectic than as indicative of nonidentical formations. Such divergence is less a problem to be eliminated or superseded than a normative condition of nondominating relation between/among sociopolitical formations. Understanding these movements as oriented by nonequivalent kinds of collective identity, modes of oppression, and forms of political aspiration provides the condition for putting them into relation in ways that do not presume some version of false consciousness or invidious unknowing as the basis for the discrepancies in articulations and experiences of blackness and indigeneity. Through discussion of the largely incommensurate ways the concepts of *sovereignty* and *the settler* are understood within scholarly accounts of blackness and indigeneity, the chapter addresses how varied intellectual and political orientations contour what such concepts come to mean and do. Tracing the fields of significance at play in these scholarly accounts, I demonstrate how they frame questions of belonging, placemaking, governance, and futurity in ways that emerge out of particular histories, thereby also characterizing the contours and force of ongoing patterns of institutionalized violence differently. Rather than suggesting the need to adjudicate among these accounts, or to synthesize or triangulate them, I argue for the value of acknowledging them as having disparate frames of reference while also bringing them into accountable relation to each other. The speculative serves as a means of doing so by providing a way of suspending the exclusivity of claims to what is real. Addressing theorizations of the work of science fiction, I illustrate how the speculative can function as a mode of hesitation. It offers what might be termed an ethics of equivocation that enables something like an ontological humility—or ethos of ontological multiplicity—in the face of others' ways of explaining what was and is and envisioning what might be. In this way, the speculative as a mode or an ethics facilitates the project of imagining oneself into others' frames of reference without suspending the efficacy of the explanatory frameworks one has, allowing both to coexist while opening up room for the difficult and potentially fraught dynamics of equivocation that arise in moving among disparate worldings.

Chapter 2, "Fungible Becoming," engages with efforts to explore the stakes of racial embodiment, particularly the historical and ongoing pathologization of Black flesh—or constitution of blackness as a reduction to flesh. Blackness functions as a process of social inscription that converts human beings into fungible potentiality—not simply objects for ownership and sale as chattel but as the vehicle for manifesting economies, geographies, and modes of personhood for whom others will serve as the subject. However, what might it mean to turn toward a conception of embodiment as malleability, to forgo the claim to normative personhood in favor of embracing the possibilities of blackness as



a means of moving beyond propertied, and inherently racializing, modes of selfhood? In the *Xenogenesis* trilogy, Octavia Butler opens potentials for thinking about modes of embodiment and interdependence that displace existing, institutionalized ways of defining and calculating racial being. The novels do so in two ways: by insisting on the significance of shared humanness; and by staging human-alien encounter in ways that suggest the possibility for a less reifying way of understanding bodily identity, relation, and becoming. Butler does not so much envision human-alien miscegenation, the emergence of a new mixed species-being, as speculatively envision possibilities for more capacious and less insulating and hierarchical forms of sociality—a process that can be characterized as amalgamation. These forms of fluidity challenge existing institutionalized ways of defining privatized, biologized racial identity. In figuring these potentials, though, Butler also explores how such a sense of malleability emerges out of histories of equating blackness with fungibility, particularly through the trilogy's portrayal of reproduction and motherhood through its first protagonist—an African American woman named Lilith. Even as the novels' account of protean enfleshment implicitly reflects on the social production of blackness, the forms of alien sociality that seem to offer a way beyond racializing conceptions of property are themselves described in ways that draw on longstanding (stereotypical and ethnological) conceptions of indigeneity in the Americas. While repeatedly gesturing toward the politics of sovereignty and self-determination when addressing the ethics of human resistance to alien-managed transformation, the novels tend to present such Indigenously inflected concepts in ways that cast expressions of collective identity as a reactionary investment in forms of racial identity (a dynamic that I explore through brief engagements with Native futurist short stories by Drew Hayden Taylor and Mari Kurisato). Liberation from racialized modes of embodiment, and the notions of the human that they instantiate, gets linked to the absence of place-based peoplehood. Doing so defers the potential for a robust engagement with Indigenous sovereignties and implicitly translates indigeneity as a reactionary investment in the preservation of a naturalized group identity, itself understood as inherently racialized/racializing.

Turning to speculative imaginings of captivity and flight, chapter 3, “Carceral Space and Fugitive Motion,” addresses the vast proliferation of apparatuses of imprisonment over the past forty years and the growing experience of emplacement in terms of racialized carcerality for Black subjects in the United States. This expansive matrix of mass incarceration also entails surveilling and regulating Black neighborhoods, particularly in urban areas. That sustained intervention, however, is not justified in race-explicit terms, instead being



legitimized as part of a broader need to maintain “law-and-order” in putatively high crime areas, and therefore it does not present itself as a mode of institutionalized racism. In *Futureland: Nine Stories of an Imminent World*, Walter Mosley offers a speculative theorization of the principles immanently at play in such modes of neoliberal apartheid while addressing the central function of processes of racialization in the kinds of datafication on which such social mappings increasingly rely. Mosley explores the proliferation of carceral mechanisms and technologies beyond the prison, including the reorganization of everyday geographies so as to facilitate state-sanctioned containment separate from punishment for criminal activity per se in ways that build on existing racial demarcations while also generating additional and compounding modes of racialization that arise out of the application of ostensibly race-neutral criteria. The text explores the racializing effects of intensifying population-making modes of calculation (massive data gathering, algorithmic formulas for sorting kinds of persons, construction of biometric categories) as they emerge within legally mandated modes of putative racial neutrality, and it investigates how such institutionalized and state-sanctioned determinations of risk and value shape everyday geographies. In response, Mosley offers a poetics of fugitivity that disowns an oppositional politics of collective inhabitation in favor of figuring freedom as flight, in which not being located anywhere in particular becomes the avenue to emancipation from omnipresent topographies and strategies of incarceration. By contrast, Daniel Wilson’s *Robopocalypse* series figures situated relation to place and other beings as vital, offering what might be characterized as an ontology of emplacement. While not primarily focused on Indigenous peoples’ struggles for self-determination as such (although featuring an account of Osage nationhood), Wilson’s novels draw on what might be understood as Indigenous principles to highlight the existence and emergence of forms of collective territoriality that not only serve as the basis for human social organization and survival but appear as necessary for the continuance and flourishing of life itself. However, if Wilson’s texts suggest the difficulty of engaging place-based collectivity from within the topos of fugitivity, they also themselves leave little room for thinking the dynamics of diaspora (both as a political formation and as an effect of dispossession). The chapter closes by turning to Mosley’s later novel *The Wave* in order to explore the text’s meditation on questions of Black placemaking in the United States and how that exploration of located belonging itself comes to be configured around flight. The novel imagines a kind of Black indigeneity in the Americas while also suggesting the problems of such a vision. In this way, the novel seeks to think the complexity of relations between blackness and indigeneity in the Americas,



and the difficulties of that speculative process are brought into relief by the novel's framing of its narrative in terms of tropes of mobility and escape.

Chapter 4, "The Maroon Matrix," turns to ways of envisioning Black collective placemaking and explicit efforts to conceptualize such political formations in relation to Indigenous sovereignties and histories of settlement. More than perhaps any other trope within diasporic Black political discourses and movements, marronage has served over the past century as a principal way of signaling opposition to the violence of the slave system and the forms of antiblackness that have persisted and arisen in its wake—particularly in the Caribbean and Latin America. The previous chapter addresses tensions between flight and collective emplacement, but as a critical-political trope marronage contains them both within one figure—in what might be called *the maroon matrix*. Maroon communities arise out of literal fugitivity from enslavement and are maintained through an ongoing refusal to be subjected to the plantation system and its legacies of racial capitalism, private property, and criminalization/incarceration. That separateness, both metaphorical and literal, has been conceptualized by intellectuals as expressive of a process of *indigenization* and acknowledged under international law (and, by extension, as part of domestic law in parts of Latin America) through the terms developed to define and recognize Indigenous peoples. Marronage, then, provides a framework through which to think Black emplacement and self-determination in the Americas while, at the same time, the intimate role played by indigeneity in form(ul)ations of marronage also threatens to situate non-native people of African descent in a relation of substitution/replacement to Native peoples, rather than one of mutual engagement and negotiation within landscapes shaped by the dynamics of empire. Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* and Andrea Hairston's *Mindscape* explore the possibilities for Black collective territoriality in the diaspora while situating it in relation to enduring Indigenous presence and Native peoples' pursuit of self-determination. These novels address, in different ways, how Black presence can participate in Indigenous dispossession while also suggesting that indigeneity can serve as a conceptual and political resource for challenging dominant equations of blackness with placelessness, or the absence of a proper space of collective inhabitance. Hopkinson's and Hairston's texts illustrate the difficulty of translating indigeneity into the terms of marronage without the former becoming something like setting—functioning as a background or vehicle for non-native modes of struggle for change. What, though, does it mean to acknowledge Indigenous specificity and (geopolitical) distinctness? Native futurist work, such as Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel's *Oracles* and Stephen Graham Jones's *The Bird Is Gone: A Monograph Manifesto*, investigates these



problematics of acknowledgment, addressing the double-edged character of state-recognized Indigenous territorial boundaries while also tracing how historically shifting Native social formations are congealed into notions of static Indian difference (potentially appropriable by non-natives for their own purposes). Together, these two sets of texts highlight the difficulty of conceptualizing how Black projects of placemaking and of Native self-determination might articulate with each other in ways neither superintended by the state nor predicated on an indigenizing politics of analogy. The chapter closes by considering the appearance of representations of treatying within Hairston's novel and the possibilities such an invocation of diplomacy might offer for envisioning and enacting relations of reciprocity—the potential for sustained modes of Black-Indigenous collective negotiation that do not mandate that these modes of placemaking (and the political imaginations from which they emerge) be defined through or in contrast to each other.

The coda, “Diplomacy in the Undercommons,” seeks to think Black-Indigenous relation from two nonidentical trajectories in order further to suggest ways political imaginaries can open onto and engage each other without becoming a single framework. Addressing how the kinds of negotiation discussed at the end of chapter 4 might provide one way of conceptualizing productive translation across political difference, I approach this dynamic through Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's figuration in *The Undercommons* of “bad debt,” considering the ways such debt might open onto a conception of diplomacy. In this vein, I take up the work of the hashtag #nobanonstolenlands. Created by Melanie Yazzie in response to the prominence of forms of American exceptionalism in the resistance to the Trump administration's anti-Muslim travel ban, the hashtag offers a way of envisioning generative Native connections to and embrace of non-native presence that is neither dispossessive nor routed through forms of state recognition and belonging. Conversely, I also return to the discussion of Black Lives Matter, considering the choice by movement leaders to reference the contemporary presence of Indigenous peoples. These examples do not create a unified political imaginary, but they do suggest speculative engagements across difference that can facilitate modes of mutual accountability through ongoing projects of translation.



## ON THE IMPASSE

How can Black and Indigenous struggles be put into relation with each other? Both have been crucial to the history of the United States and the Americas more broadly, and trying to address one without a sense of the importance of the other can produce deeply problematic historical and political blindnesses, as well as generate dismissive and demeaning forms of exceptionalism. However, a range of difficulties arise in trying to hold them both in the same conceptual or analytical frame. One prominent strategy for doing so has been to situate settler colonialism and enslavement within a single system, explaining antiblackness and anti-indigeneity as mutually participating within an overarching power structure. Doing so aims to think together the uneven distributions of power, resources, and life chances for a range of oppressed racialized populations while suggesting that these groups share a set of objectives in the dismantling and transformation of that larger matrix of ideologies, institutions, and coercions. While the goal may be to provide a basis for solidarity



predicated on a common analysis of the forces that shape what seem like varied vectors of domination, that very theoretical unification can short-circuit the process of relation by relying on the analytical structure itself to resolve prominent differences and discrepancies among these movements. Doing so also de facto can privilege a particular political analysis (in terms of both the character of oppression and ways of envisioning desired change) and thereby subordinate or delegitimize other formulations. That process of unification further can entail presenting alternative forms of political imagination as merely reproducing dominant logics, discounting them by casting them as surrogating for the forms of state identification under critique. As against such totalizing or foundationalizing gestures, a critical praxis organized around translation starts from the premise that these movements are not so much inherently commensurable or incommensurable as simply nonidentical; that they are shaped and given momentum by nonequivalent sets of concerns, emphases, and self-understandings. Articulating them to each other, then, requires engaging the ways the terms and models generated within one (set of) movement(s) cannot simply encompass those of another, or be incorporated into a supposedly neutral supervening framework, without producing profound shifts in meaning and orientation.

Enchattelment and settlement operate as differentiable backgrounds in ways that engender varied trajectories for Black and Indigenous political and intellectual formations. Native peoples also were subject to enslavement, and Black people have been subject to territorial expropriation and dispossession,<sup>1</sup> but one might approach, in Sara Ahmed's terms, as discussed in the Introduction, the predominating "what" that "surfaces" in histories of Black and Indigenous struggles as divergent. My aim, then, lies less in suggesting that Black and Native people(s) have not been subject to similar or interdependent forms of state and popular violence than that those potentially cross-cutting parallels and intersections come to signify in relation to disparate historical and experiential trajectories. Those experiences that might be understood as shared or interwoven are contextualized and oriented differently depending on the political imaginary of which they become part, the background against which they gain meaning. Conversely, this nonequivalence between varied struggles and movements affects how they relate to each other, as each transposes events, dynamics, figurations, articulations in ways that align them within a given movement's own particular conceptual and historical orientations. As Ahmed suggests, "[a] 'we' emerges as an effect of a shared direction toward an object," and she adds, "Groups are formed through their shared orientation toward an object. Of course, a paradox is already evident here in that to have 'something' that can be



recognized as 'the same object' is an effect of the repetition of the orientation toward 'it,' just as the orientation seems directed toward the object that exists 'before' us. In a way, 'what' is faced by a collective is also what brings it into existence."<sup>2</sup> Blackness and indigeneity as ongoing processes of group formation can be understood as differentiated by the objects by which they are oriented (such as the terms of law and policy, collective memories, shared social dynamics and frames of reference) and the "what" toward which they turn (horizons of futurity, possibility, freedom, liberation).

The process of moving among these formations, then, might be understood as one of translation. We can approach Black and Indigenous imaginaries as, in Marisol de la Cadena's terms, varied "ways of making worlds,"<sup>3</sup> ways of articulating and mapping present sociopolitical dynamics while connecting forces from the past to the emergence of future potentials. She suggests of her own relation to Indigenous Andean intellectuals, "Our worlds were not necessarily commensurable, *but* this did not mean we could not communicate. Indeed, we could, insofar as I accepted that I was going to leave something behind, as with any translation—or even better, that our mutual understanding was also going to be full of gaps that would be different for each of us, and would constantly show up, interrupting but not preventing our communication," adding, "[O]ur communication did not depend on sharing single, cleanly identical notions—theirs, mine, or a third new one. We shared conversations across onto-epistemic formations."<sup>4</sup> She later observes, "I learned to identify radical difference as a relation, . . . the condition between us that made us aware of our mutual misunderstandings but did not fully inform us about 'the stuff' that composed those misunderstandings."<sup>5</sup> When not conceptualized as a project of generating equivalence, of finding correlations ("cleanly identical notions"), translation draws attention to the existence of semiotic gaps—forms of relational *difference*—that "leave something behind" and that function less as obstructions to communication than as a crucial part of being-in-relation.<sup>6</sup>

The figure of translation, though, also suggests a methodological problem with respect to defining what constitute Black and Indigenous formations. Translation can imply a movement between different languages in ways that attribute an inherent coherence to the formations in question, but any given language itself is not a stable, easily delineated entity. Rather, all languages are internally multiple and heteroglossic while also having porous boundaries with other languages: the standardization of a particular version of a language as paradigmatic allows other versions to be cast as dialects, degraded improprieties, creolizations, and pidgins. Similarly, employing the trope of translation raises the question of what gets to count as "Black" and "Indigenous" within my



own analytic framing. What versions of these identities, movements, political visionings provide the baseline through which to conceptualize horizons and thresholds of relation, difference, translation? As Grace Kyungwon Hong notes of conceptualizations of blackness within Audre Lorde's work, "Black communities are not homogenously unified but are themselves made up of diverse and heterogeneous entities," and as such, "they are themselves always already coalitional."<sup>7</sup> Reciprocally, the category of *Indigenous* itself emerges through a series of transnational movements over decades and has been taken up in uneven and shifting ways around the world.<sup>8</sup> Even if one were to use "Native American" or "American Indian" instead, those rubrics can perform a homogenizing agglomeration that displaces the very idea of distinct, self-determining peoples toward which such naming usually seeks to gesture. Moreover, I should underline that Black and Indigenous are not inherently separate categories, that there are many Black Native people in at least two different senses: people of African descent who can trace their lineage to non-Afro-descended Native people; and Black people who are citizens of Native nations, by adoption, treaty, or other means.<sup>9</sup> Efforts to speak about differences between "Black" and "Indigenous" formations or modes of "we"-ness, then, run the risk of occluding Black Native people. Conversely, though, I am wary of positioning Black Native people as the necessary bridge between what otherwise may function as nonidentical groups, even as I seek to formulate accounts of "we"-ness that would not exclude, delegitimize, or erase Black Native histories and experiences and the effects of those histories and experiences on understandings of what blackness and indigeneity were, are, and might be.<sup>10</sup>

As opposed to seeking to stabilize Black and Indigenous as categories in order clearly to delineate their separation, to map the frontier that constitutes their difference, my aim lies in sketching the processes through which these modes of groupness gain cohesion as identities and movements that tend not to follow the same intellectual and political trajectories. While neither blackness nor indigeneity is singular, they still might be understood as occupying discrepant problem-spaces. In *Conscripts of Modernity*, David Scott describes a problem-space as "an ensemble of questions and answers around which a horizon of identifiable stakes (conceptual as well as ideological-political stakes) hangs," adding that differences among problem-spaces can be registered in the variance in their "tropes, modes, and rhetoric" and the "horizon in relation to which [a given problem-space] is constructed."<sup>11</sup> Broadly stated, if the histories of enchattelment and settlement produce differently configured kinds of problem-spaces with their own horizons and stakes, then the framings, narrative strategies, governing tropes, and forms of analysis at play in Indigenous



and Black struggles will unfold in ways that give rise to discrepant ensembles—in Ahmed's terms discussed earlier, varied formations of "we"-ness that take shape through repeated and ongoing dynamics of turning toward different objects/objectives. This chapter begins by critically engaging the effort to generate singularizing accounts that either foundationalize a particular framework (organized around blackness or indigeneity) or that seek to encompass varied frameworks into a kind of meta-structure treated as having greater explanatory power. After exploring the conceptual and political problems generated by this impulse toward unification, I turn to addressing two keywords—*sovereignty* and *settler*—that generate impasses in thinking about differences between Black and Indigenous formations/movements, thereby also illustrating the varied orientations of such movements. The chapter closes by turning to the concept of *speculation* to explore the possibilities it offers for understanding and negotiating those impasses, foregrounding the potential for an ethics of multiplicity that might guide movement among apparently mutually exclusive truth claims.

## Structure

Systemic analysis can be used to model and explain the relation among a range of sociopolitical processes, highlighting the significance of the structural dynamic(s) in question across seemingly disparate phenomena while also situating disparate populations affected by those phenomena in a determinate set of relations to each other and, thereby, providing the basis for shared understanding and organizing. However, such system building also can have the effect of interpellating populations in ways that defer or disavow their own analyses of how they are situated with respect to other groups as well as the sociopolitical formations in and against which they struggle. Speaking about the insertion of human social formations into a developmental narrative in which they all can be understood as undergoing an inevitable "transition" to Euro-American political economy, Dipesh Chakrabarty suggests, "This transition is also a process of translation of diverse life-worlds and conceptual horizons about being human into the categories of Enlightenment thought." In the place of such a universal narrative of time's unfolding, he argues for the importance of "translations [among such diverse life worlds] that do not take a universal middle term for granted."<sup>12</sup> While contemporary analyses that seek to put Black and Indigenous histories and struggles into the same frame usually do not endorse the kinds of universalizing history Chakrabarty critiques, they do have a propensity for collating varied collective experiences into a singular account. The



terms and categories of that account's intellectual structure appear as a neutral matrix in which all manner of events, oppressions, and movements can be securely situated and explained. Thus, the complicated and potentially fraught processes of translation through which various lifeworlds, political imaginations, problem-spaces, backgrounds, orientations, and conceptual horizons are brought into relation with each other can be displaced by the apparently immanent coherence and explanatory reach of the analytical structure itself. In contrast to this kind of framework, which can have exceptionalizing effects by presenting one group's experiences as paradigmatic of how the system works, I would like to draw on Black feminist conceptions of *difference* as a means of holding on to the conceptual, political, and ethical significance of not resolving forms of oppression and resistance into encompassing structural narratives.

In order to explore the dynamics and stakes of this kind of system modeling, I turn to two theorists whose work has been increasingly important in current scholarly conversations: Sylvia Wynter and Glen Coulthard. They each offer powerful accounts that explain broad patterns of structural violence; they have been quite influential; and they each illustrate some prominent tendencies within Black studies and Indigenous studies. In particular, both scholars generate differently configured kinds of what might be characterized as "in the last instance" effects.<sup>13</sup> By this phrase, I mean that even as these models may posit the existence of varied kinds of institutional formations, modes of collective identification, and vectors of institutional power and oppression, they suggest that there is an underlying or overriding structure that has a particular character that ultimately shapes or overdetermines the terms, dynamics, and possibilities for change for what is understood as the system as a whole (call it coloniality, racial capitalism, modernity, the world-system, etc.).

Wynter argues that a specific Eurocentric way of envisioning what it means to be human, a "genre of the human" that she refers to as "Man," has come to dominate global political economy.<sup>14</sup> In "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," Wynter suggests that "the struggle of our new millennium will be one between the ongoing imperative of securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself."<sup>15</sup> In casting nonwestern populations as evolutionarily backward due to their racial impediments, this framework legitimizes "the large-scale accumulation of unpaid land, unpaid labor, and overall wealth expropriated by Western Europe from non-European peoples . . . from the fifteenth century onwards."<sup>16</sup> Globalizing discourses of race from the early-modern period onward, then, generate the conditions for a process of humanization/dehumanization that undergirds



both the conquest of the New World and the African slave trade. European settlement in the Americas gave rise to “the modern phenomenon of race, as a new extrahumanly determined classificatory principle and mechanism of domination. . . . For the indigenous peoples of the New World, together with the mass-enslaved peoples of Africa, were now to be reclassified as ‘irrational’ because ‘savage’ Indians, and as ‘subrational’ Negroes”—“the new idea of order was now to be defined in terms of degrees of rational perfection/imperfection.”<sup>17</sup> This notion of rationality enacts a process of *degodding* or secularization by which relations of rule are organized along physical rather than spiritual principles—later to be supplemented or perhaps superseded, Wynter suggests, by an evolutionary conception of those who are “selected” and those who are “deselected.” In being consigned to the “space of Otherness,” “Indians” and “Negroes” serve as examples of irrational/subrational backwardness against which to define “human” progress and, thereby, position Europe and its descendants as the pinnacle of human achievement to date, legitimizing enslavement and colonial dominance/expropriation.

Wynter’s articulation of this global (set of) dynamic(s) and the role of a universalizing, racializing conception of the human within them arises out of her effort both to develop an analysis that extends beyond a project of inclusion and to envision alternative possibilities for social life that can arise out of existing practices and principles among the oppressed. As Katherine McKittrick suggests in *Demonic Grounds*, “Sylvia Wynter’s work entails not only ‘deconstructing’ or denaturalizing categories such as ‘race’; it also means envisioning what is beyond the hierarchical codes and partial human stories that have, for so long, organized our populations and the planet.”<sup>18</sup> Wynter argues that antiracist and anticolonial movements from the mid-twentieth century often ended up seeking to contribute and be recognized within the very systems they had set out to dismantle, particularly in terms of the scholarly work conducted in these movements’ name, and she positions her work in direct contrast to that implicit inclusionary impulse. For example, in “On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory,” she says that in these movements’ entry into the “academic mainstream” they often “find their original transgressive intentions defused, their energies rechanneled as they came to be defined (and in many cases, actively to define themselves so) in new ‘multicultural terms’ [such] as African-American Studies; as such, this field appeared as but one of the many diverse ‘Ethnic Studies’ that now served to re-verify the very thesis of Liberal universalism” against which Black study and critique “had been directed in the first place.”<sup>19</sup> Her effort to think the global politics of racialization as a predicate for modernity, then, emerges out of a realization of the ways the



“devalorization of racial blackness was in itself, *only* a function of another and more deeply rooted phenomenon—in effect, only the map of the real territory, the symptom of the real cause, the real issue.”<sup>20</sup> Her work, then, seeks to enable what she elsewhere has characterized as “ontological sovereignty,” a new way of understanding potentials for social life that arises when racially oppressed peoples “move completely outside our present conception of what it is to be human, and therefore outside the ground of the orthodox body of knowledge which institutes and reproduces such a conception.”<sup>21</sup> This process entails, in Rinaldo Walcott’s terms, “a cosmopolitanism from below,” one in which forms of collective worldmaking among the oppressed serve as the basis for forms of self-fashioning that challenge the givenness of the current racialized world order.<sup>22</sup>

In articulating this analysis of racializing global structural transformation, though, Wynter takes blackness as paradigmatic of the dynamics of dehumanization through which Man is (re)constituted. She observes in “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom,” “While ‘indios’ and ‘negros,’ Indians and Negroes, were to be both made into the Caliban-type referents of Human Otherness to the new rational self-conception of the West, there was also . . . a marked differential in the degrees of subrationality, and of not-quite-humanness, to which each group was to be relegated within the classificatory logic of the West,” earlier suggesting, “it was to be the peoples of Black African descent who would be constructed as the ultimate referent of the ‘racially inferior’ Human Other, with the range of other colonized dark-skinned peoples, all classified as ‘natives,’ now being assimilated to its category.”<sup>23</sup> In situating settler colonial occupation of the Americas and the transatlantic slave trade within a single framework, Wynter highlights their mutual participation within a modern world-system predicated on naturalized racial ideologies and attendant forms of institutionalized violence that work to secure the interests of the dominant “ethnaclass,” which narrates its own particular identity as simply the character of “the human itself.” Yet in producing a structural account of post-Columbian Euro-dominance ordered around the construction of modes of racial otherness, Wynter locates blackness as the “ultimate referent” for those processes, such that all other forms of racialization and oppression against non-European peoples can (and should?) be understood within a framework in which blackness and antiblackness provide the background.

Within such critical and political mapping, though, what place is there for engaging Indigenous geographies and modes of peoplehood? Wynter’s earlier essay “1492: A New World View” suggests some of the implications for thinking Indigenous sovereignty that emerge within the overarching structural



account she articulates. As in “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom,” her interest lies in tracing how a particular “genre of the human” comes to function as the basis for creating and ranking modes of racialized being, in which white supremacist narratives of Euro-superiority circulate as if they merely index the natural dynamics of human evolution and development. In insisting on the need for a global vision that can move beyond this account of the human, and its oppressive distributions of privilege and immiseration, Wynter underlines the need for a shared sense of species identity as the primary way of redressing the structural violences about which she theorizes. That new account of the human, though, leaves little room for envisioning self-determination for Indigenous peoples. Addressing Native critiques of the quincentenary of Columbus’s landing, she asks, “[C]an there be . . . a third perspective,” beyond affirmation of Euro-conquest and denunciation of its genocidal effects, that offers “a new and ecumenical human view” of 1492 and its aftermath?<sup>24</sup> Characterizing “both celebrants and dissidents” of the quincentenary as offering “partial perspectives” that follow from “partial interests,” Wynter suggests that Columbus’s journey to the Americas and all that followed in its wake should be thought “from the perspective of the species,” “taking as our point of departure both the ecosystemic and global sociosystemic ‘interrelatedness’ of our contemporary situation” in ways that move toward a globally shared sense of common humanness.<sup>25</sup> She suggests that the forms of global connection that proliferate in the wake of the Columbian encounter can enable a conceptual revolution allowing “knowledge of our specifically human level of reality,” thereby enabling a thinking of “the *propter nos*” for the entire species.<sup>26</sup> This explicitly antiracist account seeks to displace the Euro-bourgeois subject as the metric through which to assess relative humanness.

However, what happens to Indigenous articulations of peoplehood and self-determination, in terms of both the critique of the ongoing history of settler occupation of their lands and the insistence on substantive acknowledgment of Native nations as crucial to any meaningful trajectory for decolonization? If Wynter understands her analysis as marking the *coloniality* of what she presents as the contemporary world-system, implicitly casting the dislodging of Man as a process of decolonization, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang raise questions about what it means to envision decolonization in ways that do not address Indigenous projects of self-determination as landed peoples. In “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” they argue, “Decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life: it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies.” They further suggest that not engaging in sustained ways with Indigenous projects of self-determination “turns decolonization into



an empty signifier to be filled by any track towards liberation. In reality, the tracks walk all over land/people in settler contexts.”<sup>27</sup> From within Wynter’s analytical structure, to what extent do such Indigenous political geographies appear as merely “partial interests” that need to be transcended in favor of a vision of “humankind in general”? The existence of distinct peoples with their own complex (and potentially overlapping) modes of placemaking can come to appear either as a drag on the antiracist envisioning of a global “we” or as a regressive investment in forms of collective identity tied to particular lands and waters.<sup>28</sup> As Sandy Grande notes in *Red Pedagogy* with respect to leftist non-native political imaginaries, “[A] key question, then, is whether a revolutionary socialist politics also envisages the ‘new’ social order as unfolding upon occupied land,” adding, “How does the ‘egalitarian distribution’ of colonized lands constitute greater justice for Indigenous peoples?”<sup>29</sup> Understanding forms of racialization as causally and systemically crucial to the oppressions, inequities, and violences of, in Wynter’s terms, “our present single world order and single world history” generates a structural account in which the expropriation of Indigenous lands can be explained as a function of the institutionalized narration of Native peoples as irrational/subrational savages, a status for which blackness provides the model.<sup>30</sup> Incorporating Indigenous peoples into the kind of global structural formulation Wynter offers, then, raises questions about the possibilities for addressing the (geo)political imaginaries offered by Indigenous intellectuals and activists.<sup>31</sup>

In suggesting the existence of “genres of the human,” though, Wynter does gesture toward the potential for pluralizing the possibilities for being and becoming in ways that might provide intellectual resources for engaging with Indigenous (and other modes of) peoplehood. In “On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory,” she suggests that those populations who come to be classified under Euro-conquest and enslavement as “*Indians* and *Negroes*” were “forcibly uprooted from their own indigenous genres of being human and, therefore, from their once autocentric self-conception and classified instead as now subordinated groups.”<sup>32</sup> She further argues that global forms of Western coloniality “had to repress the reality of the quite different self-conceptions and sociogenic codes of the multiple groups now subordinated and classified as *natives*, in order to enable their multiple societal orders to be studied by anthropologists, *not* as the institutions of alternative genres of the human that they were . . . but, rather, in Western classificatory terms, as ‘cultures.’”<sup>33</sup> Even as the presence of “multiple societal orders” often appears in Wynter’s work in the past tense, as what was assaulted and erased through the imposition of Western notions of the human, the existence of a range of “alternative genres of



the human” opens the potential for thinking such modes of being, which have been effaced through Euro-dominance, as what lies beyond coloniality—or as contributing to the critique and dismantling of coloniality. Although, at other moments, Wynter seems to suggest that all extant genres of the human obey a “master code”—a “governing *sociogenic principle*”—that provides the shared framework for the current world-system,<sup>34</sup> but the prospect of the plurality of genres opens toward a conception of translation across nonidentical “societal orders,” even as the diversity of such collective worldings is staged within a problem-space organized around racialized relations to the human rather than, say, negotiating relations to particular lands and waters.<sup>35</sup>

By contrast, in *Red Skin, White Masks*, Coulthard foregrounds the historical and continuing centrality of settler assertions of authority over Indigenous peoples and territories to existing political economies (particularly within and among settler-states). He argues for the importance of understanding “primitive accumulation” less as a completed stage in the process of capitalist development than as persistent and crucial in the operation of contemporary capitalism. He observes, “[I]n the Canadian context, colonial domination continues to be structurally committed to maintain . . . ongoing state access to the land and resources that contradictorily provide the material and spiritual sustenance of Indigenous societies on the one hand, and the foundation of colonial state-formation, settlement, and capitalist development on the other.” In underlining this point, he cites Patrick Wolfe’s formulation that “the primary motive [of settler colonialism] is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element.” Coulthard presents ongoing and intensifying forms of settler expropriation (often conducted through forms of state recognition) as structurally necessary—as *foundational*—to extant modes of state formation and capitalist development, later noting, “it is correct to view primitive accumulation as the condition of possibility for the developing and ongoing reproduction of the capitalist mode of production.”<sup>36</sup>

This argument responds to calls for the recognition of Indigenous peoples by the settler-state and for forms of reconciliation between such peoples and the state. To the extent that Canada and other settler-states seek to engage Indigenous struggles for self-determination by legally acknowledging the existence and claims of Native nations, the pursuit of such acknowledgment, Coulthard indicates, eventuates in the translation of Indigenous geopolitical self-understandings and horizons of governance into terms compatible with the existence and jurisdiction of the state itself. He indicates the need “to challenge the increasingly commonplace idea that the colonial relationship