

# On “The Body” and the Human-Ecology Distinction

Reading Frantz Fanon after Bruno Latour

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IN *THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH*, Frantz Fanon writes, “A hostile, ungovernable, and fundamentally rebellious Nature is in fact synonymous in the colonies with the bush, the mosquitoes, the natives, and disease” (1961, 182). The “natives” are Nature. In this way Fanon reveals a colonial morphology alienated from any human-ity that is on the wrong side of a colonizing divide. As part of what Bruno Latour names the modern desire to distinguish nature from culture, philosophies have split along these lines as well. Perhaps for this reason, as an *ecological* indictment, Fanon’s provocative claim has gone largely uncommented upon (Clare 2013): Colonial power seeks to purge the European morphology of human-ity of all things “Nature.” Sara Ahmed has argued that for Fanon whiteness is a corporeal schema by means of which humans are sensed, and this sets the stage for a “noticeability of the arrival of some bodies more than others” (2007, 150–53). For Fanon, this human morphology is ecologically alienated in that it opposes itself to “ecology” (“the bush, mosquitoes, the native, and disease”). Whiteness is a corporeal schema or morphology of human-ity that considers nature to be alien, and so it must also defend itself against that nature, perhaps especially when this dares to show itself in politics. Interestingly Fanon does not select the human side of this divide. He seeks instead to undo the divide. His work seeks to replace this human morphology

with another one that takes seriously the “cortico-viscerality” of a therefore significantly altered “new man” (1961, 216 note 35; 233).

If Fanon’s interest was in recovering a new man, my own interest seeks to broaden this into a morphology that is multimorphic instead of dimorphic (Preciado 2013, 105). What Fanon helpfully suggests is that the European morphology of human-ity is fundamentally opposed to all things “ecological.” In this way the human is from the start an indistinguishably political and ecological project, one that consists in the divide itself. Fanon seeks to collapse the political and ecological not by eliminating any possible human morphology, but by seeking a new one in which attention to bodily difference is not in conflict with what human means. Bodily difference, Fanon suggests, has been denied in order to set a certain human morphology off from “the natural world.” The very idea of a generic body makes it possible for modernity to isolate the political.

Reading Fanon yields a critique of a concept that he did not himself explicitly criticize, but which his project in effect renders deeply problematic, “the body.” I therefore question this concept in the present as it suggests a supposedly generic body whose meanings and therefore intuitions and fears are also denied. I argue that reading Frantz Fanon after Bruno Latour, it is possible to understand where “the body” as a concept comes from: “The body” becomes the meaning of the modern political precisely in its exclusion of “ecology.” If for Latour, modernity means the attempt to purge culture of nature and thereby to exacerbate natural disasters precisely in this effort, for Fanon, modernity is Manichaean: Moderns (wielders of colonial power) seek to purge humanness of all things ecological, including bodily difference, which threatens the political and ecological distinction. “The body” is far from a benign figure of speech. It pretends to a genericity that is in fact nowhere to be found on earth. “The body” is a distinctly modern legacy, evidence and fuel of modernity’s planetary alienation.

The essay is composed of five sections. In the first I suggest that the political and the ecological, in spite of a lot of excellent work undermining the nature-culture distinction, remain mutually resistant concepts. In section two I argue that this split can be partially understood through the work of Bruno Latour. For Latour modernity is defined by an attempt to purge culture of nature. This is the “first Great Divide” that constitutes modernity as a concept and in fact a distinct nature-culture. For Latour, this distinction then gets externalized or projected to create a second Great Divide, one imagined by moderns between themselves and other societies. To illustrate the extent of the sway of this distinction, I read a recent and widely influential essay on doing history in the Anthropocene by Dipesh Chakrabarty. Chakrabarty underestimates the role of the nature-culture distinction in the making of climate crisis. Here I also explain that perhaps what is needed is recognition that the human as

a morphology both separates itself from ecology and yet—incompatibly—is considered to be an ecological pinnacle. The human isn't and yet is ecological. Differences among humans, when they are discussed, are attributed unilaterally to the political side of a new political-ecological split. After Latour the nature and culture distinction is questionable, but a political-ecological split survives that attributes the eruptions of discontinuous life entirely to human agency.

In the third section I then turn to the work of Frantz Fanon to argue that Latour's Great Divides are expressed as "Manichaeism" in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. The "ecological" import of Fanon's concept of Manichaeism has largely been missed, thanks both to the salience of the political-ecological distinction and to the subtlety of Fanon's account. But Fanon is not only talking about politics; he's talking about ecology. The human, Fanon explains, is meant to be a natural master of the planet, a human among animals. The human is master of all "matter" with which all things related to bodies and all bodies related to things are identified.

In the fourth section I suggest that it is this modern Manichaeism that produces a crucial double bind in the present: Those who fail to be "the body" of modernism are also those most harmed by its elemental (a word I borrow from a critical reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Luce Irigaray for an indistinguishably political and ecological) destruction. Politics, at least in the tradition that gives rise to modern politics, is in fact and has always been the privileging of certain bodies over others. There is no perfectly apolitical bodily feature, though some features of bodies are more politically formative than others. Modernity does nothing to intervene on this. In fact it exacerbates this theme. Neither the discourse of politics (the human, conceived as an absolute power) nor the discourse of ecology (natives, mosquitoes, disease) offers refuge to those whose bodies are considered a threat to a human morphology that is planetarily alienated. In the final section of the essay I argue that this partitioning of politics (relations among the humans) from ecology produces "the body" and its generic justice. I return to Latour to argue that he ultimately does not appreciate the double bind discussed in section four. Fanon does. Therefore Fanon offers a better framework for undermining "the political," not by reducing it to the modern sense of "the ecological," but by giving attention to what he suggests is the "cortico-visceral" injustice of a modernity that denies its own earthly status.

## THE POLITICAL-ECOLOGICAL DISTINCTION

Given that there is so much important work now being written on environmental ethics and politics, on new materialisms, on the Anthropocene, on the Capitalocene, on de-colonial approaches to climate change, on eco-feminism, on feminist science studies, on re-naturalization, to all of which this essay is

indebted, it might seem retrograde to insist, as I ultimately want to insist, that a political-ecological distinction remains and to ask from where a contemporary political-ecological distinction has come. Much of this literature has been inspired by Bruno Latour's definition of modernity as the attempt to distinguish nature from culture (Mayberry, Subramaniam, and Weasel 2001, 4; Bennett 2001, 2010; Morton 2007; Haraway 2008; Kirby 2008; Barad 2007, 2003; Alaimo and Hekman 2008). Instead of nature and culture, concepts I take to have been rendered further meaningless by important work such as that of Karen Barad (2007), Alison Stone (2006), Donna Haraway (2008), and Anna Tsing (2015), later in the essay I pursue another pair, ecology and politics. Ultimately I argue that this distinction produces a generic or a-bodily connotation as perhaps *the* political concept, the very conception that is politics itself. It is this supposed generic that survives as the concept of "the body," which I discuss in the fourth and fifth sections of this essay.

In order to illustrate the fact that the ecological and the political are conceptually separate sets of relations, consider a moment in a recent interview between Donna Haraway and Cary Wolfe, both of whom have themselves powerfully undermined the distinction between human-ity and animal-ity, the latter of which I take to be unambiguously synonymous with the ecological. These are two scholars whose work has established the natural as the cultural, the cultural as natural.

Their conversation comes up twice against "a very complex nexus of questions" that Haraway articulates as in part the "*crossing* of the biopolitical and the ecological [my emphasis]" (Haraway 2016, 234.) Wolfe points out that "biopolitics" and "ecological thinking" have "typically been taken as not having a lot to do with each other" (ibid., 255; on the "biopolitical" see Esposito 2008). Is this not a very surprising observation? After all, Haraway's own work resides at their intersection, most famously in *How like a Leaf: An Interview with Thyrza Nichols Goodeve* and *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. And indeed Haraway disputes their distinction. She cites the ecological politics of Val Plumwood and Thom van Dooren. But she admits that Wolfe raises an interesting question.

Why is it that these concepts—biopolitics and ecological thinking—persist in distinction conceptually? Wolfe suggests that it is because "ecological thinking . . . has often smuggled back in . . . a lot of reproductive discourses that are not queer enough" (ibid., 256). I think Wolfe is pointing out that ecological thinking has not tended to engage with queer critiques of "the human." Ecological thinking in other words has tended not to gain traction with certain political concepts and disputes. But from the other side, too, engaging in political philosophy clearly does not in any way guarantee an engagement with ecology. In fact, political dynamics are still regularly described as "unnatural," by which is generally meant unfixed and caused by

humans. Perhaps this is why Rudolph Kjellén felt the need to create a neologism in order to make clear that he was interested in precisely this project: a *biopolitics* or politics of the state as a “living form,” which can be cleansed by eugenics (Esposito 2008, 16). In this way the very word biopolitics is evidence of a modern conceptual divide: bio and politics. But here’s my worry. Aren’t all politics “bio”? Why the rhetorical distinction? Don’t all political concepts have physical implications? For all of the reasons Haraway as well as Wolfe have established, isn’t politics *essentially* a sort of ecological relation? And if not, why not?

In asking these questions, I certainly do not want to undo decades of crucial work in which political concepts have been demonstrated to be human creation. I seek instead to give these a new framework. Like Fanon I seek a human morphology or better a sensitivity to *multimorphology* that appreciates its relationality *as* earth and thus a sensitivity to the multimorphic powers of earth that we ourselves are.

#### LATOUR, CHAKRABARTY, AND THE TWO GREAT DIVIDES

In this section I return to Latour in order to point out that for him modernity is an attempt to purge “culture” of “nature.” Bruno Latour’s work is in the background of Haraway and Wolfe’s conversation. What is culture, and as a subset “politics,” in modernity? The distinction between *polis* and *oikos* is one traceable to the ancient Greek city-states. Though there was much disagreement among Greek philosophers regarding the relationship between these terms, the *polis* popularly seems to have meant “representative government of the sort with which we are familiar from modern European history: elite representative institutions” (Springborg 1990, 84). For Latour in *We Have Never Been Modern* what modern means is the desire not only to distinguish these two, but to purge the politics of all signs of nature. Here I want to pay particular attention to Latour’s articulation primarily in *We Have Never Been Modern* of the relationship between what he names “Two Great Divides,” [*les deux Grands Partages*] (1993, 97; Latour 1991, 132). The first and more basic Great Divide is that between culture and nature. This divide produces as an “export” a second Great Divide “between Us and Them” (1993, 97–106).

Naming these efforts in such hyperbolic terms is characteristic of the humor that characterizes Latour’s writing (Elam 1999). For Latour, modernity is a kind of ridiculous, wasted, and disastrous effort to displace myriad powers. To be modern is to think one can cultivate one’s own power by partitioning things that belong to each other. The book begins with “the proliferation of hybrids”: the ubiquity of compounding problems composed of supposedly incommensurable parts. He writes in 1993 of the modern categories of newspapers: “Headings like Economy, Politics, Science, Books, Culture, Religion,

and Local Events remain in place as if there were nothing odd going on" (Latour 1993, 2). And yet the "smallest AIDS virus takes you from sex to the unconscious, then to Africa, tissue cultures, DNA and San Francisco," in what Latour takes to be a typical (I would add: typically black-phobic, crip-phobic, queer-phobic, trans-phobic) mindscape of hybrid life. This is a network, a conglomeration of actors "that the intellectual culture in which we live does not know how to categorize" (Latour 1993, 3). Latour doesn't comment here explicitly on the role of European morphology<sup>1</sup> in the making of what he calls a network, though he does include the "unconscious" as one of its incommensurable dimensions. The point is that those describing this network—those writing newspapers but also scientists, politicians, and philosophers—"will slice the delicate network traced by the virus for you into tidy compartments where you will find only social phenomena, only local news, only sentiment, only sex" (ibid., 2). Even such important thinkers as E. O. Wilson, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jacques Derrida speak past each other (ibid., 5). Each is "powerful in itself, but impossible to combine with the other two. Can anyone imagine a study that would treat the ozone hole as simultaneously naturalized, sociologized, and deconstructed?" (ibid., 6). Latour admits that his reading of these three is "a bit unfair," but the point would seem to be that it is *necessary* to read all three. It is just that doing so at best creates a patchwork (ibid.).<sup>2</sup>

Hybridity is a result of the attempt at partitioning. Networks are only "hybrid" because the parts are conceived to be incommensurable. Without this self-identifying and proud modern predilection to make the divisions, there would be no hybrids. Without the seeming need for a conceptual translation between what is appreciated as "exact knowledge" and what is appreciated as "the exercise of power," there would be no hybrids (Latour 1993, 3). The very notion of a Great Divide is Latour's attempt to make ridiculous for the reader divisions created by an imaginary that is both doomed to fail and apparently succeeding. The "paradox of the moderns," according to which the more the divisions, the more alarming the hybrids, is for Latour dramatized most obviously in "the end of limitless Nature" in the "glorious year 1989 [that] witnesses the first conferences on the global state of the planet" (ibid., 8). In the very same year the Berlin "wall of shame" fell (ibid., 9). Along with it the sense of an outside of European capitalism disappears. Those in "rich Western democracies" miss the "perfect symmetry" and the combined devastation of this pair of events in "1989: The Year of Miracles" (ibid., 9).

Dipesh Chakrabarty's important essay "The Climate of History: Four Theses" ironically demonstrates the resilience of this divide (2009). Chakrabarty's essay is directed toward the field of history. There is no comparable essay in the field of philosophy to which to appeal, one that like Chakrabarty's essay has admirably targeted its field's most basic assumptions while becoming a trans-disciplinarily influential piece. So in lieu of reading

a comparable essay in my own field, I take up his. However, I also want to discuss here Chakrabarty's very helpful claim that an adequate response to climate crisis can only be found in an appreciation of the fact that "there can be no phenomenology of the species" (220). My own interest in questioning "the body" is an attempt to take up that part of Chakrabarty's essay as well.

Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that the very scale of geological change poses an unprecedented intellectual challenge to the field of history, specifically how to think about human-ity in relation to the planet. History has been until now merely the record of human events. The Anthropocene, however, is an event in "deep time," an event that makes humans seem to be both a geological hiccup (in deep time) and cataclysmic (a species that causes an event in deep time). Can they be both? And what should the practice of history now look like given this significant challenge?

My interest is first in the relationship Chakrabarty presupposes between geological change and contemporary academic culture. Chakrabarty writes, "The task of placing, historically, the crisis of climate change thus requires us to bring together intellectual formations that are somewhat in tension with each other: the planetary and the global; deep and recorded histories; species thinking and critiques of capital" (2009, 213). The essay ventures an estimation of such challenges of capital-imperial-caused geological devastation to the field of history, dedicated by definition to a "recorded history" that is made possible only because humans are the ones who have themselves recorded it. The central question of the essay (but most directly Chakrabarty's third thesis) is the following: How does one write a *history* of "deep time," which is by definition almost entirely without humans and therefore largely without what is called history? It seems to be a contradiction in terms, the very idea of a history of deep time. The extent of geological change at the very least has begun a debate over whether to rename the current epoch of the planet as the Anthropocene (Moore 2016). But the Anthropocene is more than the end of a certain period within history. If the "ever-expanding base of fossil-fuel use" (Chakrabarty 2009, 208) of the post-industrial era continues to expand, as Eduardo Mendieta has explained, it will mean the "coming to the end of the life that gave birth to humans" (Mendieta 2017). As Chakrabarty claims, geological-scale alterations reveal more than the albeit devastating problems of capitalism and its imperial domination (Chakrabarty 2009, 212). They are evidences of a changed planet. Chakrabarty explicitly and helpfully appreciates the conundrum—how to conceive of human life as life—as a chronologically modern one. However, and here is my point, this conundrum of how to think history and deep time together *is an expression of the nature-culture divide* of modernity.

Embedded in Chakrabarty's essay is the modern distinction that concerns Latour in *We Have Never Been Modern*, nature-culture. Whereas



for Chakrabarty geological change calls upon scholars to “rise above their disciplinary prejudices” (Chakrabarty 2009, 215), it would really seem to be the other way around: Modern disciplinary prejudices are the nature-culture making for a geological change that is eliminating inestimable life (Mendieta 2017). As Eileen Crist has so forcefully argued, it is no coincidence that there are only shoddy tools in the academy with which to approach the problem (Crist 2016). In other words, the specific dimensions of disciplinarity reflect a bifurcated nature-culture that has made for not just a little involvement in the planet, but irreversible ubiquitous change. As a kind of planetary-scale overkill, which many have already understood for generations, modernity destroys not effectively but devastatingly (Whyte 2017, Stanley 2011, Warren 2017, McBrien 2016, Hage 2017).<sup>3</sup> Profound climate disaster as well as the conundrum of Chakrabarty’s thesis arise *because of* the disciplinary distinctions, the modern will to partition. It is no coincidence that an academy established and largely governed by a European human morphology is badly equipped, even when anxious to address it.

In spite of reflecting so starkly the problem Latour highlights, the conclusion of “The Climate of History” suggests a very promising way forward. Chakrabarty writes of E. O. Wilson, whose *In Search of Nature* is “bereft of any sense of politics” (2008, 211; Wilson 2002, 102), the very Wilson similarly invoked by Latour (1993, 5–6, 59). E. O. Wilson implores people alarmed by climate change to come to understand themselves “as a species” (Chakrabarty 2009, 215). Geological change for Wilson is explicitly and purely a natural matter from which culture and politics are a distraction. Anticipating subsequent critiques of the Anthropocene as a concept, the *anthropos*-cene, as a way of conceiving of geological alterations en masse (for example Malm and Hornborg 2014), here Chakrabarty suggests that such homogenizing language as “species” hides “the reality of capitalist production and the logic of imperial . . . domination that it fosters” (Chakrabarty 2009, 216). Indeed he convincingly undermines Wilson’s species-identification as a viable answer to geological change: “Who is the we? We humans never experience ourselves as a species. We can only intellectually comprehend or infer the existence of the human species but never experience it as such. There could be no phenomenology of us as a species” (Chakrabarty 2008, 220). There is no generic membership in a species. There is only “human cultural and historical diversity” (ibid., 207). Because each one is only one “instance of the concept species as indeed would be any other life form,” it is not possible to experience living simply as a concept (ibid., 220). This effort to understand ourselves as a species that is responsible not universally, not generically, but historically is in fact going to “probe the limits of historical understanding”: “Climate change poses for us a question of a human collectivity, an us, pointing to a figure of the universal that escapes our capacity to experience the world. It is more like a universal that arises from



a shared sense of catastrophe . . . without the myth of a global identity” (ibid., 222). Human-ity as a collectivity that can have “no global identity” is thus Chakrabarty’s suggestion for a conceptual way forward (2009, 214, 222). It is this suggestion that has me turning to the work of Frantz Fanon.

This ubiquity of the project of nature-culture distinction such as can be seen even in the very best attempts to address it, according to Latour, was first embarked upon by Thomas Hobbes and Robert Boyle. In tandem they established the fragmentation constituting modernity, the first Great Divide. In their work, “epistemology and political science will go their opposite ways” (Latour 1993, 29). Hobbes and Boyle together exemplify a morphology in which “the representation of things through the intermediary of the laboratory is forever dissociated from the representation of citizens through the intermediary of the social contract” (Latour 1993, 27). The social contract becomes a pact composed strictly of social relations that must deny their actual assessments of bodies having some relation to the human as a morphology conceived of as creating the contract (Pateman 1988; Mills 1997; Hartman 1997; Moten 2008; Sheth 2009; Sharpe 2014, 2016; Tremain 2017; Hage 2017, 61). It is a zone supposedly free of flesh. It is so thoroughly divorced from nature that it is not even a culture; it is simply “politics.” Modern politics, the flipside of the laboratory, is thought to be free of bodies. Of course, the point for Latour is precisely that modernity is entirely futile: “No one has ever been modern. Modernity has never begun” (ibid., 47). But precisely in denying the part of what is natural in what is Society, and vice versa, modernity is a distinct nature-culture that creates proliferating networks—power in/as the lab as well as the dangerous water of/as the city—that it ignores even to the point of a crisis that threatens moderns themselves. As Jane Bennett puts it, modernity worships the attempt to purify politics of the natural precisely as it demonstrates the impossibility of this effort. Modernity “relies on the relegation of hybridization to the status of an open secret” (Bennett 2001, 96). Everywhere there are hybrids, and yet the social contract remains the cruel arbiter of justice.

Distinction making of some sort Latour argues is characteristic of human-ity, “weaver of morphisms” (1993, 137). He writes that this “define[s] the *anthropos*”: “technomorphisms, zoomorphisms, phusimorphisms, ideomorphisms, theomorphisms, sociomorphisms, psychomorphisms” (ibid., 137). The key *modern* morphism or morphology is this first Great Divide, the politics-ecology or social contract-laboratory distinction “internal” to modernity. Latour claims that “we might still recognize in our own societies some fuzzy areas: “madness, children, animals, popular culture, and women’s bodies” (1993, 100). These are fuzzy precisely because they are the appearance in culture of nature. They are the embarrassing or horrifying eruption of nature in politics. Society means denying these in order to protect a relationality (supposedly) devoid of nature.<sup>4</sup>

The internal first divide according to Latour accounts for a second Great Divide that modernity understands as external to itself. Because of the desire to partition culture and the social contract from nature, they must be distinguished from other societies that exhibit undifferentiated nature-cultures. “In Westerners’ eyes the West, and the West alone, is not a culture, not merely a culture. Why does the West see itself this way? Why would the West and only the West not be a culture? In order to understand the Great Divide between Us and Them, we have to go back to that other Great Divide between humans and nonhumans that I defined above. In effect, *the first is the exportation of the second* [original emphasis]” (1993, 97). Moderns sense themselves (taste, touch, see, smell, hear) as if they are a purified politics. They are so thoroughly separate from nature that they are not really living creatures at all. There is clamor on the margins of the social contract within an inherently violent European culture (“madness, children, animals, popular culture, and women’s bodies”), but this morphology projects such violence onto other nature-cultures. What makes one modern is living a simultaneous nature-culture that one does not appreciate. That lack of appreciation makes for a way of sensing, a delicate bubble of sensation floating above the rabble. *Anthropos* must protect a lack of awareness of its own contingency in the face of other nature-cultures.

Thus upon closer examination these Great Divides are for Latour much more closely related than his presentation of them as two distinct Great Divides would suggest. The first Great Divide is responsible for the second. As Latour puts it: the “Internal Great Divide accounts for the External Great Divide” (1993, 99):

Whatever we do, however criminal, however imperialistic we may be, we escape from the prison of the social or of language to gain access to things themselves through a providential exit gate, that of scientific knowledge. The internal partition between humans and nonhumans defines a second partition—an external one this time—through which the moderns have set themselves apart from the premoderns. For Them, Nature and Society, signs and things, are virtually coextensive. For Us they should never be.

This “Us” is as Latour is suggesting organized around an implicit body, revealed by the above discussed “fuzzy areas” of modern Society. And so the first Great Divide ultimately *is* the second Great Divide. It is a divide between some humans and some other humans. Both Great Divides hierarchize bodies around “the body” the social contract presumes.

There is much disagreement as to when the current planetary crisis begins, and I cannot sort that out here. But I think it is fair to say that this period is broadly the period of the development of a sort of second half of the morphology Latour articulates, one according to which I am a member of a

species *Homo sapiens*. In precisely this period, the human as the political or Societal half of this morphology distinguishes itself from Nature, as Latour explains. Sylvia Wynter argues that *Homo sapiens* develops precisely as an ecological pinnacle (Wynter 1995, 2009, 2015). In fact she argues convincingly that *Homo sapiens* as a concept displaces the Christian god as conceptual pinnacle. *Homo sapiens* is technically part of the studies of what is called biology, the bio-, the study of life. But *Homo sapiens* is at the same time set apart in its capacity for knowledge and mastery of this life. The human is therefore somehow in relationship to *Homo sapiens*, who is eventually admitted to be an ecological factor. The human-*Homo sapiens* is perhaps a hybrid in Latour's sense.

While Latour is quite right to be worried about the ridiculousness of splitting off culture and Society from Nature, this does not yet account for how all of this can be the case. How can white able cis dimorphic masculinity as a morphology have ecological implications? How is it that, in spite of the literal flatness of biological discourses, *Homo sapiens*—as opposed to the human politically and supposedly generically understood—retains a certain separation from the rest of life?

Of course differences within the human-*Homo sapiens* were in fact a central feature of this modern project in both of its parts—the “political” and the “ecological” (Wynter 1995). Insofar as political philosophy and biology remain modern pursuits in Latour's sense, the dynamic lives on. One of the outcomes of this divide in the present is that difference is considered the province of the political, something humans unjustly impose on humans who are all, according to the prevailing morphology of the human, also *Homo sapiens*. This is an important rejoinder to the centuries of development of the modern biological concepts of race, class, sex, disability, and others, in which such concepts were intended not only to describe but more importantly to demonstrate the inferiority of some members of the species over others. However, to conclude from this that human-ity properly understood is generic creates new conceptual conundrums. As differences among humans are taken to be simply imagined, many hold that “race, gender, class” should not be granted the dignity of being philosophically explored. Then again if differences within the human are granted, this has a tendency toward a dangerous polarization. As Ghassan Hage has argued, “This polarization is a process driven by the domesticator [i.e., modernity] that has an interest in the polarity. To speak of polarization as opposed to just difference is to speak of a difference where a force is aiming to evacuate each element of what makes it similar to the other” (2017, 98). In other words, polarization is, no less than denial, modernity's hostile response to difference. Either there is just one mode of human-ity, which one can see featured in pictures of *Homo sapiens* and in medical wall charts (denial), or there are polarized, fixed, supposedly

apolitical types of human-ity, entirely beyond the reach of human political creation (polarization).

In this way responses to difference in the present repeat the modern gesture to which Latour has pointed: The modern morphology of human and culture and Society are premised upon a denial of anything bodily going on in these realms. The minute that difference is taken seriously, we're suddenly in the realm of pure biology. Denial of difference protects the human within a set of supposedly generic traits, or embracing of difference polarizes those traits into fixed models. Either way the human extends only to a limited set of political-ecological specimens and remains a kind of pinnacle.

In more recent work, Latour continues to use the terms of the nature-culture distinction in order to undermine it (2017). But expressing two distinct things side by side does not provide a sufficient philosophical response if what one really wants is to live in ways that do not presuppose their distinction. How did these terms take form? I want to make the hyphen itself as ridiculous as Latour himself seems to find it. Of course, Latour cannot really be singled out for using terms that are collaboratively created. I don't mean to blame the messenger. But the strategy of simply pressing together two things *that resist being thought together* is not a solution. I find this strategy of pressing words together side by side in many places. There is Foucault's crucial interest in "biopolitics," a term coined by Rudolph Kjellén. Foucault took up the term in an effort to subject to radical criticism its conservative articulation.<sup>5</sup> There is in response to this gesture in Foucault, Achille Mbembe's crucial articulation of "necropolitics."<sup>6</sup> But pointing out the hybridity is not enough. Ultimately, I need to pursue Dipesh Chakrabarty's question, posing it for the field of philosophy: "If, indeed, globalization and global warming are born of overlapping processes, the question is, How do we bring them together in our understanding of the world?" (2009, 200).

What might insisting on the fact that there is no generic "human" contribute to an understanding of climate crisis? Latour has offered the start of an answer: Modernity as a nature-culture is the attempt to isolate a political realm of the human who has no appreciated bodily life. But what accounts for the resistance of the human as a morphology to ecology in the present? Shouldn't "the human," if this is somehow understood as *Homo sapiens*, be perfectly compatible with ecological discourse?

## THE MODERN IS MANICHAEAN

What Latour calls modern, Fanon had already called Manichaean in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Implicitly Fanon is criticizing precisely the attempt to distinguish that Latour is criticizing. If Fanon had lived longer than a mere thirty-six years, I suspect he would have had much more to say

about the “cortico-visceral” critique of colonial power begun in this book (Mbembe 2016). My interest is in the fact that Fanon articulates the attempt to distinguish political from ecological as the simultaneous attempt—instead of as two Great Divides—to hierarchize bodies of all sorts around a hypocritically generic human who is supposedly detachable from land (Clare 2013).<sup>7</sup> For Fanon, the political-ecological distinction and its inane morphology of the human are not even articulable except as the very same gesture.

In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon writes, “The colonial world is the Manichaeian world” (2004, 6). Colonialism inflicts dichotomy on those against whom it defines itself. This dichotomizing or polarizing is Manichaeian in that it divides earth into good-lightness and evil-darkness,<sup>8</sup> the latter of which must be brought under control of a good-lightness with which European power is synonymous: “The ‘native’ is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. He is, dare we say it, the enemy of values. In other words, absolute evil” (ibid.). Manichaeian-ism reaches its “logical conclusion” as zoological discourse, but never for Europeans who were definitely developing a notion of their own relation to climate at the time (Locher and Fressoz 2012). The zoological terms are instead strictly for those who must be colonized (Fanon 2004, 7). As Achille Mbembe puts it in a reading of Fanon on this point, “The noun ‘Black’. . . designated not human beings *like all others* but rather a *distinct* humanity—one whose very humanity was (and still is) in question. It designated a particular kind of human: those who, because of their physical appearance, their habits and customs, and their ways of being in the world, seemed to represent *difference in its raw manifestation*—somatic, affective, aesthetic, imaginary” (Mbembe 2017, 46). A distinct morphology of the human thus develops against what it understands as the “raw manifestation” of difference, distinguishing this from a properly human and political relationality. Manichaeian-ism needs a concept of race in order to defend itself against “multiplicity,” and it takes this “appearance . . . as the true reality of things” (Mbembe 2017, 112). Such dichotomously *human* values, identified with an all-powerful body amidst inert nature, are “irreversibly poisoned and infected as soon as they come into contact with the colonized” (Fanon 2004, 7). This human has the power to design the earth—colonies, farms, and economies. The customs, traditions, and myths of the colonized are sensed only as evil that must be eradicated. Fanon writes:

The customs of the colonized, their traditions, their myths, especially their myths, are the very mark of this indigence and innate depravity. This is why we should place DDT, which destroys parasites, carriers of disease, on the same level as Christianity, which roots out heresy, natural impulses, and evil.

The decline of yellow fever and the advances made by evangelizing form part of the same balance sheet. (ibid.)

My interest here is in the fact that for Fanon the insecticide DDT and Christianity—nature-cultures in Latour’s language—are “part of the same balance sheet” (Fanon 2004, 7). Though Fanon does not articulate further worries about DDT, he clearly takes this technology to be part of a Manichaean morphology that kills indiscriminately. The point for Fanon is that colonization understands its own technologies or religions as exemplifying an unquestionable good-lightness that assumes it must defend itself. Later Fanon makes an even more direct claim to this effect, the quote with which I began this essay:

A hostile, ungovernable, and fundamentally rebellious Nature is in fact synonymous in the colonies with the bush, the mosquitoes, the natives, and disease. Colonization has succeeded once this untamed Nature has been brought under control. Cutting railroads through the bush, draining swamps, and ignoring the political and economic existence of the native population *are in fact one and the same thing* [my emphasis]. (Fanon 2004, 182)

Thus Manichaean-ism must defend itself against both “native” and “swamp,” both of which convey a resistance to mappability for someone who finds these unfamiliar. These are terms that express a certain mode of life that must direct ecological processes, that distinguishes political from ecological in its own communities but can’t begin to make out any difference between them when among a community to which the Manichaean morphology is unfamiliar.

## MODERN MANICHAEAN-ISM PRODUCES A DOUBLE BIND

Obviously geological change, as an event in deep time, is not a problem for only some humans. Modern colonization was, and yet both represent inconceivable endings. Geological change is nevertheless dramatic change. This is precisely why Dipesh Chakrabarty argues paradoxically that thinking in terms of a species, as that which no one lives, is necessary. But if the roots of geological change are an ecologically alienated morphology and a punishing communality, then for addressing asymmetries of power—of environmental racism and climate refugee-ism for just a few broad and basic examples (Bullard 2000, Lewis 2016, Faber and Schlegel 2017)—thinking in strictly either political or ecological terms will not suffice. And yet modernity produces a double bind that makes such crises difficult to articulate without doing either “political” or “ecological” harm.

The notion of a generic human, the human-*Homo sapiens* but also as it is put more casually, “the body,” enables both a depoliticized ecology and

an a-ecological politics. Following the human as originally juxtaposed with nature and bodiment, an unjustifiable premise to which both Latour and Fanon point, the human morphology as both “the human” and *Homo sapiens* inherits these dynamics. In other words, the human as *modern* provides even its most ecologically relevant sense. To demonstrate the contingency of a body continues to mean exiting politics and entering ecology, conceived as the nature distinguished from culture in Latour. But the presumptions that fit that body only apply where there are now fewer—not few, but fewer—ecological concerns. And so while politics is a negotiation over which the human as a concept reigns, ecology is a discourse in which originally there are no humans at all and in which, more recently, there are supposedly only *Homo sapiens* and no sign of the dynamics of a supposedly pure political projection (race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, disability, class, size). Neither politics nor ecology alone can really do justice then to the degree to which the human is set against any decolonial concept of justice for those sensed in Manichaeian terms. But it’s not at all clear how to put them together without either denying the inevitability of difference (if you take the political route) or reifying difference (if you take the ecological one).

Latour doesn’t seem to appreciate this double bind, at least not explicitly. His project is in his own words one of restoring the “share of things” to the human (Latour 1993, 136). The problem with this is that as Latour well knows certain people have received far too much of their share of things, of thing-ness, of being perceived as the purportedly inert “flesh” that somehow inspired the nature-culture distinction in the first place (Spillers 2003; Hartman 1997; Clare 2001; Mbembe 2017, 42). Planetary alienation inspired moderns to deny their own materiality and project it onto others. This is the sense in which Latour is right; the human as a morphology does lack a share of things, of thing-ness. But there is an obvious and palpable and familiar danger to this thingness for most humans. Not to discuss the continuing power of modern biological classifications (in the sense of absolute and ahistorical) of race, poverty, sex, disability, madness, motivated as they were by a morphology of human modernity in denial regarding its ecological status threatens to yield not only an abodily politics, a generic politics, but also a depoliticized ecology. Which came first—the hatred of a planet made to symbolize wretched human-ity or the abjection of human-ity made to bear a planet’s meanings? I’m not sure it would be possible to determine. And anyway neither is adequate. Following Fanon I hold that the human is a morphology informed by the desire to control a life it pretends only to describe. The description isn’t description at all; it demonstrates values. It demonstrates phobias to whatever it perceives as a threat to this morphology of ecological-bodily mastery (Hage 2017). It denies and also points beyond its own singular relationalities to relationalities of “bush, mosquitoes, infection.” The two Great Divides of Latour are most certainly one.



Another way of thinking about the plurality of human-ity is possible, a philosophy of morphologies, to which both Latour and Fanon point. And this is going to require admitting that the modern biological distinctions themselves were reciprocally inspired by an attempt to create a certain human morphology in order to try to distance it from all things it deemed ecological and not political. Bodily difference modern-biologically understood was a clue to an alienation from that which it sought to describe, and its ongoing philosophical neglect prevents me from asking how a certain morphology of the human is a feature of “climate.” To articulate the project as “restoring” to the human a “share of things” that modernity has taken away threatens to reinforce a dangerous dynamic for the many (indeed, the most) for whom the body is the remainder of an earth-denying human morphology. To apply this project universally—to restore the share of things to everyone—completely misses the ongoing violence wrought by the modern distinction in the lives of those whose relations in the political are ecological, whose relations in the ecological are political, because of the modern imperative.

An altered engagement is necessary with the power of things (Bennett 2010, Barad 2007), but also with the power of a thingness that human-ity both is and isn’t entirely responsible for creating, a thingness that is responsible for a variety still barred from entering the political. What is needed is an open philosophical reckoning with the legacies of a certain practice of biology that presupposes the human-*Homo sapiens* morphology and that at best misunderstands departures from this morphology and at worst takes such departures to require elimination. Difference cannot be classified in a definitive way and should not be compared to the human as modernity defined it. Human-ity is neither dimorphic (with respect to sex or anything else) nor fixed. Difference is neither pure projection nor misfortune (Tremain 2017, Fritzsche 2015). But also, and this is crucial, there is no generic body.

It is Fanon who can explain the context and the danger of the approach of both a purportedly depoliticized ecology as well as an a-ecological politics. For Fanon, the attempt to empty the political of the ecological is a hallmark of the Manichaeism of the colonial world. Those who are not “the body” of politics who are nevertheless willing to “embody, or rather change bodies with, European civilization” are allowed to enter (Fanon 1961, 156). Meanwhile the modern attempt to distinguish the natural from the cultural is *simultaneously* a distinguishing of human from human, distinguishing the body from bodies to whom it bears a distinct cortico-visceral relation. The modern Manichaeism was a morphology premised upon the denial of a variety perceived to be synonymous with nature. Fanon questions both the attempt to purge politics of and “depoliticize” differences in a context where they most certainly have a variety of political implications: Political-ecological features are made so significant as to force a human out of the political synonymous

with a certain lived experience of human-ity, and yet they are also considered to be so insignificant as to require silencing in order to preserve a homogeneity necessary to the political.

Unlike Latour, Fanon seems to be both acutely aware of the double bind that Manichaeism produces, and he seems to suggest that identifying human-ity with bodiment is nevertheless a crucial de-colonial response. There is first of all the famous final line of *Black Skin, White Masks*: “O my body, always make me a man who questions!” (2008, 206). But further, a crucial aspect of his approach to domination is attention to its “cortico-visceral” affects (Mbembe 2016): “Pathology is considered a way the organism can respond, in other words how it adapts to the conflict, the disorder being both a symptom and a cure. More exactly it is generally agreed that the organism . . . outwits the conflict using the wrong, but nevertheless economic, channels. The organism chooses the lesser evil in order to avoid a complete breakdown” (2004, 217). While it might be said that this language is complicit with the zoological language Fanon criticizes in the early pages of the very same book, the point for Fanon would seem to be that colonization imposes a planetary alienation synonymous with whiteness, a whiteness that denies its own cortico-viscerality, and this whiteness becomes a source of violence for others who are told to deny theirs. His interest is not to further pathologize those whose earth has been ended by colonization. It is rather to undermine Manichaeism, in which there is supposedly no such thing as phobia, no such thing as ecological violence, no such thing as the lived experience of morphological harm, and thus there is a constant thwarting of articulations of cortico-visceral violence from many angles.

Fanon in other words appreciates fully the elemental (both political and ecological) dangers of Manichaeism, and so he doubles down on a project of tracing that. This doubling down can be seen in the very way in which Fanon pursues his psychoanalytic writings. He rejects what he calls the idealist notion of the “psycho-somatic” (2004, 216 footnote 35). He prefers the “cortico-visceral” that “has at least the advantage of putting the brain back in its place, i.e. of considering the matrix where precisely the psyche is elaborated,” i.e., Manichaeism (216 footnote 35; Mbembe 2016), which divorces “psyche” from “body.” This matrix is the colony itself, the globalization of which Chakrabarty writes. Fanon notes that this formulation “cortico-visceral” is a legacy of Ivan Pavlov’s research, and Fanon doesn’t seem to endorse it entirely. But for him “cortico-visceral” is preferable to the idealism and Manichaeism of the term “psycho-somatic.”

Even though Fanon does reinforce an identification with his own body in a context that purports to threaten him precisely because he is a body, he takes care to do so in a way that undermines fundamentally the political-ecological distinction. Again, simply mashing these words together does not succeed in

undermining the intuitions that produce them. For Fanon, such intuitions are the colonial morphology which senses in terms of a supposedly immaterial good-lightness. Leaving in place the political-ecological distinction is a kind of denial that there is in what counts as political a certain preeminence of a certain body, which supposedly escapes and controls materiality.

In the section of *The Wretched of the Earth* in which Fanon first discusses this Manichaean-ism, he refers his reader back to *Black Skin, White Masks*. He writes that “the mechanism of this Manichaean world” is a morphology in which “the black man” is evil “for the good reason that he is black. Doesn’t white symbolize justice, truth, and virginity? . . . The white man practices this logic daily. The black man is the symbol of evil and ugliness” (2004, 6 footnote 1; 2008, 157). He “represents the (uneducated) sexual instinct . . . genital power out of reach of morals and taboos” (2008, 154). The mechanism of the Manichaean is then this fetishization of bodies that can perceive themselves as out-of-body only by contrasting themselves with a body that “guarantees his [the colonizing body’s] disembodied universality” (Hartman 1997, 21).

In the final pages of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon criticizes what he calls a white justice. Reading these pages together with *The Wretched of the Earth*, this is a “justice” or legality that does harm not only in fetishizing him as the very body of genitality, but that at the very same time does not acknowledge the role of his body, perceived as black, in propping the “political” up out of the “ecological.” White justice fetishizes a generic equality of treatment, a denial of a difference that it created and renews. In other words, not only does the body fetishize certain bodies that protrude against an implicit morphology of the human, it pretends to accommodate them so long as they do not reveal themselves as departing from it (Ahmed 2007). *The Wretched of the Earth* picks up on precisely this theme: White justice is the result of a Manichaean splintering of the political from the bodily, the political from the ecological, the cortico-visceral from the violences of morphology. None of this makes any sense, but Fanon had warned in *Black Skin, White Masks* that it wouldn’t. The Manichaean becomes another way of articulating the oxymoron that is the justice offered by a human morphology that misunderstands its own nature.

Ultimately I want to multiply Fanon’s already somewhat multiple morphology that rejects both a generic, disembodied psyche and a generic, idealized body. His consistent questioning of the ideal of political genericness and the hypocrisy of a supposedly a-bodily human points the way out of the modern condition that Latour later criticizes. The modern homogeneity of the human was invented and is currently protected precisely in order to distinguish the human from a natural world that it considers devoid of value. Fanon suggests that one way to intervene in this is to revisit the question of “the human” as an indistinguishably political-ecological one. While the

increasingly global morphology of “the human”—whose sensory features are owed to *contrast*—is clearly not the result of “nature,” neither is it purely the imposition of thoughts. And so the role of difference as a modern linchpin should neither be denied nor polarized, but neither can the philosophy of morphology be abandoned (Fanon 2008, 99).

## CONCLUSION: “THE BODY”

In Fanon there is an implicit claim that both the presumption of a disembodied sameness and the imposition of a fetishized, vilified difference are the fruit of an ecological-political distinction. His work helps to explain why the modern “compartmentalized world” of “the human,” when it attempts to think in ecological terms, can offer only a generic body that is not a body at all insofar as it is an idealization (Fanon 2004, 5). In Latour and Fanon there are thus many resources for indicting the ecological-political distinction. However, for Latour the nature-culture distinction within modern culture is at least to some extent distinct from the relationship of Europe to its others. For Fanon these problems are not even pose-able as distinct. If I prefer Fanon’s formulation to that of Latour, it’s because it is not clear to me how to establish a first or a second Great Divide in Fanon. Additionally, Latour doesn’t seem to appreciate what I’m calling the double bind of modernity. While Latour does not himself seem to regard the second Great Divide as truly secondary, in Fanon modernity’s politics are modernity’s ecology; they are the same problem of a certain body taken to be the floating master of earth. What is more, Fanon suggests that the problem of conflating humans and aspects of humans with ecology is not the real problem. What is necessary to address the modern double bind is calling out the hypocritical dream of “disembodiment” within modernity as a dream that is the privileging of a certain body.

The concept of “the body” is a contemporary expression of this supposedly generic “race-neutral” politics. Fanon argues that this politics is produced by Manichaeism. Fanon’s method can be widened to include skepticism toward all gestures to “the body” in elemental contexts, supposedly body-neutral politics: white and wealth justice in water projects, wealth and settler and ability and nation justice in pipeline projects, no-such-thing-as-reproduction and no-such-thing-as-language-or-even-accent and white justice in smart cities and smart borders, gender dimorphic and white and wealth justice in bathrooms and prisons and luxury living high-rises. The unaffordable city, the city as a place merely to store wealth, no less than the isolated suburb, is a modern justice project of the body. All of these are fantasies of “the body” that deny their own morphology. They include phobias that have yet to be given words and questioned. Such gestures are not only an indication of renewals of a legacy of setting the human off from nature. They are also a

demonstration of the degree to which this morphology must be renewed even in purportedly material accounts, depoliticized ecologies, and ahistorical, classification-oriented biological discourse. The human can continue, even in a thorough-going biological morphology, to carve out a zone for a supposedly generic political who builds cities in which shockingly few can sleep. Homelessness as an event that obliterates the political-ecological distinction is a product of “the body.” I propose thinking without “the body” in order to cut against this distinction. I propose ruminating without “the body” in order to attend to elemental events hidden by the continuing vitality of this distinction.

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## NOTES

1. As Gail Weiss puts it, “Lacking the concreteness of the term ‘anatomy,’ morphology also invokes a *logos*, a way, as Heidegger notes, of letting ‘something be seen;’ logos he suggests (following the Greeks), is itself a discourse which ‘lets us see something from the very thing which the discourse is about’” (1999, 72). Morphology, I would like to suggest, is a way of sensing rather than seeing specifically—hearing, feeling, seeing, tasting, smelling in a context of bodies that are never generic (Mendieta 2014, 110, 129).
2. I don’t pretend to understand fully Latour’s reading of the work of Jacques Derrida. See for example Latour’s claim that “for Canguilhem, Lyotard, Girard, Derrida . . . this new scientific knowledge lies entirely outside culture” (1993, 98). Latour’s somewhat naive realism is more a party to the dispute than he admits (a point explored in Elam 1999). Laura Hengehold argues that Latour “polemicizes against ‘postmodernists,’” but Hengehold nevertheless finds harmony in the work of Latour and Foucault (2015, 102). Whatever the problems with Latour’s reading of Derrida or others, I am interested somewhat isolatedly in his articulation of the relationship in modern cultures between conceptions of Society and the nature-culture distinction.
3. As Eric Stanley has explained, “*Overkill* is a term used to indicate such excessive violence that it pushes a body beyond death” (9, 2011). Murder becomes overkill when “the utility of violence gives way to the pleasure in the other’s mortality. If queers, along with others, approximate nothing, then the task of ending, of killing, that which is *nothing* must go beyond normative times of life and death” (ibid.). I take the Anthropocene—both the multifarious phenomena this term attempts

to describe and especially the term itself—to be evidence of such concepts as “the human” and “the body,” both of which are evidences of modernity as the attempt to split that which is “ecological” from that which is “political,” resulting in part in the political nothingness of which Stanley writes. Stanley’s articulation of overkill as well as Calvin Warren’s elaboration, on political “onticide,” I read in the context of this morphology that gives rise simultaneously to profound planetary changes and the ironic grandiosity that often erupts into pleasure taken in the powers of “mankind,” powers bent on not only ending but mutilating materiality insofar as that materiality provincializes “the human” (compare Crutzen 2002 and Stanley 2011, Warren 2017, Moten 2008, Haraway 2016).

4. On this point I disagree with Mark Elam. Elam argues that Irigarayan sexual difference should be understood as a Great Divide displaced by Latour’s assumption of a supposedly blank “we” as in *We Have Never Been Modern*. In Latour’s inattention to “profound differences among humans which bear at best only a tenuous relation to an imagined Great Divide between Westerners and non-Westerners,” Elam writes, “Latour is guilty from a feminist point of view of breaking a complicity between masculinity and rationality, only to affirm his support for a new and potentially more powerful connivance between masculinity and the construction and regulation of hybrid networks” (1999, 5). To my knowledge Elam neither cites nor discusses the passage about the fuzzy areas that Latour is arguing must be cut out of Society in order for it to be Society. And so I think it’s unfair to say that in Latour bodily difference is “unacknowledged” (ibid., 5). However, I mean to pursue Irigarayan difference through Judith Butler (Parker 2017) and the work of Paul B. Preciado (Preciado 2013), reading these together with Fanon’s interest in morphology.
5. As Roberto Esposito has explained, the terms “biopolitics” and “geopolitics” were first employed by Rudolph Kjellén, who understood the state to be a “living form” whose “hygiene” can be threatened by diseases resolvable by strategies such as genocide (2008, 16–18). Esposito argues, “Biopolitics has to do with that complex of mediations, oppositions, and dialectical operations that *in an extended phase made possible the modern political order*, at least according to current interpretation [my emphasis]” (2008, 15).
6. I am not arguing that either the work of Foucault or the work of Mbembe is fundamentally committed to the political-ecological distinction. So far (in the case of Mbembe) each attends to the dynamism of bodiment within the “political” (Huffer 2015; Mbembe 2016). Foucault took up the concept of biopolitics in order to try to put the ecological (see Lynne Huffer’s “Foucault’s Fossils” 2015) and political back together. Mbembe especially offers much for my own interest in the racialized “nothing” necessary to a political that is alienated from bodiment (Mbembe 2001, 174). This could perhaps be read together with, for example, Merleau-Ponty’s apolitical “elemental,” a notion that nevertheless holds much promise, as can be seen in the work of Gail Weiss (1999, 2017). Would it be

possible to read Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray's "elemental" and flesh together with Hortense Spillers's crucial denunciation of a morphology that produces flesh as a "zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse or the reflexes of iconography" (Merleau-Ponty 1968; Spillers 2003, 206; Irigaray 1992)?

7. Sylvia Wynter elaborates on this point, especially Fanon's critique of any supposedly acultural scientific understanding of a person that fetishizes their body conceived of as static and in fact ignores ecological-material relations of power in the becoming of that person's life, a life that is for better or worse communal. Wynter's reading of Fanon fundamentally informs this essay. In other work I am exploring the wide-reaching implications of Wynter's philosophy of genre as well as the indebtedness of the very notion of the biological to blackness. However, I do have misgivings about her retention of a morphological "hybridity" that is similar to that which I discuss here in Latour. The notion of hybridity in Latour that I am criticizing here is on my reading common to Wynter and Latour (Wynter 2006, 156–57; Wynter and McKittrick 2015, 33).
8. Fanon invokes Manichaeism, the religion of Mani that is thought to originate in third century of the Common Era, Babylonia. Only scattered fragments of Mani's writings survive, but they gesture to a "framework of world conflict and world redemption" structured by good-lightness and evil-darkness. According to Mani, earth is the result of a struggle between a divine power of good-lightness and a power of evil-darkness. Mani claimed that the divine good-lightness sent a succession of messengers, including Mani himself, to teach people how to liberate lightness. Mani seems to have understood sexuality among other things to be an impediment to the releasing of light (Reese 1999, 445). Lewis Gordon argues that the significance of Manichaeism for Fanon is in the "material anti-value of blackness in the face of whiteness" of this tradition (1995, 33). See also Nigel Gibson's rejection of the view that Fanon's work is itself Manichaean, as Fanon has somehow in the past been misread (2003). As George Yancy makes clear, whiteness on this understanding is "talismanic and soteriological. The theological implications are obvious. When we think of that which is unblemished, sinless, and pure, most of us unconsciously think of that which is white, resembling light, possessing luminosity" (Yancy 2017, 188; see also Zimring 2015). It is whiteness as a supposedly ethereal, body-and-earth-transcending morphology that this essay explores. As Lewis Gordon puts the point, assimilationism "manifests a desire to eliminate the Other *as* Other—in other words, to create a world of only one *kind* of human being who stands in relation to others roughly as consciousness in denial of itself as body" (1995, 153). This is how whiteness, but I also want to argue "the body" in a multifaceted way, becomes ecologically significant. The same must be said for other aspects of a morphology to which whiteness is necessary: white masculine- white able- white



cisgender- white thin- white English speaking- white citizen. This is a morphology that troubles any political-ecological distinction. It is a morphology that is indistinguishably “political” and “ecological.”

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