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Sexual Difference and Creolization

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In this essay, I suggest an entangled analysis of sexual difference theory via Luce Irigaray and creolization via Édouard Glissant. I argue that these two distinct discourses share a critical stance against Western sameness and assimilation into a closed metaphysical system. However, each is born of particular historical socio-political struggles that should not be collapsed. I bring them together to demonstrate that their claims are productively entangled and that a critical re-reading of melancholia can unite readers to locate sources of sexual-racial-colonial violence in disparate locations and epochs, holding collective memory and acting beyond critique. Relying on Françoise Vergès's account of métissage and anamnesis, I will suggest that Antillean geographical vantages reveal complexities of racial and colonial relation to one's mother, the state, and the sea. By interrogating psychoanalytic and linguistic claims, I forward a South-South circulation of coordinated but distinctive political reimaginings that challenge static notions of race, gender, and sexual difference.

The Wombs of Women

In June 1970, a scandal broke the headlines on Reunion Island. Doctors had racked up vast sums of money under the cloak of performing "minor interventions," which were, in fact, thousands of abortions, many conducted without consent, under false diagnoses such as appendectomies. These men performed abortions in the first, second, and third trimesters and many concluded with sterilization. Françoise Vergès writes, "the doctors broke two laws: one forbidding abortion and criminalizing those who practice it, and the other concerning reimbursement for medical procedures."¹ As thirty Reunion women pressed charges, officials ignored them. During the trial, the accused defended their actions, arguing that the state's local overseas department representatives indirectly encouraged them vis-à-vis the island's birth control policies. The irony is that at the same time, in the metropole, officials

criminalized abortion, resulting in national French women pursuing abortions under deplorable medical conditions without social security reimbursement or publicly funded compensation.³ The hypocrisy, she observes, is only superficial: “Regulating women’s bodies was the objective in both France and the overseas departments (DOM), but it was not practiced in the same way in the two spaces. In France, the state wanted women to bear children; in the DOM, it launched aggressive birth control campaigns and systemically hampered the establishment of social legislation that would protect pregnant women.”³ Vergès notes the failure of the 1970s influential Movement for the Liberation of Women (MLF; *Mouvement de libération des femmes*) to include as central to their political platform the condition of women in the colonies of France and its territories, a failure she calls the “racialized management of the wombs of women.”⁴

In preparing the manuscript to write this account, Vergès conducted no fieldwork and gathered no oral testimonies. She relied on public records and articles. She used literary and cinematic sources to reveal that these abuses of power remain unhidden in plain sight. As sight gives access to a logic of racial aesthetics, the visible evidence of racism remains unseen. Her analysis of this phenomenon is not solely to raise awareness of the dual valuation of women’s wombs; it is also to denationalize feminist approaches that use national markers to group thinkers into a referent like “French feminists.”⁵ Acknowledging historian Dipesh Chakrabarty who proposed the “provincializing of Europe,”⁶ she gestures toward moving beyond nativist or atavistic narratives, not rejecting what came from Europe, but “deconstructing a method wherein ‘Europe works as a silent referent,’ by integrating other cartographies, South-South circulation, and other schools of thought, to understand better strategies (ruse, diversion, fabrication, dissimulation) enacted by the colonized.”⁷ In this paper, I suggest a mode of decolonial strategy that I identify as entangled disidentification. I forward a South-South circulation between thinkers Édouard Glissant and Françoise Vergès as exemplars of this strategy. However, I also include in this circulation the contribution of sexual difference thinker Luce Irigaray to function as a European referent, but by which the forces of creolization can reshape sexual difference’s focus and aim.

Entanglement

In *Caribbean Discourse*, Glissant describes the metamorphosis of a people transhipped as enslaved people but by which a “mingling of experiences” or a “tangled nature of lived experience” produces a process of being that thwarts the “illusion of successful mimesis” into the image of their master.⁸ To be clear, it is the murkiness of reflection back to the master that mobilizes a new relation of becoming, a strategy he calls opacity.⁹ He describes how the master, through assimilation/annihilation, provides “models of resistance to

the stranglehold it has imposed, thus short-circuiting resistance while making it possible."¹⁰ The description is one of entrapment even as one resists. Glissant's writings are for a people who have been transformed elsewhere, unable to collectively continue "the methods of existence and survival, both material and spiritual, which it practiced before being uprooted."¹¹ However, Glissant's writing transforms the exile into one who can engage in the nomadic process of creolization.

Luce Irigaray also posits exile as the condition of post-Enlightenment man and, with a Freudian-Lacanian analysis, surmises that for man to be or become, he must sever his birth and origin from a woman's body,¹² forming a "schism in the unity of the self,"¹³ and an "exile from his first natural identity . . . lost and blind in an artificial world that he created."¹⁴ With this void or hole, sometimes analyzed as Being, a precarity can now be exploited to perpetuate a logic of him/Him. Man, she argues, has cut himself off from life (sexuate difference) so that forms might exist, the logos constituting forms from one subjectivity with replications of itself, not two with fecund multiplicities, and "only those who belong to certain societies – of men – can communicate with this language."¹⁵ Therefore, sexual difference is not merely a signifier of a social category like race, culture, colonial history, or even biological sex—it is an operative and material way to reveal how we conceive of life itself in all its diversities.¹⁶ Our current status, sexual indifference, Irigaray supposes, fails to cultivate an interiority. Instead, man is exiled to an external world "that he intends to appropriate by means of a technique which reduplicates that real, of logic through which he makes the world his own, the logos."¹⁷ From Irigaray's reading, the logos is the Master, and all must bend toward the project of assimilation/annihilation within this Self-Same, thus eradicating any difference or resistance. However, life, particularly sexuate life, persists, and Irigaray's project, I suggest, resonates with creolization. Sexual difference, like creolization, reconfigures sexuate subjects portrayed as fissured, nomadic, and in exile, as replete beings whose coherence exceeds Western colonial language and closed metaphysical systems. Sexual difference is also an affirmative project, suggesting that those outside the self-same can serve as global guides in a life-sustaining, errant wandering. In this, Glissant and Irigaray share a philosophical exploration of exile to decipher another subject position.

Additionally, Glissant's theorization of entanglement can advance the critique of a closed metaphysical system that sexual difference theorists describe as "phallogocentrism," the collusion between a logocentric determinate method for deriving truth that culturally relies on a gendered masculinist (phallic) and patriarchal agenda. Within phallogocentrism, resistance to the dominant symbol only reinforces the power to "other" any resisters. Such is the plight, argues Irigaray, for any actual sexual difference and why her theory is not a gender additive critique but one that cuts to the heart of metaphysical unity and the possibility for difference itself to exist. All

differences, however plural, are caught within a metaphysical trap predicated upon a masculinist conditioning of wholeness and unity conflated with the universal; hence, particulars only generate variations of the same. Under this diagnosis, a woman truly is a misbegotten male. Such an analysis leads Irigaray to an oft-spurned statement: “Sexual difference is an immediate natural given, and it is a real and irreducible component of the universal. The whole of humankind is composed of women and men and of nothing else. The problem of race is, in fact, a secondary problem—except from a geographical point of view?—which means we cannot see the wood for the trees, and the same goes for other cultural diversities—religious, economic and political ones.”¹⁸ In this essay I consider the line, “a geographical point of view,” a strange addition in which she seemingly prioritizes sexual difference over and against an uncritical list in which culture follows race.

Rosi Braidotti notes a cartographic precision to Irigaray’s writings, wherein she includes the location of her essays as if to imply that situated ethics and politics of location ought to inform her work.¹⁹ But like Irigaray, locations and cultures are not singular; they are plural, a mixture of hyphenated places, cultures, languages, customs, and beliefs. While Irigaray argues that women are in exile by the Western constructs of both language and subjectivity, the claim seems to elide the ontological and political reality of people who remain stateless and homeless, without a natal land or their land stolen. Or they—in the case of Reunionese people—were transshipped, indentured, or economically lured to lands not their own. However, sexual difference, as Irigaray deploys it, draws our attention to how place and dwelling are conceived and reproduced from a woman’s body, drawing attention to the quandary of no place for those who become the building materials for others to have a place.²⁰ Hence, given the importance of place with sexuate difference to reveal the ontological chinks in the armor of metaphysical presence, it is necessary to take the notion of sexuate difference and allow it to wander and shift with the morphological bodies and environs outside of Irigaray’s lived experience. I suggest Glissant and Vergès offer interlocking accounts which can deepen and specify Irigaray’s claims.

I argue that Glissant is useful when paired with Irigaray because he theorizes with geographic locations. Still, his poetics and prose provide a way to critically rupture beyond mimesis and to use the entangled metaphysics of sameness productively. His theories are for those “seeking to make sense of the *entangled*, interrelated, interdependent cultures of a globalized world. . . . challenging in the process the populist rhetorics of cultural purity, of ethnolinguistic nationalism, and of ideological monolingualism.”²¹ Instead of seeking purity, universal truth, and continuity to challenge prescient socio-political tensions, Glissant embraces opacity, errantry, and diversion—“an interweaving of negative forces.”²² He explains, “Diversion is the ultimate resort of a population whose domination by an Other is concealed: it then must search *elsewhere* for the principle of domination, which is not evident in

the country itself: because the system of domination . . . is not directly tangible. Diversion is the parallaxic displacement of this strategy."²³ This searching elsewhere is a rhizomatic extension of an uprooted people. Glissant narrates examples of diversion, including the Creole language, a camouflage of assimilation. He includes a swath of migratory and revolutionary thinkers, including Aimé Césaire, Marcus Garvey, and Frantz Fanon, who found political progress elsewhere than the entangled places where the processes of creolization began. In true nomadic fashion, Glissant returns to where he began, from house arrest in Paris to the Isle of Martinique in 1965. During these fifteen years, he forged a line of study with a regional Caribbean filiation, challenging the departmentalization of the islands with France. He wrote in 1981, "We must return to the point from which we started. Diversion is not a useful ploy unless it is nourished by reversion: not a return to the longing of origins, to some immutable state of Being, but a *return to the point of entanglement*, from which we were forcefully turned away; that is where we must ultimately put to work the forces of creolization, or perish."²⁴

I consider Glissant's brief commendation of entanglement, ostensibly where movement cannot proceed, a quagmire of mixed and enmeshed ideologies and stagnating political possibilities. The brutal example Vergès cites of sexual, racial, and capitalist systems leaves a wake of trauma. How does one respond ethically to such traps? Glissant's notion of entanglement spurred a series of questions that I center in this essay: What does it mean to use entanglement as an embodied pause that frames retour and detour? Can this notion be applied to Irigaray's argument of sexual difference, and can creolization with sexual difference engage racial-sexual-colonial entanglements which Irigaray so deftly avoids? How are those committed to sexual difference entangled, and what detours, disidentifications, and melancholia does entanglement positively offer?

Entanglement, as a word, signifies immobility, ensnarement, and entrapment. Dictionaries offer quicksand, quagmire, toil, trap, morass, noose, and mesh synonyms. I argue the principal entanglement that sexual difference theories under analyze is what Aimé Césaire called "colonial trauma," or the historical legacies of oppression between France and its colonies, and by extension, its nationally recognized theories (loosely deemed "French" theory) and the provincialization of these theories in overseas departments and territories. Sexual difference via Irigaray reveals the spatio-temporal and morphological implications for thinking concepts like entanglement—entrapment and surface tensions, caught in a noose, ensnared in a morass, stuck in the toils of a mesh with no escape. I note that these metaphors and turns of expressions convey psychic, sexual, and racial motifs of objects and experiences, of being sexually and racially marked, of traumas made manifest through coloniality. While Irigaray explores sexual logics, which tends to how we conceive of solid and non-fluidic mediums, her work is also clinical in that she engages moments of trauma, observed as immobility

among women and the psychoanalytic interpretation of latency, hysteria, and melancholia. However, she misses how these affective signals enmesh with racialized-sexualized-colonial trauma and that these notions are inextricably entangled.

The first entanglement I explore is the structural, linguistic, post-structural, deconstructive, and psychoanalytic theories that erupted in France and the United States after World War II, popularized by a flight of intellectuals deemed “French,” which included but is not limited to Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Marguerite Duras, Michel Foucault, René Girard, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, and Luce Irigaray.²⁵ Although presented to post War U.S. scholars as a French intellectual package, weak similarities connect their works while strident differences remain. However, amongst this flight of intellectuals, scant attention to the experiences of racism and colonialism, particularly amongst the psychoanalysts, develops. Notable exceptions include Jean-Paul Sartre’s existential psychoanalysis, Octave Mannoni’s “Prospero complex” colonizer, Albert Memmi’s autobiographically informed critiques, and Frantz Fanon’s analysis of the social saturation of racism and anti-blackness and the power of these to penetrate the internal forces that shape the human as a social subject. However, suppose psychoanalysis is the theoretical framework by which entanglements of racism are revealed. In that case, its profound racist and sexist underpinnings as socio-politically operationalized in France and the U.S. are rarely theorized. I explicate Irigaray’s complicated history with psychoanalysis and other feminists to argue that her work doesn’t suppose theoretical purity; instead, it reveals the melancholia that many within these complex structures experience and by which theories of sexual difference can work coordinately with lived experiences to expose, rename, and ultimately, re-imagine.

This Feminism Which Is Not One

Luce Irigaray figures as one of three women inaccurately dubbed a “French feminist,” and a superficial gloss of her works may prime a reader to conclude that she inadequately considers racism and colonialism, occluding how anti-blackness, Settler colonialism, and interlocking structures of oppression that condition life itself and the project sexual difference.²⁶ However, a growing list of recent scholars interested in sexual/sexuate difference has brought these concerns into dialogue with her work.²⁷ Irigaray’s unique version of sexual difference theory, particularly given its reach toward an invocation of a feminine subject, mentions abortion rights but seems to elide the assumed race neutrality of sexual difference and its historical complicity with colonialism. The failure to attend to sexual difference theory’s racial-colonial complicity mirrors the same elision to these concerns in mainstream political women’s movements across France. A prescient global critique of “the

women's movement," made univocal in its assemblage, argues that right-wing, neo-liberal, and feminist theorists co-opt the language of women's rights throughout Europe as covers for anti-Islam and anti-immigrant campaigns, a trend Sara Farris calls femonationalism.²⁸ These kinds of femo-imperialisms or femo-colonialisms reify the positionality of colonial women to be spoken about but not with, or the false necessity for White communities to "empower" women labeled "Third World." As Chandra Talpade Mohanty writes, "Universal images of the Third World woman (the veiled woman, caste, virgin, etc.), images constructed from adding the 'Third World difference' to 'sexual difference,' are predicated upon (and hence obviously bring into sharper focus assumptions about Western women as secular, liberated, and having control over their own lives."²⁹ I read Mohanty articulating that Western, secular women have created a political movement centering their symbolic as the self-referent, thus generating a system whereby the legibility of blackened and colonized people is foreclosed. However, white women's lives and even the term "French feminism" reveals the thin liberation white women can offer within this system.

Irigaray's work is positioned within a constellation of fecund thinkers Anglo-American readers tend to flatten, reducing multiple strands of feminist thought and action that erupted in France after the 1968 student protests into a smaller subset misrepresented as "French feminism."³⁰ French feminism as an expression is erroneous in that it tends to reduce the national representation of French feminism to Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray. It supposes wrongly that all three are feminists and ignores that each has a distinct and diverse relationship with the term "feminist." In the 1970s, a diversity of disparate groups organized to advance feminism with the MLF, which the press simplified into a taxonomy of three groups: "*lute des classes*," "*Féministes révolutionnaires*," and "*Psych et po*."³¹ Cixous and Irigaray did associate with *Psychanalyse et politique* or *Psych et po*, of which Cixous had the most substantial ties; however, Irigaray distanced her association in 1974 after a contentious dispute.³² Kristeva neither associated herself with the MLF, and by extension *Psych et Po*, nor did she call herself a feminist. Despite the waning connection of these women writers, during the decade, *Psych et po* grew to have prominence amongst the MLF's diverse groups through an influx of unknown funding;³³ the group leveraged these funds to advance their publications and, in 1979 even trademarked both the name "*MLF/Mouvement des libération des femmes*" and the logo of the fist in the woman's sign. Claire Goldberg Moses recounts that when opponents of *Psych et Po* alerted the MLF participants to the sweeping changes in their organizations, *Psych et Po* used its ample funding to pursue lawsuits, which resulted in *Psych et Po* receiving financial damages while continuing to sue other feminists in court for "defamation."³⁴ However, to audiences in the United States unaware of these actions, "French feminism" went on to signify the linguistic/psychoanalytic traditions primarily, with Marxist and materialistic versions overlooked³⁵ or overshadowed.

Nevertheless, Moses surmises that Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray became conflated with “new” French intellectualism, which existed before the invention of French feminism. Anglo-American interpreters, already proponents of a “French theory,” began to promote this disciplinary turn. During the 1960s, American academics flattened by the arguments of New Criticism were eager to embrace the promise and possibilities of feminist criticism, hermeneutics, postmodernism, psychoanalytic criticism, structuralism, semiotics, Marxism, and deconstruction. They viewed the contributions of Barthes, Foucault, Lévi-Strauss, Sartre, and Derrida as ways to “legitimate the transition of ‘soft’ disciplines from being *descriptive* enterprises to more *theoretical* ones.”³⁶ Those familiar with Irigaray’s critique that soft/hard binaries are proxies for feminine/masculine constructs can map the overwhelming maleness of the list. Under this reading of events, the Anglo-American turn had less to do with *Psych et Po* and its take-over of the feminist movement in France and more to do with the American theoretical search for legitimacy that these French male intellectuals provided; Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray came in secondarily as a balancing force of women’s representation.³⁷ Moses explains the American invention of “French feminism,” which she describes as “a feminist *political* practice, a strategy for placing both women theorists and the topic of gender centrally into their field of scholarship alongside a group of heavily French male theorists who had already captured their male colleagues’ attention.”³⁸ Those familiar with the work of Irigaray can recognize that even gender balance and representation misconstrues Irigaray’s claims of sexual difference by which she argues that difference must be theorized at the level of the symbolic. This move only reifies an assumed Phallic unity.

However, reading these events with Françoise Vergès’s previously cited account, what is galling is not only that Irigaray came to represent French feminism but that even the notion of a “French” feminism fails to acknowledge the colonial discourse that makes such nationalism possible, in which French national feminists were both victims and agents of a parallel but inverse racial logic occurring in their departments and territories. To use Irigarayan language, the “French” in feminism remains a blind spot that renders the sexual-racial-colonial experiences of the people in the departments and territories invisible. The experiences of sexually segregated policies and carceral punishments, hysterical in their arbitrary racial markings, remain inversely situated, not only the symbolic castration of women but also their lack and excess to the signifier of whiteness that constitutes, even while it does not cohere with the actual demographics of the country, what it is to be nationally French.

Scant evidence remains that Irigaray acknowledges how issues like abortion, equal pay, sexual violence, and private/public dichotomies intersect and interlock with structural racism, homophobia, ableism, xenophobia, and colonialism, which Vergès so aptly illustrates. For Irigaray’s proponents, it is

because these notions are already encoded within a male universal symbolic.³⁹ Therefore, sexual difference must be prior. A host of French intellectuals (Kristeva, Derrida, Sartre, Memmi), nationally entangled with Algeria and North Africa, engage in the colonial and anti-Semitic conversations capturing the European landscape. Still, unlike Fanon, they do not bring to the fore the anti-Black critique U.S. theorists argued as central.⁴⁰ While Irigaray and Derrida offer unique and robust versions of sexual difference predicated upon the psychoanalytic work of Lacan, they rarely engage that theory's capacity to deploy applied socio-political issues of justice. It appears dubious or inadequate to say that these thinkers, particularly Irigaray, used the framework of sexual difference to think about race and postcolonialism explicitly. One is left to question if sexual difference is sufficient to engage with race and anti/de/post/neo-coloniality and if the heavily psychoanalytic, structural, and post-structural leanings of sexual difference can offer a robust theoretical framework for those committed to this triadic analysis.

Entanglement and Disidentification

For Glissant, movement is not a linear motion but a locomotion varied in speed, direction, and intensity by entanglements, diversions, and errant wandering. By entanglement, I read Glissant analyzing paradoxically the "negative forces of oppression" rendered on his culture and body that follow and morph as he changes geographic locations. Creolization, as such, is a process by which mixed, transshipped, and racially anti-identified people can locate, narrate, and reconceive filial bonds while retaining a unique composite, rather than atavistic, genealogy of knowledge and kinship. Such a move resists dialectical synthesis. Instead, Glissant keeps the oscillation between thesis and anti-thesis, identity and anti-identity.

Glissantian entanglement may share strategic scope with what José Esteban Muñoz posits as disidentification, a third location, a cultural, material, and psychic survival strategy, a Foucaultian polyvalence of discourse that responds to state and global power apparatuses which seek to impose brutal systems of racial and sexual subjugation.⁴¹ For this paper, critical to Muñoz's definition of disidentification is the observation that it is an anti-assimilationist thought that mourns a lost object but realizes melancholically that there is no escape.⁴² Importantly, Muñoz depathologizes melancholia, pointing to the lives under siege by which melancholia offers a site for collective struggle, "a productive space of hybridization. . . between a necessary mourning and indispensable militancy."⁴³ This notion of melancholia, indispensable militancy, and tangled forces, I suggest, Glissant remains within, stagnant but not stuck. The processes of creolization resist a singular culture, a way of thinking, a filial genealogy, and an economic production in service to capitalist enslavement. As such, creolization is a

process that those committed to sexual difference's critique ought to recognize as a specificity of the metaphysical rupture that sexual difference theories suggest. Irigaray's work hearkens to what exists outside the Self-Same symbolic—that something persists and subsists, that an unraveling lurks in the background and morphology reveals this diversity of ideologies and lived experience.

Critical Melancholia and Whiteness

Ranjana Khanna has noted that psychoanalysis is both a colonial discipline and a framework for liberatory postcolonial and neocolonial movements, a critique she titles "critical melancholia."⁴⁴ She explains that critical melancholia reveals how intellectuals from locations deemed "primitive" relative to "civilized" nation-states became agents of the disciplines and studies that had named them colonized peoples. Melancholia among these intellectuals appears as an "inability to assimilate loss, and the consequent nagging return of the thing lost in psychic life."⁴⁵ Tracing Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia," Khanna explains similar states of loss to a person, objects, or abstractions, such as an ideal, liberty, or country; however, a state of dejection accompanies melancholia.⁴⁶ Successful mourning involves the psychical work of narcissism, directing energy inward and assimilating the feelings of loss; with melancholia, assimilation is impossible. The object is swallowed whole, and one is stuck with this loss and unaware of its influence.⁴⁷ Freud captures this inability to assimilate as negative. Yet, paradoxically, it also offers a subversive agency whereby critical identification with the self is lost, and temporality—how one functions with this loss in the past and the future—is revealed through reverberating echoes.

Khanna writes, "What Echo was to Narcissus, melancholia is to mourning. And if Freud would eventually transfer the critical agency found in melancholia into the normalizing function of the superego, I would salvage it, putting the melancholic's manic critical agency into the unworking of conformity and into the critique of the status quo."⁴⁸ Khanna describes a demetaphorization where encryption is the symptom of mourning, and haunting is the symptom of melancholia. The looming specter of melancholia over the postcolonial independent nation-state reveals a manic call for justice made necessary, as Glissant rejoins because the colonizer constrained resistance to only their terms. As such, the colonized would be incapable of metabolizing⁴⁹ or assimilating the loss of subjecthood in the lands they were transhipped. I return to this haunting in the final section of this paper as I explore the unresolved sexual and racial violence Vergès recounts.

In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, under the subtitle "A Very Black Sexuality,"⁵⁰ Irigaray also traces "Mourning and Melancholia." According to Freud's insight, the little girl's melancholia is due to the discovery of castration, a condition both the little girl and her mother share, making the

mother an unconsciously forsaken object-relation of identification. She records the melancholic symptoms of the little girl⁵¹ and Freud's conclusion that the girl's libido withdraws from her object-mother, seeking a displaced object. The ego will attempt to consume or cannibalize the loss by orally devouring it. In melancholia, Freud supposes that women manifest this sign of dejection as a refusal to eat or consume (anorexia), even a lack of sexual appetite. Given the collective and shared condition of castration, the little girl cannot work through this by mourning because the object is not dead but lost, and she cannot perceive what has been lost. Exasperated, Irigaray quips that the girl lacks sufficient narcissism to establish a firm melancholic syndrome:

This is not to say that the sexuality of this 'dark continent' will not show a good number of the symptoms of melancholia. But they will be scattered about rather than organized in a coherent and permanent manner...Hysteria is all she has left...she will do as she is asked. But this "as" or "as if" is not ludic, not under her control...But here the game is controlled—as we have already seen—by the Phallus's mastery of the sexual economy...The choice she faces would be between censoring her instincts completely—which would lead to death—or treating them as, converting them into, hysteria. Actually, there is no real alternative. The two operations entail each other.⁵²

What is clear is that melancholia can be helpful in a critical sense but only as a descriptive phenomenon. It does not resolve the tensions that sexual and racial identity assimilation demand—it leaves these choices as things that ought not to be assimilated. Irigaray's reading, when mapped with Khanna's "critical melancholia" in the context of postcolonialism, reveals a manic (Khanna) and hysteric (Irigaray) response to inassimilable loss that the Phallic economy proffers. Like Muñoz's earlier account, melancholia is a site for collective mourning and political resistance when the polis has no axiom to recognize excluded political agents or attempts to define them as lack. Rather than being stuck without agency with inassimilable loss, Glissant's work sets in motion a productive errantry, a political strategy of detour/retour in which injustice isn't swallowed but transformed beyond the binary choices of assimilation or death. Interestingly, Fanon also noted the diagnosis of the colonized as hysterical,⁵³ as the colonized is made wretched under the symbolic law which orders hierarchy by sex and race.

Glissant's notion of entanglement can be paired with Irigaray's notion of sexual difference in that sexual difference signals a space or a gap between subjective binaries, an interval of possibility that exceeds a psychoanalytic symbolic order, permitting the real and the imaginary to unfold in new directions. Her work is helpful in that she diagnoses a Western cultural imaginary constructed via a privileging of the male identity, bodily unity, solidity, and visibility, interpreted morphological reals mapped onto the anatomy of the male body and the lack of the female body. Sexual difference is a way to reveal this framework and to breach its cultural lock, challenging

its psychic and generationally cultivated markers of inclusion and exclusion. While Irigaray's work centers principally on the *f eminine* other, not the female body per se, to expose and undermine this phallogocentric economy, her positing of the *f eminine* intervention remains, as Marjorie Hass suggests, race invisible;⁵⁴ it succumbs to the markers of whiteness. Sexual difference, given its psychoanalytic framing, exposes the deep psychic trauma on raced bodies and the mental "dis-ease" of raced cultures. I suggest that while Khanna and Irigaray underscore the unconcealment of inassimilable loss that melancholia exposes, sex, not race, is posited within this order of the symbolic. I turn to Seshadri-Crooks to explicate this formative distinction.

Psychoanalysis and Race

In Lacan's work, Seshadri-Crooks argues that race functions as an element of the real, not the symbolic, and as such, whiteness functions as its signifier without a signified. Race is a category that predetermines social arrangements and behaviors by accenting difference rather than connection. Thus, race is in service to a mythos that we are Whole beings and allows people to view others as wholly "black," "white," "red," or "yellow." It functions to support a logic of domination that hides our vulnerability. Sexual difference, she notes, rests on historically contingent valuations derived from male and female. By contrast, race is about exclusiveness, a person's exceptional uniqueness, which conflates with the public good as one takes up this power-centric interest via Hobbesian social contracts. But she argues, "it is not power in the sense of material and discursive agency that can be reduced to historical mappings. As many have assumed, if such were the case, then a historicist genealogy of the discursive construction of race would be in order: Foucault, not Lacan, discourse analysis, not psychoanalysis."⁵⁵ She argues that race organized difference in its access to being, a *jouissance* that whiteness promises it can access. She concludes, "The subject of race, therefore, typically resists race as mere "social construction," even as it holds on to a notion of visible, phenotypal difference."⁵⁶

Notions of colonial race include inherited features under the genetic lottery of one's biological parents. Whatever their race, the children inherit a series of genes by which kinship is bound to culture and ethnicity. The organizing feature doesn't adhere to geographical or even national groupings. It is ultimately a mapping of what one sees, visual aesthetics or racial aesthetic practice,⁵⁷ by which "gross morphological features" (hair, bone, skin) are interpreted before class, ethnic, or cultural variances, and—like sex—one inherits these features from birth as a set of normative embodied appearances. Here an Antillean point of view challenges what is seen. A North-South, rather than Antillean-Antillean point of view, gazes via the sight of the metropole—the white gaze.

It also means race becomes operative within the Hegelian realm of the family or the private aspect of civil society; it operates on the interplay between the family, an organization socially regulated that can justify itself through a supposed biology of inherited essences.⁵⁸ To uncover racism, Seshadri-Crooks focuses on how “race transmutes its historicity, its contingent foundations, into a biological necessity. It is this process, a process that depends upon and exploits the structure of sexual difference, that one must grasp. . . . Race depends upon the sexed subject for its effectivity; the indeterminacy of the sexed subject is the fulcrum around which race turns. The signifier Whiteness attempts to signify the sexed subject, which is the ‘more than symbolic’ aspect of the subject.”⁵⁹ Such a signification ultimately fails and yields anxiety that she argues is related to the unconscious anxiety about the historicity of Whiteness, a fraudulent signifier.⁶⁰ She applies the structural mapping of psychoanalysis to reveal the collusion of the symbolic that orders how we perceive and fail to perceive material reality. The method forces people to confront the subject’s lack of being, no possibility for desire, and an effect of language; this anxiety to face vulnerability also hides the social construction of race.

Neutered Whiteness

As the opposition between dualities is integral to Western philosophy’s deployment of hierarchy, Irigaray’s project challenges the valuation system. Sexual difference, as Western philosophy has conceived it, has placed woman in a system by which her subjectivity varies by degree or kind to man. As Mary Bloodworth-Lugo notes, she is greater or lesser by degree (one-sex model) or a different kind (two-sex model) than he. What the two-sex model identifies with clarity is the assumption of body neutrality that typically follows gender theory. Namely, the fluidity of non-binary gender traits is still applied to a “neutral” static and non-social body. The masculine and feminine gender qualities, under gender theory, are dismantled while leaving the male-body and the female-body the canvases upon which these traits are applied. To use sexual difference theory to tackle racial invisibility, the neutral body cannot be the aim of difference; thus, racial markings ought to be critical to this unmasking of the neutral and neutered Western body.

Irigaray’s argument supposes a metaphysical asymmetry. As such, woman resides both within and outside this system. Human beings can’t be alive without a feminine subject, and she is not the same as the Other of the Phallus. Being present while out of grasp makes the feminine subject a constant presence that is simultaneously absent. Under the symbolic rule of the Father’s law, the father is the only subject, the only kin to a developing younger male subject. The mother is already de-kinned and serves as a function rather than a relation. It is this meditation on lost kinship that Sabrina Hom suggests, drawing upon the fluidic element of blood, Irigaray’s work

brings the relation between the mother and daughter out of the Oedipal dyad of father and son. Hom, also tracing Seshadri-Crooks, contends that Irigaray's meditation on blood signifies the complexities of paternal-child identification and subjecthood and the entangled racial subject identifications of kinship.⁶¹ The phallus as a lack not only severs identification between mother-daughter, but it functions, as Fanon writes, to amputate the black man. These severed relations litter a minefield that lures people into its explosive landscape, promising the dominance of a civilized pure, whole being. Irigaray's work via the maternal helps us establish new modes of kinship beyond the sutured wreckage, which I explore in the final section.

La Mère/Mer

Irigaray's focus on the maternal, as her work underscores, plays on the homophone of the mother and the sea, *la mère* and *la mer*.⁶² To understand the racial, colonial, and sexual implication of this doubled meaning, I return to Irigaray's rethinking of the solid and fluid, the mother and father, the land and sea. In *Wombs of Women*, Vergès defines terms she anticipates a French audience will need to be clarified, and her first is *Outre-Mer*. She writes of *Outre-Mer*: "This designation refers to the colonial administration and today comprises a wide range of distinct situations. As such, it is inadequate. Nonetheless, I see no other way to describe the situation of these lands that, according to the republican system, are united by the fact that they are products of the reconfiguration of the French slave empire (the overseas departments, or DOM: Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Reunion Island) and post-slave empire (Kanaky, Pacific Islands, Mayotte)."⁶³ A land defined by its colonial legacy and enslaved status of the people who occupy these lands, she suggests, results in the feeble marker *Outre-Mer*. Its distance and its non-solidity are already implied. Hortense Spillers pens that the people of the Middle Passage were suspended in an "oceanic" medium of Freudian "undifferentiated identity: removed from indigenous land and culture. . . . were in movement across the Atlantic, but they were also nowhere at all" reduced to quantities, cargo, degenderized.⁶⁴ The sea hides the accounting of people and their transshipment. The sea becomes a fluidic medium in which one is not a mother; on land and with soil, her reproductive capacities can be leveraged. However, her family kinship will have little semblance with Lacan's sexual division of parentage.

La Mère-Patrie—The Gift

To understand "colonial family romance," a colonial child of the French revolution, Vergès turns to Freud's contention that the little boy (not the little girl as we already note from Irigaray's reading of the castrated girl and mother) views his idealized parents as the source of all beliefs. Perception

shifts as the child comprehends the erosion of power that mark his father (the Phallic anxiety, or lack of lack in Lacan's account) and mother (castrated phallus). The boy's hostile feelings, particularly toward his father, will pivot toward a better parentage, a new set of relations worthy of nurturing those unitary hopes and beliefs—the socio-political body. This move legitimates a revolutionary allegiance around abstractions of *fraternité, liberté, égalité*. Vergès narrates that the prerevolutionary romance generated a salvation narrative within the Hexagon, where the revolutionary Republic lifted people from the yoke of feudalism and tyrannical patriarchs. Contrastingly, love and affection did not motivate people to travel to the colonies; men went abroad in search of capital exploits in gold and religious conversion. Absent is a discourse of a political ideal. If the monarchy represented patriarchy, then the figure of Marianne, "the benevolent mediator," would protect her children from his tyranny, thus heeding the Oedipal warning of the overbearing king. This protective figure, *La Mère-Patrie*, was sent to the colonies to protect her children from other local tyrannical or failed fathers.⁶⁵ As Vergès notes, this formed a founding mythos, what Glissant calls a "unique root"⁶⁶ genealogy and narrative, an idealized parent associated with European whiteness, capable of denying the dimension of race in the making of this identity. She pens, "The fable gave France the means to console itself when colonized 'children' would rebel and to repress the reasons for which they rejected her. It was their ingratitude, rather than tyrannical 'love,' that explained their behavior."⁶⁷

Ultimately, she claims the family romance invents a cast of diminutive children in need of *La Mère-Patrie*, caught in a cycle of dependence and debt. Her benevolent oversight and order are the colonial *don*,⁶⁸ or gift, the legacy of the Enlightenment project. Akin to this mother-father figure is primogeniture, a preference given to superior white brothers who are consanguineal relations by revolutionary power and possibly mixed blood. This lurking *métissage* forms an anxious and unspoken disapprobation of sexual intercourse between races. It was the *frère aîné* (older brothers), not the colonial lobbies, who, in the Republic's narration, abolished slavery in 1794, forcing the colonized people into an indentured gratitude that lasted through the mid-twentieth century.⁶⁹ Uncounted were the colonies' resources of wood, sugar, minerals, and bodies needed to fight France's wars. The debt was insurmountable and asymmetrically established. Rather than filial contributors, the colonized were cast as "dependents" ascribed with mental illness and moral failures associated with the racialized and sexualized markers of a matrifocal society,⁷⁰ female-headed families which nurtured an infantile society of the lazy, indolent, addicted, and socially-politically impoverished.⁷¹

Métissage and Anamnesis

The Lacanian anxiety traced as the Phallus and its hidden signifier whiteness is transformed through Vergès's analysis of *métissage*. She notes the dialectic of enslavement and emancipation: on the one side were the colonizers, as described, who blamed the Creoles for their conditions of oppression; they attributed abuses of power to the irregular actions of individuals and corrupt administrators, not a system of power. Countering this fiction of childish and deserved enslavement, Frantz Fanon argues for a *tabula rasa* approach, rejecting the Manichean society divided by two species, the duality marking the cold war. He rallies for a Third World restart to history, one which does not succumb to defining itself "in relation to the values which preceded it."⁷² Vergès reads in Fanon's call an implication that men and women have the power to "reinvent their symbolic and material world, to shed memory. It construes memory as a morbid legacy, a melancholic nostalgia...a fantasy of self-engendering, a refusing a filiation that is experienced as impossible to receive and transform."⁷³ The dead spirits of defeat and loss inspired him toward Algiers and not to Martinique; rejoining with Glissant's earlier point, he did not return to the entangled legacy of Creoles on the island of Martinique. There he found no political traction for the new epoch. Vergès notes Toni Morrison's commentary that slavery was "undigestible and unabsorbable, completely,"⁷⁴ an ethos Khanna affirms but also supposes this indigestibility can be a productive site of critical analysis. Vergès—instead of Fanon's *tabula rasa* or a morbid melancholia—argues for anamnesis, a collective remembrance of a group's origins embracing an ambivalence of symbolic limit and the possibility that one may exceed this limit. The collective remembrance resonates with Muñoz's notion of melancholia as collective mourning and indispensable militancy. She reads a mixed heterogeneity of emancipatory discourses within Reunion history and society: an appropriation of French republic ideals but without mimetic assimilation. Instead, they were, as she says, "creolized, métissés, hybridized," turning to examples like Xiaomei Chen and Jacques Derrida, as theorists who posit the capacity of people, in Audre Lorde fashion, to turn the master's tools into weapons that destroy the house he intended to build.⁷⁵ She asserts an "in-between" of "citizen *and* colonized, worker *and* citizen, member of the colonized community *and* member of a subethnic, *and* women," what she calls an inscribed social matrix of race, gender, class, and sexual difference.⁷⁶

In this way, Vergès's *métissage* brings together the entangled identities and categories of each of the thinkers I have traced in this paper, but in true Irigarayan fashion, she does not syncretize or sublimate—she forges new pathways of remembering and, ultimately, becoming. In a Glissantian sense, she holds the entangled memories and historiographies carefully, refusing to unsee or assimilate; her melancholia turns to a re(member)ing of people and land where the vantage of the Antillean, rather than the colonizer, holds sway.

If Irigaray's work brought us back to the question of filiation and the mother, Vergès remembers via anamnesis the Creole mothers and their site of loss and sterilization on the island of Reunion; she memorializes the hysteric loss to which France's legal system and feminist movement remain blind and mute. She uses the sea, via the Middle Passage, to figure the bodies of the enslaved, pushing their haunting beyond morbid melancholia toward a collective call for responsibility, to live up to the ideals of the revolution and tear down its façade that turns every person into a capitalist worker within the global neo-plantation. Like materialist feminists, she worked within France, tracing the history and economic oppression. Unlike them, she cannot remain indifferent to France's subaltern and the complicity of this silence.⁷ Using the discourses of European psychoanalysis and the Lacanian grammar of White supremacy, Vergès offers those committed to the claims of sexual difference a geographical vantage upon which colonialism, racism, and sexual difference remain entangled. We return to the islands of Martinique and Reunion, not to encounter a pure sexual difference but one where the forces of creolization may indeed enliven our perishing pursuits, which are haunted and wounded without such an analysis.

¹ Françoise Vergès, *The Wombs of Women: Race, Capital, Feminism*, trans. Kaiama L. Glover (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 16.

² Françoise Picq, *Libération des femmes : Les années-mouvement* (Paris : Editions du Seuil, 1993).

³ Vergès, *The Wombs of Women*, 16.

⁴ Vergès, *The Wombs of Women*, 26.

⁵ Libreria delle donne di Milano, *Non credere di avere dei diritti: La generazione della libertà femminile nell'idea e nelle vicende di un gruppo di donne* (Rosenberg and Sellier, 1987); Teresa de Lauretis, "The Practice of Sexual Difference and Feminist Thought in Italy: an Introductory Essay," In *Sexual Difference*, Milan Women's Collective Bookstore, trans. Teresa de Lauretis and Patrizia Cicogna (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Claire Goldberg Moses, "Made in America: 'French Feminism' in Academia," *Feminist Studies* 24, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 245. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178697>; Christine Delphy, "The Invention of French Feminism: An Essential Move," *Yale French Studies* 97 (2000): 166-198; Lisa Disch, "Christine Delphy's Constructivist Materialism: An Overlooked 'French Feminism'," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 114, no. 4 (October 2015): 827-849. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-3157155>. Three women, including Irigaray, became misrepresented as nationally standing in for France's feminist movement. Irigaray's strained relationship with Psych et Po resulted in greater political traction with Italian feminists than French feminists, sympathetic to materialist feminist claims.

⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Trenton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000/2007).

⁷ Vergès, *The Wombs of Women*, 21.

- ⁸ Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (University Press of Virginia, 1989), 14, 15.
- ⁹ Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 189-194.
- ¹⁰ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 15.
- ¹¹ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 15.
- ¹² Luce Irigaray, *In the Beginning, She Was* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 52. “Cut off from her - or her - men withdraw from themselves. They wander deprived of vigor, of energy. Animated by a mechanism as arbitrary as their language, they learn with a master how to adapt themselves to it, without failure, without errors, a false gesture, a false word, or concatenation of words. They are initiated into repeating, into imitating. This apprenticeship is supposed to make them men. Instead, it exiles them from themselves.”
- ¹³ Irigaray, *In the Beginning*, 90.
- ¹⁴ Irigaray, *In the Beginning*, 130
- ¹⁵ Irigaray, *In the Beginning*, 83.
- ¹⁶ Ranjana Khanna, “On the Name, Ideation, and Sexual Difference,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 27, no. 2 (2016): 63. To situate what I mean by sexual difference and what I understand Irigaray’s work to offer, I borrow Ranjana Khanna’s definition: “Sexual difference is a term with transitional content, yet to be fully conceived, and indeed perhaps intellectually hospitable in ways that resist content as justification, conceptualization as closure, or thought as merely aspirational.”
- ¹⁷ Irigaray, *In the Beginning*, 143
- ¹⁸ Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You: A Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, trans. Alison Martin (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 47.
- ¹⁹ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 17.
- ²⁰ Luce Irigaray, “Place, Interval: A Reading of Aristotle, *Physics IV*,” in *Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 34-55.
- ²¹ Édouard Glissant, Preface to *Introduction to a Poetics of Diversity*, trans. Celia Britton (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), xiii; italics mine.
- ²² Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 19.
- ²³ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 19, 20.
- ²⁴ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 26; emphasis mine.
- ²⁵ Michèle Lamont, “How to Become a Dominant French Philosopher: The Case of Jacques Derrida,” *American Journal of Sociology* 93, no. 3 (1987): 613. “Structuralism,” *Yale French Studies* 35/37 (1966). Lamont notes the critical introduction of these nationally branded thinkers at an influential international structuralism conference in 1966 at John Hopkins University, where invited scholars included Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Serge Doubrovsky, Lucien Goldmann, Jacques Lacan, and Tzvetan Todorov. The conference followed with a special issue on structuralism in *Yale French Studies*, further strengthening the fabric of their associated works.

Explicit volumes with their works named also cemented this U.S. notion of a unified French thought, such as Vincent Descombe's *Modern French Philosophy* and John Fekete's *The Structural Allegory: Reconstructive Encounters with the New French Thought*. Similar works threaded Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray's works together, such as Nancy Fraser's and Sandra Lee Bartky's *Revaluing French Feminism: Critical Essays on Difference, Agency, and Culture*.

- ²⁶ Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 104-107; Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's Woman'," In *Out of Kumbia: Caribbean Women and Literature*, eds. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990), 355-72; Penelope Deutscher, *A Politics of Impossible Difference: The Later Work of Luce Irigaray* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).
- ²⁷ Sabrina L. Hom, "Between Races and Generations: Materializing Race and Kinship in Moraga and Irigaray," *Hypatia* 28, no. 3 (2013): 419-435; Stephen D. Seely, "Irigaray Between God and the Indians: Sexuate Difference, Decoloniality, and the Politics of Ontology," *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 43, 1 (2017): 41-65; Rachel Jones, "Philosophical *Métissage* and the Decolonization of Difference: Luce Irigaray, Daniel Maximin, and the Elemental Sublime," *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology* 5, no. 2 (2018): 139-154; Joanne Faulkner, "Settler Colonialism's 'Miscarriage': Thinking the Failure of Relationality through Irigaray's 'Interval'," *Angelaki* 24, no. 3 (May 2019): 137-154;
- ²⁸ Sara Farris, *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017).
- ²⁹ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in *Dangerous Liaison: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997), 273.
- ³⁰ Christine Delphy, "The Invention of French Feminism: An Essential Move," *Yale French Studies* 97 (2000): 166-198.
- ³¹ Françoise Picq, *Libération des femmes : Les années-mouvement* (Paris : Editions du Seuil, 1993), 190. Picq contests the simplified reduction of group dynamics, dividing and sapping the strength away from the varied group projects.
- ³² Claire Goldberg Moses, "Made in America: 'French Feminism' in Academia," *Feminist Studies* 24, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 245. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178697>; Picq, *Libération des femmes*, 210-215.
- ³³ Moses, "Made in America," 250.
- ³⁴ Moses, "Made in America," 241. It is argued that this nomenclature of "French Feminism" is an invention that Anglo-American feminists coined to delineate their own lingually divided project.
- ³⁵ Disch, "Christine Delphy's Constructivist Materialism: An Overlooked 'French Feminism'," 827-849.
- ³⁶ Lamont, "How to Become a Dominant French Philosopher: The Case of Jacques Derrida," 614.
- ³⁷ Moses, "Made in America," note 58. Moses cites a 1993 Iowa doctoral History candidate who notes that when the poststructuralists, such as Foucault and Derrida, were added to her program, she, as a feminist, turned toward Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray. This author notes that in 2002, in her graduate study, Kristeva and Irigaray (the only female 20th-century female figures studied) were paired with a heavily "French" male list that included Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Levinas, Foucault, and Derrida.

- ³⁸ Moses, "Made in America," 262.
- ³⁹ De Lauretis, *Sexual difference*, 18. When asked about lesbianism absent from *Non credere di avere dei diritti*, contributor Luisa Muraro wrote back, "From the way you speak of lesbianism, almost seems as if you are making sexual choice a principle or a cause or a foundation of freedom. If that were what you thought, I would say to you: no, the principle of female freedom is of a symbolic nature. It is not an actual behavior, however valid and precious such a behavior may be toward the empowering of women in society. . . . in order for us to enter the symbolic order we must start from silence, we must clear everything out—the place of the other must be empty."
- ⁴⁰ Kathryn T. (Gines) Belle, "Fanon and Sartre 50 Years Later: To Retain or Reject the Concept of Race," *Sartre Studies International* 9, no. 2 (2003): 55-67.
- ⁴¹ José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentification: Queers of Color and the Performance Politics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 19, 25, 26, 161-79.
- ⁴² Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 18. 51-74.
- ⁴³ Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 74.
- ⁴⁴ Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham, ND: Duke University Press, 2003), x. Khanna writes, "Critical melancholia is an affect of coloniality as well as a reading practice that makes apparent the decentered nature of the psychoanalytic paradigm."
- ⁴⁵ Khanna, *Dark Continents*, 16-17.
- ⁴⁶ Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vol., trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953-74), 14:243.
- ⁴⁷ Khanna, *Dark Continents*, 21, 22.
- ⁴⁸ Khanna, *Dark Continents*, 23. Like Antoine Poirot's diagnosis of men in Algiers suffering from "pseudomelancholy," giving rise to violent behavior, which differs in its manifestation from European melancholy, one can understand these men critically and politically protesting the hegemony of their lost ideal—the right to subjecthood and the right not to be exploited.
- ⁴⁹ Myra J. Hird, "Digesting Difference: Metabolism and the Question of Sexual Difference," *Configurations* 20, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 213-237. Hird suggests that metabolism offers ways to excite the tensions between being and becoming that Elizabeth Grosz's Darwinian account of sexual difference provides. It is beyond the scope of this paper to account for this mode of analyzing sexual difference. Still, I note the synergy between melancholia as an indigestible loss and how metabolism may offer a way to frame sexual difference beyond sexual dimorphism that forecloses the implication of Irigaray's work.
- ⁵⁰ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 66; emphasis mine. I note the unconsidered notion of "blackness" as a necessary construct for Irigaray to trace the "dark" continent of woman. Under her reading of Freud, the terms blackness and sexuality reference female sexuality within psychoanalysis. I argue that blackness should be theorized explicitly as a distinct construct, and its relation to sexual difference deserves studied examination.
- ⁵¹ Irigaray, *Speculum*, 66, 67.
- ⁵² Irigaray, *Speculum*, 71, 72.
- ⁵³ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 19.

- ⁵⁴ Marjorie Hass, "The Style of the Speaking Subject: Irigaray's Empirical Studies of Language Production," *Hypatia* 14, no. 10 (2000): 64-89.
- ⁵⁵ Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 8.
- ⁵⁶ Seshadri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness*, 8.
- ⁵⁷ Seshadri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness*, 19.
- ⁵⁸ Seshadri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness*, 17.
- ⁵⁹ Seshadri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness*, 21.
- ⁶⁰ Seshadri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness*, 21. She notes another way of expressing her argument: "Race is a regime of visibility that secures our investment in racial identity. We make such an investment because the unconscious signifier Whiteness, which founds the logic of racial difference, promises wholeness. (This is what it means to desire Whiteness: not a desire to become Caucasian [!] but, to put it redundantly, it is an 'insatiable desire on the part of all raced subjects to overcome difference.) Whiteness attempts to signify being, or that aspect of the subject which escapes language. Obviously, such a project is impossible because Whiteness is a historical and cultural invention. However, what guarantees Whiteness its place as a master signifier is visual difference. The phenotype secures our belief in racial difference, thereby perpetuating our desire for Whiteness."
- ⁶¹ Hom, "Between Races and Generations," 427. Hom writes that the discourse around racial blood reveals that racialization is "dependent upon controlling and rationalizing blood."
- ⁶² Irigaray, *Speculum*, 168, footnote.
- ⁶³ Vergès, *The Wombs of Women*, 21.
- ⁶⁴ Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* (summer 1987): 65-81, 72.
- ⁶⁵ Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 66. I note the synergy between this account and the cunning attack against black masculinity and failed fatherhood that Spillers observes in the racial propaganda of the Moynihan Report, where a perceived "matriarchy" is pathologized.
- ⁶⁶ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 22.
- ⁶⁷ Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 4.
- ⁶⁸ Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don : Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," ed. Jean-Marie Tremblay (1923-1924/2002) : http://www.uqac.quebec.ca/zone30/Classiques_des_sciences_sociales/index.html
- Jacques Derrida, *Given Time. I, Counterfeit Money* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1992); Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 6, footnote 16. Vergès notes the play on the French verb *donner*, which means to give, and its noun form, *don*, implies not only a giving but of the sacred, devotional, favor, or grace. She traces Mauss's famous essay on *le don* in which he explores the social relations that encode the gift, a theme picked up by Derrida in his work, noting the irresolvable paradox of debt that every gift entails.
- ⁶⁹ The departmentalization or independent autonomy question split Afro-Caribbean thinkers and scholars, including Aimé Césaire (a departmentalist) from Édouard Glissant (a regional autonomist).

- ⁷⁰ Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 65-81, 77. The single parent-model is endorsed via a mythos of “One” God who is father/mother to his children; However, as Spillers notes, this single-parenthood becomes illegitimate in matrilineal or focal societies. In White supremacist cultures, the father may remain awkwardly unnamed to conceal the forbidden desire of the white father; his excluded parental acknowledgment also ensures his children can become his racially reproduced capital gains.
- ⁷¹ Octave Mannoni, “Administration de la folie, folie de l’administration,” in *Un commencement qui n’en finit pas : Transfert, interprétation, théorie* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, Champ Freudien, 1980), 137 ; Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 18. Vergès cites Mannoni’s analysis that psychiatry became the medical discipline by the Republic collaborated to exclude based on protecting “the tranquility of the majority” with “historically defined norms and propriety” to maintain a “certain way of being reasonable.” Thus read, Creoles are the failed children of the Enlightenment project and its capitalist efficiency.
- ⁷² Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 5, 55.
- ⁷³ Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 13; emphasis mine.
- ⁷⁴ Elsie B. Washington, “Talk with Toni Morrison,” in *Conversation with Toni Morrison*, 235; Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 15, fn. 56.
- ⁷⁵ Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 17; Jacques Derrida, “The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration,” in *For Nelson Mandela*, by Jacques Derrida and Mustapha Tlili (New York: 1987), 17; Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 16, fn. 61 and 62. She cites Chen’s use of “Occidentalism” as a tactic whereby the semi-colonized could borrow from their colonizer, repurposing this discourse toward their political aims and cultural milieu. Similarly to Derrida, only an authentic inheritor can conserve and reproduce the legacy and turn the logic of the legacy “against those who claim to be its guardians” via “unheard of acts of reflection.”
- ⁷⁶ Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 16.
- ⁷⁷ Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, fn. 70. She cites working as a journalist for the monthly and weekly review *des femmes en mouvements*, in which numerous articles on women in the world were recorded, including Egypt, Salvador, Eritrea, the Soviet Union, Guatemala, Chile, United States; however, very few were written about immigrant women in France or the “remnants of the empire.”