A Critical Feminist Semiology: De-naturalizing and Re-Politicizing Patriarchal, White

Supremacist, and Settler-Colonial Systems of Meaning

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: A Critical Feminist Semiology: De-naturalizing and Re-Politicizing Patriarchal, White
      Supremacist, and Settler-Colonial Systems of Meaning

This dissertation de-naturalizes and re-politicizes patriarchal, white supremacist and

settler-colonial systems of meaning through creating a methodology of critical feminist

semiology. This methodology is built from the contributions of many thinkers' works in

semiology, phenomenology, philosophy of myth, feminist philosophy, and critical philosophy of

race. I return to the emergence of semiology in Ferdinand de Saussure's work to show that it has

been more political than the dominant reading takes semiology to be. My reading of his work

emphasizes the importance of studying politics, history, institutions, colonialism, and geography

in the study of signs as a part of social life. I critique Roland Barthes for depoliticizing the

method of semiology while acknowledging his many contributions, especially in the study of

myths. Barthes' emphasis on the *operation* of myths to naturalize and depoliticize politically

motivated contingencies is a major contribution to the method of critical feminist semiology.

This project turns to Simone de Beauvoir's work *The Second Sex* and reads it as a semiological

phenomenology. Beauvoir's work closely considers signs as a part of social life through

demonstrating the contingency of the myth of the eternal feminine as well as its political,

economic, social, and ontological operations. She shows how this myth shapes lived experiences

and how it might be resisted. This chapter demonstrates that the myth of the eternal feminine

operates as a part of a patriarchal system of meaning. The dissertation then turns to the field of

Black feminist thought, which considers how myths sustain and reinforce race and gender

oppression in a more collective manner than the semiologists previously considered. This chapter identifies clusters of myths that support one another and that support what I call the meta-myth of white supremacy. White supremacy is both a singular myth and a meta-myth that is supported by clusters of myths. To dismantle the meta-myth of white supremacy, it is vital to understand how it is supported by and supports clusters of myths; that is, treating it as an individual myth is insufficient. This dissertation then engages with Indigenous and decolonial scholars to show how clusters of myth sustain settler colonialism. The cluster of myths considered in this chapter also supports the meta-myth of white supremacy. Decolonial scholars demonstrate the importance of purging mythologies that contribute to the material success of settler-colonialism. Throughout the dissertation, myths are considered material; rather than treated as abstractions alone, myths have significant impacts on material conditions and as such should be given moral scrutiny.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to those who notice and question the water that we swim in. To those who have lost their lives, loves, well-being swimming against the current. To those who have performed off-script. To those who make possible the breath of others. To the crocodiles who hold our gaze. To ancestors whose footprints have forged a path thought impossible. To those who have danced when told to walk and loved when told to hate.

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"[S]ticks and bricks might break our bones, but words will most certainly *kill* us"[1]
–Hortense Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*

"Let's face it. I am a marked woman, but not everybody knows my name. 'Peaches' and 'Brown Sugar,' 'Sapphire' and 'Earth Mother,' 'Aunty,' 'Granny,'' God's 'Holy Fool,' a 'Miss Ebony First,' or 'Black Woman at the Podium': I describe a locus of confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments and privations in the national treasury of rhetorical wealth. My country needs me, and if I were not here, I would have to be invented… Embedded in bizarre axiological ground, they demonstrate a sort of telegraphic coding; they are markers so loaded with mythical prepossession that there is no easy way for the agents buried beneath them to come clean… I must strip down through layers of attenuated meanings, made an excess in time; over time, assigned by a particular historical order"[2]
–Hortense Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*

"The early semiology of Roland Barthes nearly escaped from linguistic domination to become a political analysis of the different systems of signs, to establish a relationship between this or that system of signs—for example, the myths of the petit bourgeois class—and the class struggle within capitalism that this system tends to conceal. We were almost saved, for political semiology is a weapon (a method) that we need to analyze what is called ideology. But the miracle did not last… Barthes quickly stated that semiology was only a branch of linguistics and that language was its only object."[3]
–Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind*

There has been an ongoing debate regarding the role that discourse and experience play in feminist philosophy, known as the "structure vs. subject" debate, exemplified by Joan Scott and Linda Martín Alcoff. Scott takes discourse to be coextensive with experience whereas Alcoff takes experience to exceed discourse. Scott suggests that making a phenomenon visible is not critical enough, as doing so can essentialize and naturalize this phenomenon instead of asking how it is produced.[4] For Scott experience is a constructed linguistic event that is always already interpreted and in need of interpretation. Experience is thus not the beginning of any explanation but must be explained itself.[5] Alcoff replies, "Scott thus turns the naïve account of

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experience on its head; on her account, experience is an epiphenomenon, originating entirely outside of the individual in linguistic structures, and its explanatory value is therefore eclipsed by the theorization of language."[6] Alcoff suggests that by making multiplicitous experiences visible, feminists who center experience can disrupt dominant discursive formations.

Despite seeming oppositional, Alcoff suggests these approaches are not mutually exclusive.[78] Yet they have been framed as oppositional—feminist philosophers have been hesitant to see semiology, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mythology as a resourceful field in part because their classical versions are less concerned with questions of power or politics.[9] Semiology can appear sanitized and sterile, disconnected from the social world and power relations. On the other hand, the "linguistic turn" was one of the largest movements of 20th century in philosophy, but it (mistakenly) excluded thinkers like Gloria Anzaldua, Maria Lugones, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, and Patricia Hill Collins. These feminist thinkers are excluded from the fields of semiology, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mythology, which is a detriment to those fields as their contributions are significant.

My work argues that lived experiences and systemic/structural organization are mutually constitutive, that any attempt to purify one from the other will fail as they are interwoven. Thus, I situate myself in the debates that feminist philosophers have had about systems of meaning, following the feminist giants of Linda Martin Alcoff, Judith Butler, and Beata Stawarska, who reject the false binary of structure vs. subjectivity. We can consider both and I argue that without doing so, we miss significant insights that the other has to offer.

I am contributing something new to this position of both subject and structure rather than either/or; that is, I have built a method in conversation with other thinkers that subverts the binary between systems of meaning (language, myth, meta-myth) and matter (this binary has

itself become an ideology). This method considers the material manifestations of myths as well as how myths emerge from material conditions. As such, the methodology enacted through this project is not a classical semiological one, but what I call a critical feminist semiology.

The argument I make is that there are discourses and practices that shape our habits and influence our experience (what would it even mean to not have discourses into which we are thrown?) *and* that we can find ways of actively disrupting these discourses, habits, and influences with resources in intersectional feminisms, feminist phenomenology, critical phenomenology, feminist philosophy of language and mythology, critical philosophy of race, and decolonial philosophy.

20th century feminist insights into language and mythologies reveal how they operate in our embodied and culturally/historically situated lives. Rather than treat language as a neutral field of communication, as somehow purified from relations of power and politics, feminists have revealed the internalization and sedimentation of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and gender oppression into the languages and myths we live by.[1011] Myths regarding gender are employed to support white supremacist ideology and practices as well as to support settler colonial ideologies and practices. As such, an intersectional feminist analysis drawing from the traditions of Black feminism, decolonial feminism, and Indigenous thought is central to my work as they reveal the contradictions and paradoxes in patriarchy, white supremacy, and settler colonialism, while utilizing multiplicity, flexibility, and ambiguity for emancipatory projects.

Classical semiology, or the study of systems of meaning, primarily addresses language structurally; however, through engagement with Simone de Beauvoir we can address how these systems of meaning are lived, how they are experienced, how they shape our perception of the world and one another, and how they open or foreclose the existential projects we take on in our

lives.[12] Beauvoir is a phenomenologist that studies systems of meaning from a particular place within them.

Frantz Fanon approaches language and myth from this lived perspective as well, taking a specifically sociogenic approach.[13] A sociogenic approach reveals the social, economic, and political production of these systems of meaning—for his work, rather than treat race as essential, or as a static category, or a natural given, race is a social, economic, and political production that he describes in the language of mythologies.[14] Fanon's sociogenic approach highlights how myths are internalized and demonstrates the relationship between myth and materiality; addressing the ways in which they are mutually constitutive. Myths are created based on a sociocultural context, according to political need, but they also create a sociocultural context. Violent myths have violent material consequences. His work engages primarily with myths about Blackness, which he says are constructed through film, literature, advertising, and popular culture, and that are internalized by colonizers and colonized alike.[15] This has serious consequences on lived experience, including how others perceive us, how we perceive ourselves, what kinds of habits of perception we have, as well as our everyday practices. Thus, thinking of myths as innocuous, or as not having material consequences, prevents them receiving (what I argue is necessary) moral scrutiny.

In a similar vein, Beauvoir also engages in depth with the myth of the eternal feminine demonstrating that femininity is a social, economic, and political production, and is ontologically motivated. Mythical indoctrination starts at a young age through children's books, gendered toys (such as dolls), and "gender-appropriate" play (such as not climbing trees for girls past a certain age). Being socialized into the myth of the eternal feminine impacts: (1) the existential projects one chooses, (2) how embodiment is experienced, (3) what opportunities are opened or closed,

(4) what relationships one is "allowed" to have, (5) whether one can comfortably pursue an authentic existence or has to hesitate between a mythic script and oneself, (6) whether or not sexuality is an enjoyable facet of lived experience, (7) economic well-being and subsistence, and (8) whether fulfilling transcendental projects are encouraged or even made available.

Roland Barthes demonstrates that myths depoliticize and naturalize contingencies. This brings up ethical concerns as myths create. As Barthes argues, myths establish, manifest, make present what they signify. Myth's power to manifest, to establish, to bring about the existence of that which they signify is employed for political and economic ends, as seen in his example of the manifesting of French imperialism through the Paris Match magazine cover. Barthes demonstrates that semiologists reveal the contingencies of what is taken as natural and the political motivations behind what is taken for granted.

As these scholars show, mythologies are not abstract but rather are materialized in our institutions, social relations, habits of perception, self-understanding, life choices, financial well-being, and our everyday practices. Contemporary feminist and critical phenomenologies continue in this vein, demonstrating how we take systems of meaning for granted; they slip into the background of our everyday lives. We live according to them—we inherit them from our social-cultural-historical milieu—and they operate before we take notice. This attention of semiology to myth and lived experience is part of what develops the method of critical feminist semiology.

However, the above thinkers do not address the ways that myths reinforce and support one another. There is not a discussion of myths that operate together. Thus, the next field I engage with is intersectional feminisms, which show that rather than treat myths individually, we must treat them as relational and intertwined to understand how they operate and how to dismantle them. The Black feminist tradition demonstrates how hierarchical power dynamics

operate differentially, how we are socialized to follow particular social scripts (at times, under duress) according to our social positionality and its multiplicities. Intersectional feminists de-naturalize that which is taken as "normal," disrupt harmful social scripts, and work towards emancipation from social scripts and material conditions that perpetuate power discrepancies.

Black feminist work addresses how myths are weaponized for economic, political, and social gain, as seen in Angela Davis' work *Women, Race, and Class*. She demonstrates that the myth of the Black rapist is intertwined with myths surrounding white femininity and that it is politically deployed as a post-hoc justification for white supremacist violence including lynching and mob attacks.[16] Thus, a second myth intertwined with the myth of the Black rapist is the myth of white femininity as pure, fragile, delicate, needing protection. Other intertwined myths, include the myth of white masculinity's violence as "protection," of white women's purity; as Davis demonstrates, white men uphold and perform myths of white masculinity through exerting violence against Black men, which is framed as protection of white femininity, mythologized as fragile, helpless, weak…[17] Davis' intersectional approach, relates myths with one another.

The myth of the Black rapist operated to "justify" violence for economic and political gain and hid from view the actual sexual violence that was occurring as Black women's bodies were deemed to be impure and as such openly available to white men. Myths also function to obscure or to draw attention away from practices. A fourth myth is interrelated here as well, that is the myth of Black women's sexual promiscuity, impurity, sexual availability, and the lack of importance of agency in their sexuality. Another consequence of the myth of the Black rapist is that previous white supporters of Black liberation became quiet. It slowed progress on Black emancipation.[18]

In addition to the intersectionality that Davis' work practices, Patricia Hill Collins shows that white femininity is hegemonic in nature—its definition is racially exclusionary. White femininity requires those who don't "measure up."[19] Collins describes myths in the language of controlling images, or social scripts, that must be navigated throughout one's life.[20] Existentially one must choose how to engage or disengage, and the consequences are significant. Negative myths like the myth of the matriarch, the myth of the mammy, uphold oppressive practices and positive myths like the myth of white femininity maintain positions of social capital—consequently, myths are both destructive and constructive.[21] Myths operate to devalue people and to value particular people. Controlling images show that white femininity is the most valued form of femininity and is a position of social capital.

Thus, intersectional feminisms have major often unacknowledged contributions to philosophy of language and mythology. Through revising semiology to engage with how systems of meaning are lived, as seen in phenomenology, as well as intersectional feminist philosophies, Indigenous philosophies, decolonial philosophies, and critical philosophy of race, we can more comprehensively address how systems of meaning shape our shared life world, our institutions, our experiences, our relationships with one another. These fields together show how myths operate in our everyday lives—organizing and shaping lived experience, perception, embodied habits, and thinking. The contribution of intersectional feminist philosophers is necessary to reveal that myths are not discrete, or individual, but they operate collectively, as a kind of network, a web, a kind of system itself.

I build the methodology of critical feminist semiology through the contributions of these fields. I make three contributions that differentiate my work from the thinkers that I engage with. These contributions build upon one another. The first contribution is conceptual clarity through

describing these thinkers as engaging in the field of semiology so that we can address more clearly how a given author's work speaks with the work of other authors. That is, some of the thinkers considered do not utilize the language of "myth" in their work, though I find their work to be contributing to the field of semiology and "myth" a the technical sense as described in Barthes' work. Others do not use myth in the same manner. Some of the Black feminist tradition utilizes myth when the phenomenon considered is untrue, but as we shall see with Barthes' contributions, whether or not the myth is true is not relevant to its operations. For an example, Davis utilizes the language of "myth" to describe the myth of the Black rapist as it is untrue, fabricated. Davis does not utilize the language of "myth" to describe the myth of white masculinity's entitlement to violence (which is framed as protection), however. With the use of Barthes' semiology as a method we can see that both phenomena are myths as myth can be anything that is already expressing something, that myths are attempts to naturalize contingencies, that myths are politically motivated, etc. Both phenomena attempt to naturalize contingencies, though different ones, and are politically motivated. Both are politically motivated by white supremacy and patriarchy. Thus, the language of "myth" is utilized differentially in these thinkers' respective works. Some thinkers instead utilize the language of stereotypes or controlling images (as seen in the work of Patricia Hill Collins). Thus, some of my contribution is a synthesis of literature that does not necessarily see itself as in dialogue because thinkers are using different conceptual language (like images or stereotypes), in place of myth. As I go, I demonstrate how each of the phenomena described are myths, which is a contribution that I make to the conversations already taking place. I contribute conceptual clarity through describing different thinkers' contributions in the language of semiology/myth.

The second contribution I make is conceptual clarity regarding the phenomena of "clusters" of myths. The thinker that most closely describes myths in this way is Beauvoir as she describes the myth of the eternal feminine as a multiplicity of myths. However, her work does not acknowledge how other myths beyond the myth of the eternal feminine contribute to the myth of the eternal feminine, which my work seeks to do: show how multiple differing myths support one another. Thus, part of my contribution is conceptual clarity surrounding "clusters" of myths that operate together that individual thinkers I engage with do not often treat together. We can identify their collective operation through identifying shared political motivations (I study here white supremacy, but this methodology could be utilized in other ways). Thus, this contribution of identifying the operation of clusters of myths and the language of the phenomena of clusters of myths is something that I demonstrate thinkers are doing when put in conversation but that they are not explicitly doing individually (with Beauvoir as the exception noted above, but in a more limited way than I seek to do). Some of the thinkers I engage with may address two or three myths that operate together—notably Vine Deloria Jr. and Brian Burkhart whose work is crucial to this project. However, I address, through engaging with multiple thinkers, how five, six, even seven myths operate collectively (especially as revealed by shared political motivations across the myths at hand). I demonstrate how these thinkers' work together illuminates something novel that I identify in their work that is not always explicit in their own work: clusters of myth. That is, this second contribution of mine builds on the first contribution, which draws from conversations before me.

My third contribution is revealing the phenomenon of meta-mythologies and utilizing the language of meta-myth. This language becomes resourceful because of the clusters of myths described above which illuminate the phenomenon of meta-mythologies. Without my second

contribution identifying clusters of myths operating together that other thinkers have yet to explicitly do in this way, the phenomenon of meta-mythology would not be identifiable. I engage with thinkers that each contribute work on mythologies (at times with two or three mythologies in operation) that in conversation collectively allows me to identify the phenomenon of clusters of myth. The clusters I describe and identify each contribute to the meta-myth of white supremacy; that is, each cluster I find and describe (in conversation with each of the scholars discussed throughout the dissertation) contribute to white supremacy. This is something that I identify as a kind of network or web of myths—clusters of clusters—that each contribute to supporting white supremacy. This is not something that other scholars in these fields have done previously, though their work is crucial to the argument that this phenomenon of the meta-myth of white supremacy is happening as I demonstrate through their works in conversation. The import of identifying the meta-myth phenomenon is that white supremacy is an individual myth and is also a meta-myth as it is supported by clusters of myths that support one another (a claim I am arguing for with the thinkers included but that the thinkers themselves have not argued for). Thus, to resist and dismantle white supremacy, the contributions that clusters of myths make is vital as treating white supremacy as a singular myth will be unsuccessful (as it is not a singular myth).

My work differs from these thinkers I engage with in other ways as well. I provide critiques of the limitations of Saussure, Barthes, Beauvoir while keeping the resources from their work present in the method I build with them. My thinking also differs from some of the Black feminist thinkers I engage with.[22] An example from my work that highlights this difference is that I discuss *limpieza de sangre* and the "one drop rule" as myths of blood purity—myth here intended in the technical semiological sense Barthes puts forward. In the work of semiology,

legal practices can be myths as myth can have any material as its basis, including a legal decree. The legal practice of the "one drop rule" is a materialization of the myth of blood purity and the myth of metaphysical purity. In sum, more phenomena are treated as myth through a semiological lens, especially a semiology that builds from the work of Barthes, in comparison to other fields.

The first contribution I make occurs throughout the dissertation, starting in Chapter One. The second and third contribution primarily emerge in the third and fourth chapters, though I begin to build the framework for them through critique in the first two chapters. Thus, each of the chapters contribute to the method of critical feminist semiology and build upon one another. How I employ the word "myth" in chapter three and four is quite technical as it builds upon the study of myth undertaken in the first two chapters. None of my contributions are *ex nihilo* but emerge through building from the contributions of many scholars before me.

In the first chapter, I detail the shortcomings of the dominant reading of Ferdinand de Saussure's work, which de-politicizes the potential of semiology.[23] Saussure argues that semiologists must study history, politics, conquest, and institutions, first as they are internalized into language.[24] Roland Barthes largely follows this reading of Saussure and the potential of semiology. As such, I critique his work for its de-politicization of semiology.[25] However, his work also makes positive contributions to the method of critical feminist semiology, including that myths naturalize historical contingencies, that myths do not have to be true to operate, and that myths manifest themselves.[26]

The second chapter reads Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* as a critical feminist semiology. She engages with the myth of the eternal feminine throughout the book. The first half of her book details how the myth of the eternal feminine is naturalized, what its motivations are,

how it is maintained over time, and how it operates at a collective level.[27] The second half of her

book details how the myth of the eternal feminine is lived as well as how it can be resisted. This

chapter follows one of the myths that contributes to the myth of the eternal feminine: the myth of

sexual purity. The myth of sexual purity appears in nearly every chapter of the book, which is

why I chose it as an exemplary myth that demonstrates how Beauvoir is enacting a

phenomenological semiology. Beauvoir treats the myth of the eternal feminine as a cluster of

myths, demonstrating its multiplicity, yet she does not demonstrate how the myth of the eternal

feminine is related to myths surrounding Indigeneity and Blackness, for example. Thus, her work

demonstrates an enactment of a semiology that takes lived experience seriously but has its

limitations as well.

The following chapter turns to the work of the Black feminist tradition which also

demonstrates that clusters of myths operate to uphold patriarchal, white supremacist, and settler-

colonial institutions in the United States. This chapter primarily engages with the work of Angela

Davis and Patricia Hill Collins to show how myths about gender and race are interrelated. These

include the myth of white femininity, the myth of the Black rapist, the myth of the promiscuous

Black woman, the myth of the mammy, and the myth of the Black matriarch, to name a few.[28]

Chapter Four turns to the work of Indigenous and decolonial thinkers demonstrate that

clusters of myths operate together to uphold patriarchal, white supremacist, and settler-colonial

institutions and practices in what is called the United States. This chapter primarily engages with

Vine Deloria Jr. and Brian Burkhart's work on myths about Indigeneity and land, but includes

the work of Glen Sean Coulthard, Robin Wall Kimmerer, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson as

well. Traci Brynne Voyles and Khiara Bridges, who are not Indigenous cholars, are also included

as their anti-colonial and anti-racist descriptions of wasteland and biological race can contributs

to our understanding of the clusters of myths considered in this chapter. These include the myth of the Ecological Saint/Ecological Savage, the myth of wilderness and wasteland, the myth of biological race.[29]

I demonstrate that one way to employ the methodology of critical feminist semiology is to identify clusters of myths, demonstrate their interconnections and reciprocal support, reveal and resist their material manifestations, and consider how they are experienced in social life. There are other ways that this methodology could be enacted as this is a context-dependent methodology. The method requires sensitivity to particularities of history, geographical place, political and economic environments, colonization and conquest, and the milieu of particular lifeworlds. This work calls for other critical feminist semiologies to be enacted as there are multiplicitous systems of meaning that differ depending on each of the above—historical time, geographical place, political environment, economic system, practices of colonization, and social values. As such, no deployment of critical feminist semiology is universalizable nor the final stay. A semiologist, as it were, is always a beginner.[30]

CHAPTER ONE: FROM CLASSICAL SEMIOLOGY TO CRITICAL FEMINIST SEMIOLOGY

> "At the start of the semiological project, it was thought that the main task was, in Saussure's phrase, to study the life of signs at the heart of social life, and consequently to reconstitute the semantic systems of objects (garments, food, images, rituals, protocols, music, etc.). […] But as semiology advances into this already vast project, it encounters new tasks; for example, to study that mysterious operation by which any message may be impregnated with a secondary meaning, a meaning that is diffuse, ideological, which is known as the *'connoted meaning'*"[31]
> –Roland Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge*

Introduction: Saussure's Semiology

Saussure describes semiology as a "science which studies the role of signs as a part of social life."[32] The dominant structuralist uptake of his work has largely focused on language.[33] He emphasizes the importance of language because it is a "social phenomenon."[34] [35] While language for Saussure is "of greater importance than any other" study of signs as a part of social life, and takes center stage for his own work, it is only one such system of meaning. He underlines the importance of "considering rites, customs, etc. as signs" as well as language—he argues they are semiological phenomenon, as a vital part of the study of systems of meaning as they are lived, as they operate within social life.[36] Studying the role of rituals, customs, practices, habits as a part of social life illuminates the "true nature of language systems."[37] Everyday rituals, customs, practices, habits, should thus be considered through a semiological lens, even though they tended to be neglected within classical semiology and instead taken up in feminist and critical phenomenology, as well as in feminist philosophy and critical philosophy of race more broadly.

Although Saussure is concerned with the internal structure of language as a system, he argues that external elements of a language "demand attention" first.[38][39][40][41] For this project, three

external elements will prove central: first, the relationship between the "history of a language and the history of a race or civilization;"[42] second, the relationship between language and political history, especially colonization;[43] and third, the institutions that impact language (such as "church, school, etc").[44] Saussure claims that these external phenomena (among others) are *internalized* into the structure of the language itself. One of the consequences of this argument is that political histories of colonization are *internalized* into the structure of the language *and* into systems of meaning including everyday customs, practices, rituals, etc. that form parts of social life. To ignore these aspects of Saussure's work is rather dangerous considering the impact of coloniality upon social life in a lived sense. I will therefore place *external* in quotation marks considering that the relevant phenomena are in fact *internalized.* As such, the interpretation of Saussures work as preserving a strict dualism of the internal/external features of signs is problematic as it glosses over the mutually constitutive relationship between social life and signs within Saussure's semiology.

First, Saussure claims that history is vital to the study of signs in social life. This is in part because language is an inherited social product, an "institution in the present, and a product of the past."[45] On inheriting a language, Saussure writes that the system of language and its history are "so close that it is hard to separate them."[46] There are, of course, major consequences to the idea of inheriting systems of meaning, especially language, which is an institution that is the "instrument of thought."[47][48] The largest tension here has been taken up in the more dualistic reading of Saussure, the tension between an individual and the social aspects of language. However, as Saussure argues, both the social and individual aspect are interdependent: "one is not conceivable without the other."[49][50] Any distinction that can be made between these aspects of language is referred to as language itself and speech; one of the most significant consequences to

inheriting the social product of language is that language is "external to the individual, who is powerless either to create it or modify it."[51][52] That is, language speakers find themselves thrown into a linguistic community, they have slowly acquired this inherited social product, and as children, they gradually assimilate to it.[53] As such, children are socialized into systems of meaning that condition their experience and ability to express themselves; these systems include language, as well as social customs, practices, rituals, that together shape social life.

Saussure was hesitant to offer the individual much power to modify the historically and socially constituted systems of meaning that they find themselves a part of; however, speech remains an act of will wherein the individual chooses specific combinations of signs to express their thought.[54][55] As such, while the individual is powerless to modify the language that they inherit, they can choose how to express their thinking through combinations.[56] The exact nature of the relationship between an individual speaker and the inherited system of signs in social life loomed large in the phenomenological uptake of Saussure's work. According to Merleau-Ponty, language is not the accompaniment of thought, but is rather that through which thought manifests; we think through language, and as such, we think *through* an institution we inherit. This opens up the possibility of not solely inheriting, but also subverting signs within social life – an important theme for feminist and critical phenomenology, notable in the works of Simone de Beauvoir and Frantz Fanon, as well as the Black feminist tradition and the critical philosophy of race (see chapters 2, and 4).

Second, the relationship between language and political history, especially colonization, should be considered before we study the internal structure of language – despite its neglect within the dominant reception of Saussure and within contemporary classical semiology. Saussure spends significant time discussing the impact of conquest on signs. He writes, conquest

is of "incalculable linguistic importance in all kinds of ways." He argues that "colonization, which is simply one form of conquest, transports a language into new environments, and this brings changes in the language."[57] While there is much to be said (that would be too large to consider for this project) on what Saussure might mean by colonization as one form of conquest, the takeaway for this work is that the histories of colonization should be considered alongside, if not before, studying signs in social life. Signs change with new environments, new geography, and new speakers (often as signs are imposed violently as seen in Fanon's work); as such, our understanding of signs would be inadequate if we ignored the history of colonization as we begin our work. Relatedly, Saussure writes, "a nation's way of life has an effect upon its language. At the same time, it is in great part the language which makes the nation."[58] The history of the formation of nation-states and the *way of life* therein are significant to the study of language internally—that is, how signs operate in social life will be effected by the way of life that a given people have established; the political formation, and its history, that speakers find themselves in will significantly influence signs as a part of social life, and thus, should also be a part of semiological study.

Third: institutions impact language (such as "church, school, etc").[59] Saussure argues semiologists must study institutions before we study the internal structure of language, as language is *interdependent* with these external studies. The examples of institutions that Saussure includes are religious and educational institutions but given that he discusses the political history of nation-states as a significant "external" element that influences signs in social life, the latter include therefore political and economic institutions. A semiology situated in the context of the United States' political history, would thus include the institution of slavery, the

institution of the "justice system" and prisons, medical institutions, financial institutions, etc. that all influence signs in social life and are interdependent with the sign systems themselves.

As such, we can see the significance of Saussure's emphasis on the importance of "external" elements to the study of signs—his claim that they "demand attention" as they are internalized into systems of meaning should be taken seriously. This emphasis is often glossed over in the scholarship, and an ahistorical, apolitical, and sanitized version of Saussure is taken up together with, an ahistorical, apolitical, and sanitized *methodology* of semiology being assumed as the standard.

If "external" elements like social rituals, customs, practices, and political formations, are an essential part of the study of signs in *social life*, why have they largely been understudied in classical semiology? When Saussure's emphasis on the *interdependence* of language and speech, internal and external elements of systems of meaning, is ignored and a more sanitized science is taken up, his work is actively de-politicized. As I argue, Saussure regards language as a much more *multiplicitous* social phenomena that should be studied alongside history, sociology, and everyday social practices *as they are lived*. Furthermore, as we can see through the analysis of the uptake of Saussure's corpus in Beata Stawarska's work, the dominant interpretation of Saussure's text reads in his work dualistic thinking—the language and speech are pitted against each other, the internal elements of a language and the external elements of a language are also read as mutually exclusive.[60] This limits the reach of both Saussure's work and the practice or the methodology of semiology, which I will expand in this project to include the "external" elements above. Additionally, following Stawarska's work, this project will engage with Saussure through this more expansive reading—i.e. language and speech, the internal and

external as interdependent—also following her argument that Saussure is closer to phenomenology than is typically decided.

Roland Barthes' Apolitical Semiology

Roland Barthes returns to the potentiality of semiology, which he notes has not become a formal field of study. In his own way, Barthes revitalized the possibilities of semiology as he included a "second order" system of meaning: mythology. However, his account has its limitations, including that the study of signs is not as rooted in social life as Saussure suggests it should be. Both Simone de Beauvoir and Frantz Fanon are both closer to the semiological method that Saussure describes as they are concerned with customs, practices, habits, as well as the "external" elements of history, politics, and institutions. As such, Saussure's work shares more in common with phenomenology than is typically acknowledged, in part because of the dominant apolitical reading of his work and in part because of the tendency to gloss over language and myth in Beauvoir and Fanon's work[61].

> Barthes describes his first encounter with Saussure's semiology as feeling:
>
> dazzled by this hope: to give my denunciation of the self-proclaimed petit-bourgeois myths the means of developing scientifically; this means was semiology or the close analysis of the processes of meaning by which the bourgeoisie converts its historical class-culture into universal nature; semiology appeared to me, then, in its program and its tasks, as the fundamental method of an ideological critique.[62]

The text that Barthes refers to as his "express[ion of] this amazement and this hope" is *Mythologies,* "a euphoric text, since it *reassured* intellectual commitment by giving it an instrument of analysis, and *responsibilized* the study of meaning by giving it a political range."[63] Barthes describes his encounter with Saussure's semiology as dazzling, hopeful, amazing, resulting in the euphoric text of *Mythologies.* As Barthes regards his work *Mythologies* as employing the methodology of semiology, I will engage with this text primarily. Further, this

text is emblematic of Barthes' work in semiology as well as his understanding of it. I recognize that Barthes understands the political importance that semiology can have in re-politicizing mythologies that were taken to be natural and universal—however, I argue that Saussure already took semiology and the study of meaning to be political as the history, politics, and institutions that influence signs in social life are an integral part of the study of semiology as he constructs it.

In the *Semiotic Challenge,* Barthes describes semiology as, the study of "how humanity gives meanings to things;" but he specifies that linguistics, which studies "how humanity gives meaning to articulated sounds" is something different than semiology which can address how "humanity give[s] meaning to the things which are not sounds."[64] In this text, Barthes focuses on objects, but in *Mythologies,* he engages with "any material [that] can arbitrarily be endowed with meaning."[65]

In *Mythologies,* the text that Barthes refers to as employing semiology (rather than engaging in meta-philosophy or a meta-semiotics about the history or the utility of semiology as the *Semiotic Challenge* strives to do), he defines semiology as "a science of forms, since it studies significations apart from their content."[66] Here we can see explicitly the difference between Saussure's definition of semiology (a "science which studies the role of signs as a part of social life."[67]), Barthes' earlier definition which excludes the "content" of significations, and his later more expansive definition of semiology as the study of "how humanity gives meanings to things."[68] Barthes's early work emphasizes the structural component of semiology, akin to the dominant reading of Saussure that excludes his emphasis on political life and history, and in fact, Barthes limits the semiological "range" to "significations apart from their content" constraining the potentiality of the method.[69] If we read Saussure in the more expansive manner that I detailed above, we can see how Barthes' interpretation limits the impact that semiology can have to make

sense of signs in social life—particularly rituals, practices, habits, customs, whose "content" is very much intertwined with the form that they take. That is, his early definition of semiology, I contend, mistakenly reduces its reach. His later definition of "how humanity gives meaning to things" is closer to the definition of semiology that Saussure gives in *Course in General Linguistics*, and it is closer to a methodology that takes seriously the impact that history, politics, and institutions make on signs in social life.

Barthes' Shortcomings and Critical Feminist Semiology: Re-politicizing Semiology

Although Barthes reduces what semiology might have been in his deployment of it in *Mythologies*, he adds in an ideological critique to his study of mythology. He writes,

> Semiology, once its limits are settled, is not a metaphysical trap: it is a science among others, necessary but not sufficient. The important thing is to see that the unity of an explanation cannot be based on the amputation of one or another of its approaches but, as Engels said, on the dialectical coordination of the particular sciences it makes use of. This is the case of mythology: it is a part both of semiology, inasmuch as it is a formal science, and of ideology, inasmuch as it is a historical science: it studies ideas in form.[70]

Barthes sees his work on myth as dialectical, engaging in semiology to study form and engaging in a critique of ideology to study history. Barthes understands myths to be a second order system of semiology, wherein ideology is relevant; Barthes thinks he is adding something additional to the method of semiology, outside of its original scope, because his acceptance of the dominant understanding of Saussure assumes that history is not already included in the method but needs to be added in. In Barthes' *Mythologies*, he includes ideological critique of the second semiological order, myth, but not the first order, language.

There are two problems here. First, Barthes' definition of semiology in *Mythologies* is too narrow – on a more expansive reading of Saussure, semiology is always already concerned with history, politics, and institutions in *social life.* That is, to remove the "content" and/or to

exclude historical study as if that is not a part of the methodology of semiology itself (and is rather something we import through ideological critique) is to misunderstand the method at hand and to deny its potential to address the impacts of processes like colonization or institutions like slavery on social life. This is the danger of the limited reading that Barthes enacts.[71] Though he attempts to remedy this seeming apolitical, ahistorical view of semiology with a Marxist ideological critique that can address historical criticism and "content," I would argue that his philosophy of mythology is further from Saussure's approach to semiology than that of the phenomenologists Beauvoir and Fanon.

This limited understanding of semiology also excludes Saussure's emphasis on *social life*—if we take semiology to only be concerned with form or structure, we lose the *lived experiences* of signs, we lose what Barthes' later definition identifies/brings back to the table, that is "how humanity gives meaning to things" which is always already enacted in an intersubjective, historical, political milieu. Barthes' work is helpful, however, for the project at hand because with his emphasis on the philosophy of mythology, we can address the ways in which other thinkers that are typically not taken to be engaging with mythology, are actually enacting a philosophy of mythology that can helpfully illuminate how humans make meaning and make meaning differently in different contexts.

The second problem with Barthes' definition here is that a historical and political analysis is given to the second order of meaning, myth, but not the first order of meaning, language. Yet, language is also political, historical, and economic. It has always already internalized "external" features of conquest, coloniality, institutions, history, politics, nation-states, practices, rituals, economics. To ignore those internalized features in language and to only acknowledge them in myth is inadequate.

Barthes describes myth as a second-order semiological system, with language being the first-order semiological system; he writes, "myth is a system of communication" "myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form".[72] "Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message."[73] Further, myth can be any material that is endowed with meaning. Anticipating pushback in the form of a question, Barthes writes, "Everything, then, can be a myth? Yes, I believe this, for the universe is infinitely fertile in suggestions."[74] While he mentions "social *usage*" as added to "pure matter" to address the way that a tree is not just a tree, he largely removes the element of social life from his analysis in his emphasis on form, which becomes quite technical.

Myth is a form, for Barthes; as such it is "not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it delivers this message."[75] Consequently, everything can be a myth and the same mythical "content" can take shape in different forms: language, pictures, film, etc. The form the myth takes is "no longer a constitutive difference."[76] Barthes thinks that the *content* of the myth is not the concern of semiology, which is concerned with form *only*. Ideology, or the study of "ideas-in-form," is content-concerned.[77] This is why his methodology is a "dialectical" approach employing semiology and ideology together to address both form and content. However, this is a limitation that Barthes places on semiology, or a misunderstanding of the potential *scope* of semiology through following the dominant interpretation of Saussure that is apolitical, ahistorical, and formal only. In his words, "the field [of semiology] is limited" and can "only at the level of forms, not content… operat[e]."[78]

In more detail, Barthes describes that semiology addresses three different terms, "the signifier, the signified, and the sign, which is the associative total of the first two terms."[79] He reads Saussure as working on an "exemplary semiological system—the language or *langue*—[in

which] the signified is the concept, the signifier is the acoustic image (which is mental), and the relation between concept and image is the sign (the word, for instance), which is a concrete entity."[80] The figure below employs Saussure's example of "tree." The signified is the concept, or what we think of when we hear the word "tree." The signifier is the sound of the word "tree," which brings to mind the concept (signified) "tree."[81] The relationship between the signifier and signified, the sound "tree" and the concept tree, compose what Saussure calls a "sign." Signs carry with them social and cultural meanings; Saussure aims to study them as a part of social life.
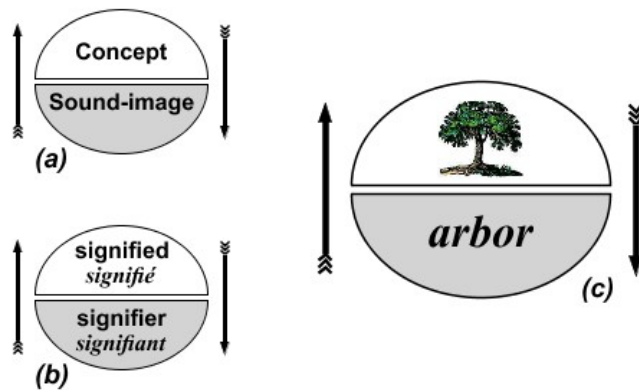
82

Barthes calls this the first-order semiological system. The substance, or material, of myth, "the language itself, photography, painting, posters, rituals, objects" is the first-order.[83] That is, myth "is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it" whether made of language, rituals, art, or objects.[84] Barthes vertically scaffolds myth as a system of meaning atop the first system of meaning. He states that myth is a "meta-language, because it is a second language" which "speaks about the first."[85] He represents this vertical scaffolding with the following image:

Language	1. Signifier	2. Signified	

	3. Sign		
MYTH	I. SIGNIFIER	II. SIGNIFIED
	III. SIGN		

[86]
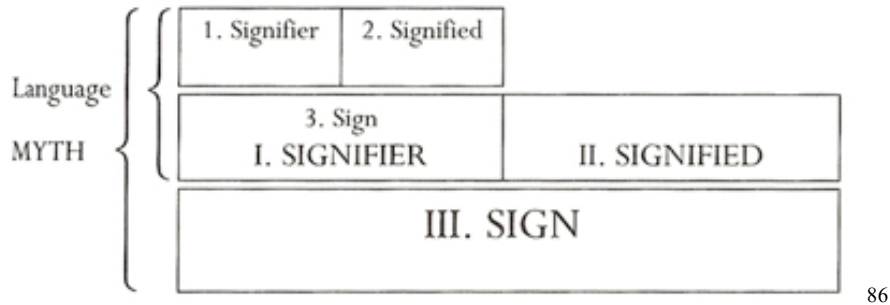
Though he states that "the spatialization of the pattern is here only a metaphor," this metaphor demonstrates that he separates myth out and away from the material that it "speaks about." He does this not just metaphorically, but as a part of enacting the method of semiology. How signs actually work in social life is much messier than Barthes lets on. I will explain and expand upon Barthes' vertical layering and separation of systems of meaning through Barthes' own examples.

The first is a sentence out of a Latin grammar book from a French lycée that reads "quia ego nominor leo" or "because my name is lion." While the words in the sentence have "a simple meaning," the sentence communicates something additional:

> It tells me clearly: I am a grammatical example meant to illustrate the rule about the agreement of the predicate… it tries very little to tell me something about the lion and what sort of name he has; its true and fundamental signification is to impose itself on me as the presence of a certain agreement of the predicate.[87]

This something additional "I am a grammatical example" is the second semiological order, myth. He replaces the terminology in his spatial metaphor to differentiate between the first order and second order, as seen in the figure below, and as included in the explanation of his example.
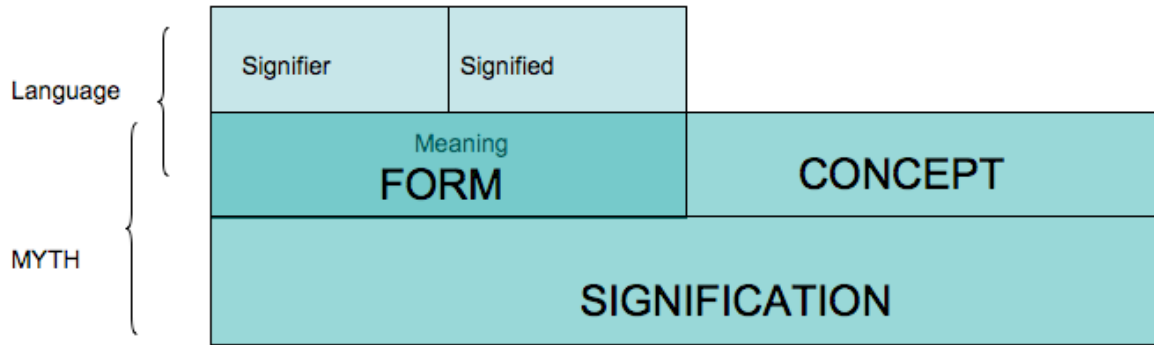
In Barthes' spatial metaphor, "my name is lion" is the sign (or meaning) of the first semiological system, which becomes the signifier (or form) of the second order semiological system. He explains that the second-order signified (the concept) is "I am a grammatical example" and that the second order sign (or signification) is "the correlation of the signifier and the signified; for neither the naming of the lion nor the grammatical example is given separately."[89] I placed figure #2 above as Barthes' changes his language to refer to the second order semiological system. In short, Barthes follows this method: "take any given sign, the combination of the signifier and signified, and then treat the whole thing itself as a signifier, which points to another signified, constituting a new sign, which can, once again, be treated as itself a signifier."[90]

Barthes describes that the "motivation which causes the myth to be uttered" in this example is "grammatical exemplarity." That is "my name is lion" is a grammatical example, which is the motivation behind it being employed in the French lycée. Further, because the motivation behind "my name is lion" is "grammatical exemplarity," we lose, "a fullness, a richness, a history" of the lion (i.e. the motivation of the sentence is not to detail the history of the lion). He writes that "the story of the lion must recede a great deal in order to make room for

the grammatical example."[91] This recession he calls a "deformation," "distortion," and/or "robbery."[92]

While his investigation into this grammatical example does reveal how this example is motivated and what it is enacting, he misses much as he apoliticizes the semiological method and the "first" order of meaning. That is, in the wider understanding and practice of semiology I argue is necessary, there is already much to be addressed in the language itself, which Barthes does not address. For example, Latin itself has internalized "external" phenomenon, such as colonization. That Latin is taught in a French lycée instead of say, Arabic, or a Berber language, is also relevant to the semiologist. The educational institution of the French lycée would also fall under the scope of a semiological study: what *kind* of environment is created through the institution; what kind of knowledge does this institution require students learn; how is "success" in this institution measured—and by whom; what is the relationship between this educational institution and other institutions, like that of the state or religion?; how are students treated—is treatment differentiated—if so by what standards; how does the educational institution relate to the social life of students and their families; what kinds of relationships are encouraged between students and staff, staff and administration, administration and families of students? How is this Latin class experienced by students; what kinds of values are taught therein; what are the Lycée grounds like—do they rely upon other institutions like private property? Barthes states that this example comes from "Aesop or Phaedrus"—are examples only drawn from the work of ancient Greek men? All of the above questions fall into the scope of semiology, especially the critical feminist semiology I am building.

These questions aren't asked by Barthes—his distinction between the first and second orders ignores how things like conquest are already internalized into the "first order" *and* how

the educational institution that motivated the myth to be uttered has already influenced the

language itself. Barthes does not consider the way in which the "second-order" may have already

influenced the "first." In his account, hierarchical verticality only goes up—language impacts

myths, but not the other way around. Thus, in addition to the spatial metaphor, Barthes smuggles

in a temporal order that the first order builds the second order but is not itself influenced by what

he takes to be the second order.

His second example is the cover of the *Paris-Match,* on which is pictured a young Black

boy dressed in a French uniform and enacting a salute. Barthes explains,

> I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great empire, that all her sons,
> without any color discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no
> better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this
> Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater
> semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (*a
> black soldier is giving the French salute*); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful
> mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified
> through the signifier.[93]

In Barthes' spatial metaphor, the meaning/sign of the first order is the same as the signifier/form

of the second order, in this case, both are "a black soldier giving the French salute."[94] The

signified/concept of the second order is "a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness."[95]

The signification is the correlation between the two. See the figure below for the advertisement

and the following figure for this example placed in Barthes' spatial metaphor.

PARIS MATCH

N° 326 25 JUIN - 2 JUIL. 1955 50 fr.

LE NAUFRAGE DE RIVA-BELLA

●

Les enquêteurs recherchent les responsabilités et revivent par la photo les dix minutes d'horreur de

LA TRAGÉDIE DU MANS

LES NUITS DE L'ARMÉE

Le petit Diouf est natif de Ouagadougou avec ses camarades, enfants de troupes d'A.O.F., pour ouvrir le fantastique spectacle que l'Armée française présente au Palais des Sports cette semaine.

Signifier #1 Different colors and shades of ink on paper in some specific order	Signified #1 Young black male, hand near face, hat, etc.	
Sign #1 → Signifier #2 Young black male solutes French flag		Signified #2 French and military connotations
Sign #2 → Myth French imperialism (African people are okay with being colonized by us good French guys! You can tell because they salute our military and our flag.)		

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Barthes reveals the motivation of this myth is French imperiality, French exceptionalism, the erasure of French anti-Blackness in its imperiality, the erasure of the violence of French colonialism, and an imposed aspirational nationalism of colonized subjects. Barthes describes that the concept ("mixture of Frenchness and militariness") is filled with a situation: "the general History of France, its colonial adventures, its present difficulties."[97] Form does not have this fullness: "as form its meaning is shallow, isolated, impoverished."[98] He writes that just as "the story of the lion" recedes "to make room for the grammatical example," the "biography of the Negro [is put] in parentheses."[99]

Barthes makes a sharp distinction between the concept and the form: "history which drains out of the form will be wholly absorbed by the concept" or again that "unlike the form, the concept is in no way abstract: it is filled with a situation."[100] This sharp distinction is only made possible by the "staggered" relation between the first and second order, in which the "form" of the second order is the "meaning" of the first.[101] While Barthes acknowledges that *meaning* has a richness, a situatedness, a context, form does not, is abstract.

Separating these systems does not consider how the "concept," full of a situatedness, is already internalized into the first order system, how French imperialism is already internalized into the language. Thus, again we see that systems of meaning are much messier, much less vertically separable than Barthes takes them to be.

Even though Barthes may be drawing on a dialectical methodology of semiology and ideological critique, rather than semiology itself, his methodology is enacting something akin to Saussure's emphasis on the interdependence of internal and "external" aspects (history, politics, institutions); that is, even if Barthes does not see semiology as doing so, but rather is seeing Marxist ideological critique as doing so, he does importantly address the historical, political, institutional milieu that this myth emerges from. This is, I argue, a strength of his approach, even if the attribution of it to something outside of semiology is mistaken.

However, Barthes does not consider how his first example "because my name is lion" might be related to "a black soldier giving a salute" precisely because he narrows the scope of semiology to form only (excluding content) and separates systems of meaning in ways that obscures their interrelatedness. Regarding the scope of semiology, Barthes does not consider how the French nation-state; its political, military, religious, economic, educational institutions; French imperialism; and geography are already internalized into the "first" order of meaning. His sharp distinctions are inadequate for addressing how systems of meaning internalize things that he reserves for the "second" order only.

Further, because he excludes content from the scope of semiology, he does not consider the way myths might relate to one another. Drawing from the two examples he provides, he does not consider that "because my name is lion" might be related to the saluting Black child. Learning Latin, instead of Arabic or a Berber language, can perpetuate European exceptionalism.

Or, further, the question of where this French lycée is *located* is not considered by Barthes, though if this grammatical example is taught in a French education system in Martinique, Algeria, or Morocco, the two example myths relate to one another. Or even: what kinds of students are allowed in this educational institution? How is their success in grammar class measured?

He further does not consider how myths appear in social life, or how they appear in lived experience, including his lived experience. He is handed the magazine at a barber's shop and ignores or does not see how the politics of aesthetics are also part of how these systems of meaning are lived. For an example: what kind of haircut is he getting; who is cutting his hair; whose hair is socially valued and whose hair is socially devalued and discriminated against (as hair has been utilized for racial categorization); is he worried about facing discrimination based on his hair or haircut (racial discrimination based on hair); will he be met with the threat of violence if he does not follow socially accepted norms for how his hair should be (as violence is a threat that trans and non-binary people face if they do not follow the social norms of a hierarchical binary gender system)?[102]

See, for an example, the racialization of Black hair in the advertisement below, the association between being *social valuable* and having "beautiful" (i.e. straight) hair, as well as the disciplinary tone towards those who do not follow these hair expectations.

This kind of racialization of hair and hair discrimination is *experienced* as a part of social life; "it's an experience so many Black girls and women in America can relate to: being made to feel dirty, gross, and out of place because of our hair. We aren't even afforded the freedom to wear our hair to work or school the way we want without fear of being reprimanded."[103] Barthes does

not consider how systems of meaning are *lived* or how they are experienced as a part of social life. These are questions that a critical feminist semiology asks that Barthes does not consider.

Relating the *content* of the above examples with lived experience and social life: what kind of hair is allowed in this educational content; must it be fashioned in a particular way; what kinds of haircuts does the French military require and how might that distinguish them from the people residing in the land that they have occupied; are the same haircuts demanded in military institutions imposed in educational institutions to assimilate local populations as motivated by settler colonial interest in land (as they were in the U.S. at Indigenous boarding schools, for example)?[104]

See, in the following two photographs, how Indigenous Boarding Schools used hair as an assimilation tactic. The first photo depicts "Tom Torlino—Navajo. As he entered the school in 1882. As he appeared three years later."[105]

TOM TORLINO—NAVAJO

As He Entered the School in 1882.   As He Appeared Three Years Later.

Tom Torlino's hair was cut in an educational institution designed to assimilate Indigenous

peoples. The educational institution forced his hair to conform to European standards of

aesthetics and gender norm, involving drastic changes in hair, jewelry, and clothing. These two

photographs of Tom Torlino became well known as they were "evidence of success" of

Indigenous assimilation through education. That is, through a critical feminist semiology we can

address how these images are myths naturalizing Indigenous assimilation ("Kill the Indian, Save

the Man"), motivated by the interests of settler colonialism, and experienced as a part of social

life.[106] Though Tom Torlino's photographs were popularized by the Carlisle Indian School to

demonstrate the "souvenirs" of the experience of the boarding schools, he was not alone in

experiencing this practice of hair assimilation. The next photo depicts Wounded Yellow Robe,

Chauncey Yellow Robe, and Henry Standing Bear, three Sioux children as they enter the Carlisle

Indigenous Boarding School in 1883. The second depicts the same three children one year later, with their enforced haircuts and school uniforms.

The meta-myth of white supremacy not only can manifest through the imposition of Latin in education but also can manifest in the enforcement of European styles of dress and hair. The systems of meaning imposed by European colonization support the meta-myth of white supremacy, which is then naturalized and manifested through institutions, practices, and rituals. These can range from imposed European styles of hair that reinforce European gender norms to where the grounds of an educational institution's campus are located to the languages taught therein to the kinds of examples employed through language instruction.

Thus, treating myths themselves as individual, isolated phenomenon obscures how they operate together and how they are experienced in everyday life. Further, treating myth as separable and distinct from language is inadequate for addressing how language is already political, economic, colonial.[109] Thus, critical feminist semiology will ask the kinds of questions demonstrated above: questions about how institutions, practices, politics, economics, colonialism, sexism, racism, are internalized into language; questions about how signs are lived and operate as a part of social life; questions about the relationship between myths and language as mutually influential upon one another.

Barthes' Contributions to the Method of Critical Feminist Semiology

There are several positive contributions to semiology that Barthes makes in *Mythologies*, including that myths naturalize historical contingencies, that myths do not have to be true to operate, and that myths manifest themselves.[110] Barthes argues that the essential *function* of myth is to "transform[] history into nature," to naturalize the concept.[111] He writes, "myth has an imperative, buttonholing character, stemming from a historical concept, directly springing from contingency."[112] The contingency is the myth's historicity—it emerges from a particular

historical and political milieu that could be otherwise—but the myth works to erase this

contingency through naturalizing its concept. He writes that the concept,

> is at once historical and intentional, it is the motivation which causes the myth to be uttered… French imperiality [is] the very drive behind the myth. The concept reconstitutes a chain of causes and effects, motives and intentions.[113]

The *Paris-Match* cover is motivated by French imperiality, a contingent historical political

situation, that this myth seeks to naturalize. In naturalizing French imperiality, there is a

deprivation of history and a distortion of meaning; the "Negro soldier" is "deprived of their

history" but importantly, "this distortion is not an obliteration…they [(the concept)] are deprived

of memory, not of existence… The concept, literally, deforms, but does not abolish the

meaning… it alienates it."[114] As Barthes suggests, the signification is always motivated and

historically constructed, which brings up serious ethical concerns, what he takes to be

"responsibilizing" the study of meaning through politicizing it. While I argue that semiology is

always already political; the emphasis that Barthes lays on the historical and political

contingencies that are naturalized through mythologies is a vital component to the study of

systems of meaning in *social life* that I detail in the next chapters.

Barthes writes that semiology teaches us that "myth has the task of giving a historical

intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal" – a process that is

"exactly that of bourgeois ideology."[115] That is, Barthes highlights a strength of employing the

methodology of semiology: we can use semiology to highlight how contingent historical

concepts are naturalized, and to show that rather than let concepts be naturalized justifications,

we can highlight their historical and political *motivations*. This process of naturalization is done

through "depoliticization."[116] Depoliticization is a technical term related to the essential function

of myth to naturalize historical concepts; Barthes writes that "things lose the memory that they

were once made;" the "de" in depoliticize is operational, myths remove the contingent, historical, fabricated quality of things because they naturalize history.[117] As such, a major task of the semiologist is to (re-)*politicize* and reveal the contingency of concepts, which we take to be natural, that we are assimilated to and have normalized. He writes that the "*fabricated* quality of colonialism" is disregarded and given "a natural and eternal justification."[118] Along with the naturalization of the fabricated, myths do not have to be true to function: "men do not have with myth a relationship based on truth but on use: they politicize according to their needs."[119] That is, the motivation, rather than whether the myth is true or not, is of primary importance to the method of semiology.

Barthes goes beyond naturalization to claim that myths establish, manifest, make present what they signify. He writes,

> French imperiality condemns the saluting Negro to be nothing more than an instrumental signifier, the Negro suddenly hails me in the name of French imperiality; but at the same moment the Negro's salute thickens, becomes vitrified, freezes into an eternal reference meant to *establish* French imperiality.[120]

As Barthes turns to the practice of "deciphering" myth, he again emphasizes myth's power to manifest, to establish, to bring about the existence of that which they signify. He writes, "The saluting Negro is no longer an example or symbol, still less an alibi: he is the very *presence* of French imperiality."[121]

Barthes describes the difficulty of "vanquish[ing] myth from the inside;" he suggests that myths cannot be met with changes within the mythical system but require a revolution against the mythical system itself. As he writes, revolution "abolishes myth" in part because "revolution is defined as the cathartic act meant to reveal the political load of the world," so that rather than "depoliticize" as oppressors do through myth, revolutions politicize and denaturalize concepts

once naturalized through myth.[122] As such a semiological methodology strives to denaturalize and re-politicize myths that have been naturalized and depoliticized.

Even though his work describes a limited understanding of semiology, the semiology Barthes actually enacts (consciously through the use of Marxist ideological critique), is deeply historical and political and references institutions of the military and education. Despite these strengths, Barthes' approach separates phenomenon that are related, and is structured hierarchically. That is, he treats myths discretely, one at a time; he organizes myth as a second-order system that is hierarchical, situated over and above language. That is, Barthes does not describe how myths might influence and shape language, how myths might relate to one another, how to consider a multiplicity of myths, how messy and ambiguous myths can be when we encounter them in *social life* as we experience them.

Conclusion

I will propose a system of meaning that relates myths to one another. Rather than seeing myths as discrete, individual, and treating them one at a time, I argue we should look at the relationships between myths, and to consider them as deeply related to one another via a network I will call a meta-myth. This approach does not depart from the messy, ambiguous, lived, embodied experiences of being in a total concrete situation. The different "orders" are interrelated and interdependent in a placement that is not hierarchical because they deeply influence one another. That is, these mythologies are lived, have material manifestations, and impact our embodiment and linguistic experiences, as such they cannot be disentangled from the methodology of semiology. I will turn next to Simone de Beauvoir to highlight how her work is closer to the semiology that Saussure described and how she can address the above-mentioned

shortcomings of Barthes to employ the methodology of semiology in significant and radical

ways.

CHAPTER TWO: BEAUVOIR AS SEMIOLOGIST & THE MYTH OF THE ETERNAL FEMININE

> "Through myths, this society imposed its laws and customs on individuals in an imagistic and sensible way; it is in a mythical form that the group imperative insinuated itself into each consciousness. By way of religions, traditions, language, tales, songs, and film, myths penetrate… into existence"
> –Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*.[123]

Introduction

In comparison to Barthes, Beauvoir's philosophy of mythology is multiplicitous, ambiguous, lived, contradictory, interconnected, and emphasizes lived experience in a total concrete situation. Beauvoir demonstrates that employing the methods of semiology and phenomenology together can help us navigate the tension that arises between the embodied subject immersed in a linguistic and mythical world, the inherited meanings and values that the person must face in their lived experience, and the capacity for potential meaning-making and world-creating that subjects engage in. Beauvoir's approach to myth—to study it through lived experience in a phenomenological approach—demonstrates that semiology and a phenomenology that takes seriously the socio-political world, are closer in kind than the academy has traditionally made them out to be. I argue that her text, *The Second Sex*, can be read as a feminist semiology. The myth of the eternal feminine, itself a cluster of multiple myths about femininity, runs throughout the entire text. Furthermore, she demonstrates how the myth of the eternal feminine *materializes* in social practices, values, institutions, habits of perception, and embodiment, which is significant for the method of critical feminist semiology.

Her feminist semiology is deployed from a particular lifeworld: France, 1946-1949. Because semiology studies systems of meaning from a particular place within them, semiology is context dependent, including Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Thus, her work is not universalizable, nor generalizable, but demonstrates how systems of meaning—especially myths surrounding

femininity—were materialized and experienced during France at this time. While these systems of meaning are from a particular setting (time, place, geography, experience within the system of meaning), we see echoes of the myth of the eternal feminine in our contemporary systems of meaning in the United States. I will argue that Beauvoir's writing about the myth of the eternal feminine is meaningful for considering myths about *white femininity* in the United States during Reconstruction Era as described by Black feminist thinkers.[124] Some of the myths that compose the myth of the eternal feminine contribute to the construction of the myth of white femininity including the myth of sexual purity, the myth of femininity as nature/closer to nature than masculinity, the myth of feminine submissiveness, the myth of feminine domesticity, the myth of femininity as maternal, etc.[125] That is, the myth of the eternal feminine and the myth of white femininity share common features, including the expectations of sexual purity, piety, fragility/daintiness, domesticity, and submissiveness. While some of the material conditions surrounding femininity have changed since the Reconstruction Era in what is called the United States, the myth of white femininity still operates today.[126] While myths about white femininity have undergone some changes since Reconstruction, Black feminist thinkers demonstrate that pieces of the myth and the legacy of this construction of white femininity still operates today.

I will argue that Beauvoir's work on semiology overlooks a constitutive feature of myths surrounding femininity (even in her time and place): race. A dualistic gender hierarchy in the "white race" became a "sign of civilization" and was utilized to justify white supremacy.[127] The myth of the eternal feminine Beauvoir describes largely maps onto this dualistic gender hierarchy that Black feminists, decolonial thinkers, and Indigenous scholars demonstrate supports white supremacy and settler colonialism.[128] That is, while Beauvoir herself does not acknowledge that the myth of the eternal feminine is racialized, we can see that this myth is

intertwined myths regarding race through the contribution of these scholars.[129] The multiplicity present in Beauvoir's account of the myth of the eternal feminine is primarily that this myth itself is a cluster, rather than this myth as operating with a cluster of other myths.

There are other differences as well. The first significant difference is the dominant spoken language (French vs. American English), as I have argued, language and myth both influence one another, so some of the internalization of "external" features into the language will differ. Both languages are shaped by colonization: English/American colonization in comparison to French colonization. The geography differs as well: I am writing from the West Coast of what is called the United States, whereas Beauvoir was writing primarily from France, though she did tour the United States with Richard Wright through some of her writing process.

As such, this chapter will look at the *methodology* that Beauvoir employs as it is more akin to Saussure's understanding of semiology rather than Barthes'. This chapter will also build historical context of the myth of *white* femininity, as discussed in more detail in the following chapter, even though Beauvoir does not describe it in the language of race.

Reading *The Second Sex* as a Phenomenological Semiology

Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is typically not read as a phenomenological *semiology*. However, I consider this text as a semiology understood in the political, economic, socially lived approach (that Saussure gestures towards but ultimately does not complete himself). Beauvoir's work develops the methodology beyond what Saussure envisioned in significant ways. These include (1) that there are *ontologically* motivated myths, (2) how to navigate oppressive systems of meaning as we live them, and (3) how to resist, shift, or change, sedimented systems of meaning.

Volume One: Facts and Myths

The Second Sex is composed of two volumes, the first of which is titled "Facts and Myths." I argue that her description of facts as always already socially interpreted and value-laden contingencies that seem natural/are naturalized is an enactment of a material semiology. That is, Beauvoir's work demonstrates *how* the myth of the eternal feminine has become naturalized as "fact." "Fact" is not apolitical, neutral, information, as it is "impossible to approach any human problem without partiality: even the way of asking the questions, of adopting perspectives, presupposes hierarchies of interests; all characteristics comprise values; every so-called objective description is set against an ethical background."[130] The first volume de-naturalizes, re-politicizes, and re-ethicizes femininity, a semiological endeavor.

Part One: Destiny

Part one of the first volume, "Destiny," describes how the fields of biology, psychoanalysis, and historical materialism all contribute to the constitution of "feminine reality" *and* its naturalization.[131] These fields naturalize contingencies to such an extent that they become *destinies*—that is, something that cannot be otherwise, something outside of a person's choosing, a limitation of the possibilities of freedom, a natural given.[132] What appears as natural destiny in these fields is actually a constructed limitation of possibilities.

Biology has contributed to the myth of the eternal feminine through claiming the "existence of a natural hierarchy," based on biological sex. Yet, while the myth of the eternal feminine is naturalized as "biological fact," biological "facts" "do not carry their meaning in themselves."[133] Rather their "meaning immediately becomes dependent on the whole context,"[134] including "the economic and social situation."[135] Thus, in "biological terms," the "inferiority" of

the female human being is not "possible to posit" as "customs cannot be deduced from biology" and change "depending on the different economic moments of human history."[136]

The body does not "form a fixed destiny" as it is described to "naturally" have; it does not "constitute the basis for a sexual hierarchy" nor "condemn her forever to this subjugated role."[137] These meanings are imposed on the body rather than "naturally" are given or necessitated by bodies themselves. Thus, "woman is not a fixed reality but a becoming" as "humanity is constantly in the making."[138] The naturalization of the myth of the eternal feminine through biology has existential consequences: "it is not as a body but as a body subjected to taboos and laws that the subject gains consciousness of and accomplishes [themselves]."[139] One becomes oneself in a context where value is ascribed to bodies differentially. Through employing a critical feminist semiology, we can see that these values are contingent rather than natural or necessary, yet they still influence how we navigate the intersubjective lifeworld. *How* we move through the world is *not* a natural, biological given, or destiny defined by the body, but a process of becoming or accomplishing oneself.[140]

Beauvoir critiques psychoanalysis for its construction of the "collective consciousness" as an anatomical given, resulting in destiny rather than choice. Psychoanalysis' contributions to naturalizing the myth of the eternal feminine draw from Freud's claim that "anatomy is destiny."[141] Rather than engage with the collective consciousness as a deterministic unfolding of anatomy, Beauvoir engages with *generalities* that are socially created and collectively navigated. Generality occurs because of "technology and the economic and social structure of a group," which is a shared lifeworld.[142] An existent finds themselves in a lifeworld that has created significations/symbols in language, myths, habits, customs, rituals, architecture, city planning,

etc. but in that lifeworld, the existent is not predetermined by "anatomy," but rather chooses how to accomplish themselves therein. As such, Beauvoir writes,

> a symbol does not emerge as an allegory worked out by a mysterious unconscious… significations are revealed to many people in the same way; symbolism did not fall out of heaven or rise out of the subterranean depths: it was elaborated like language, by the human reality that is at once *Mitsein* and separation; and this explains that singular invention also has its place.[143]

Symbols are shared generalities of human meanings rather than anatomical givens of the unconscious. Generalities in contrast to anatomic destiny leaves room for choosing *how* to respond or engage with the lifeworld into which one is thrown, which always already a world with intersubjective and shared meanings.[144] Thus, as Beauvoir writes, "a life is a relation with the world; the individual defines himself by choosing himself through the world."[145]

Beauvoir does not take *sexuality* "as an irreducible given" or as a natural, value-free dimension of existence.[146] Values are "involved in sexuality itself" and sexuality is experienced in a world of values as "the existent is a sexed body; in its relations with other existents that are also sexed bodies, sexuality is thus always involved."[147] Psychoanalysis' separation from the world of social values is "the intrinsic weakness of the system" for Beauvoir. This is a strength of the methodology of critical feminist semiology that I build throughout this project, and a strength of Beauvoir's regarding the myth of the eternal feminine as occurring within a world of values.[148] *That there are myths* always already given and what these collective myths *are* is not chosen by an individual, but how they relate to myths and the collective mythical world allows for choice.[149]

Beauvoir argues that historical materialism tends to reduce the "specific character of [gender] oppression" to class conflict.[150] Myths and material conditions that contribute to gender oppression are distinct from the myths and material conditions that contribute to class conflict.[151]

The myth of the eternal feminine constructs women as the absolute Other, whereas the proletariat becomes essential as it "constitute[s] a threat to its exploiters."[152] The proletariat has the goal of "ceas[ing] to exist as a class" whereas Beauvoir perceives woman to "not think of eliminating herself as a sex: she simply asks that certain consequences of sexual differentiation be abolished."[153] Perhaps most significantly for Beauvoir, historical materialism ignores "her reproductive function [which] is as important as her productive capacity, both in the social economy and in her personal life."[154] Historical materialism tends to reduce her to this productive capacity, this cannot accord for gender oppression because "for man she is a sexual partner, a reproducer, an erotic object, an Other through whom he seeks himself."[155]

I argue her critique of each of these fields is both existential and semiological.[156] Because Beauvoir addresses the *content* of the myth of the eternal feminine, she can address different discourses that contribute to it, unlike Barthes.[157] She reveals that biology, psychoanalysis, and historical materialism are not isolated fields, but rather, are *related* through the "whole of human reality" or the "world of values."[158] No field is value-neutral, or meaning-neutral.[159] Even if these fields take themselves to be value-neutral or *naturalize* socially contingent values, they each are interpreted by the context of social world of values and contribute to that context.[160] Further, they each contribute to systems of meaning that are *lived*. Each person is situated in a world of social values, finds themselves in a context where systems of meaning already operate, and must choose how to live in that total concrete situation.[161] Thus, even though these discourses naturalize the myth of the eternal feminine, it does not have to be a destiny for those that live in these systems of meaning; that is, Beauvoir de-naturalizes and re-politicizes myths and offers an invitation to live *otherwise*. Her existentialism offers a lens that goes further than

either Saussure or Barthes as she describes how to live within oppressive systems of meaning without having those pre-determine the meaning of one's life.[162]

Part Two: History

Part two of the first volume, "History" sets out to "demonstrate how 'feminine reality' has been constituted, why woman has been defined as Other, and what the consequences have been from men's point of view."[163] This section of the *Second Sex* describes the historical, political, and economic contingencies leading to the feminine condition as "being-for-men."[164]. This section demonstrates how the myth of the eternal feminine successfully maintained and reproduced itself, in part through social customs.[165] Thus, Beauvoir studies *social life* and reveals how femininity operates as a part of social life including its impacts on lived experience, [166] i.e. Beauvoir studies signs as a part of social life, revealing how femininity operates in the systems of meaning, how it is materialized into institutions, how it is embodied and experienced.

The myth of the eternal feminine also serves *ontological* masculine desires, a motivation for myth that Barthes does not consider.[167] The myth of the eternal feminine constructs an alterity that is free but not free enough to refuse to recognize the masculine subject or to present risks in masculine becoming.[168] This construction allows the "other" to recognize one's freedom, choice of projects, and realization of the self without risking her interference or lack of reciprocity.[169] The myth of the eternal feminine constructs as a "docile freedom" embodied in woman: "she is the perfect intermediary between nature that is foreign to man and the peer that is identical to him. She pits neither the hostile silence of nature nor the hard demand of a reciprocal recognition against him." The recognition is not reciprocal as the myth of the eternal feminine constructs femininity as an inessential other, an object rather than a subject, or a being-for-man. She is inessential, he does not have to recognize her. However, when women "assert themselves

as human beings" and posit "themselves as subjects," they become a detriment: "she is detrimental as objective reality, existing for herself."[170] (The history of private property and the myth of sexual purity begin in this section of the book but will be investigated as an example towards the end of this chapter.)

The myth of the eternal feminine forces a hesitation or anxiety on the part of the "feminine" existent because she must choose "between the role of *object,* of *other,* that is proposed to her and her claim for freedom."[171] This hesitation is existentially challenging, as it is a "ready-made" escape route (away from freedom) socially enforced and encouraged. She must choose, over and again throughout her life herself, or the myth. This choice is of great moral effort demonstrating that the ease with which an authentic existence and existential freedom is pursued varies due to myths; some existents' freedom is easier to choose than others. [172] Myths can curtail freedom and/or make freedom: difficult, unsafe, taboo or forbidden, economically difficult or impossible.

The consequences of the differentiated ease or difficulty of choosing oneself cannot be overstated. Myths that ascribe meanings to some people as being-for-others have enormous repercussions that are difficult to perceive if one is not subjected to the same myth:

> It is difficult for men to measure the enormous extent of social discrimination that seems insignificant from the outside and whose moral and intellectual repercussions are so deep in woman that they appear to spring from an original nature. The man most sympathetic to women never knows her concrete situation fully. So there is no good reason to believe men when they try to defend privileges whose scope they cannot even fathom.[173]

That is, Beauvoir demonstrates the importance of considering myths as they are lived. Myths are perceived differently depending upon whether one is described by them.

Part Three: Myths

In part three of volume one, "Myths," Beauvoir describes the myth of the eternal feminine as a cluster of myths about femininity that coalesce under one myth, emphasizing the multiplicitous, ambiguous, interconnected, contradictory operations of myths.[174] Beauvoir does not treat the myth of the eternal feminine as a single myth or as unconnected from lived experience, as Barthes might, or a naïve approach to myth might. That is, her study of myth is also existential, phenomenological, her approach takes seriously how myths are lived. Studying myth through her approach demonstrates that semiology and phenomenology are closer in kind than typically considered. Engaging with both semiology and phenomenology can help us navigate the tension that arises between the embodied being immersed in a linguistic and mythical world, the inherited meanings and values that the person must face in their lived experience, and the capacity for potential meaning-making and world-creating therein.[175]

The myth of the eternal feminine contains sets of opposites. Beauvoir writes, "she is Life and Death, Nature and Artifice, Light and Night" depending upon the ontological, economic, social, political need of the moment.[176] That is, the myth of the eternal feminine contains the myth of femininity as fertility, the myth femininity as decay or necrosis (as seen in early gynecological descriptions of femininity), the myth of femininity as nature/the feminization of nature, the myth of femininity as artificiality/vanity/shallow, the myth of femininity as the moral light of a society, the myth of femininity as sin/moral decrepitude/darkness. These myths are also interconnected as the myth of femininity as fertility supports and is supported by the myth of femininity as nature/the feminization of nature. Feminine fertility is deemed to be natural; nature is deemed to be expressive of feminine fertility. Further, femininity as death/decay/necrosis is supported by the myth of femininity as darkness/moral decrepitude—the fear of a society's

"moral decay" and the feminine as representing and upholding moral virtues of a society serves as an example of this mutual support.[177] Beauvoir writes,

> woman is akin to *nature,* she embodies it: animal, little vale of blood, rose in bloom, siren, curve of a hill, she gives humus, sap, tangible beauty, and the world's soul to man; she can hold the keys to *poetry*; she can be *mediator* between this world and the beyond: grace or Pythia, star or witch, she opens the door to the supernatural, the surreal; she is destined to *immanence;* and through her passivity she does out peace and harmony: but should she refuse this role, she becomes praying mantris or ogress. In any case, she appears as the *privileged Other* through whom the subject accomplishes himself: one of the measures of man, his balance, his salvation, his adventure, and his happiness.[178]

Other ontological motivations for these myths appear in this passage. First, there is a fear of existence, a fear of death and therefore of life, both of which are mythologized into the feminine. There is an ontological fear of nature and of being part of it, as such there is an attempted removal from it through projecting it onto the feminine: "he projects onto her what he desires and fears, what he loves and what he hates."[179] This is reflected in expected aesthetics of femininity to represent the artificial rather than the natural through make-up, clothing, domesticity, which are also racialized, though this is not addressed by Beauvoir.[180]

I argue that the mythology of femininity as artificiality contributes to the meta-myth of white supremacy; this is a weakness of Beauvoir's work as she does not address how myths regarding gender are intertwined with myths regarding race. Femininity as artificiality contributes to the meta-myth of white supremacy in at least three ways. First, artificiality demonstrates the inferiority of the feminine as because they are "closer to nature" the feminine is disciplined into removing itself out of nature, taming itself, disciplining itself into "culture."[181] This dualistic gender hierarchy described as a "sign of civilization" contributed to white supremacy in theory and practice.[182] Second, according to the meta-myth of white supremacy, the farther out of nature the feminine is, the farther from the "state of nature" any given society

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was deemed to be.[183] Thus, the artificial aesthetics of white femininity–such as shaving, wearing make-up, wearing complicated and/or constricting clothing, wearing white, having particular European hairstyles – were all taken to be signs of white superiority, white advancement in the Social Darwinian timeline of progress, white distance from the state of nature.[184] In addition to being an oppressive aesthetic standard for white women, this aesthetic standard was weaponized against women who did not "measure up."[185] This is expressed in contemporary norms for femininity in what is called the United States through trends like the "clean girl aesthetic."[186] Third, the feminine as domestic, as responsible for housework, also was an attempt to demonstrate that (white) homes were distinct from nature, were outside of nature, further contributing to the meta-myth of white supremacy.[187] Much of the labor of cleaning white homes was done by women of color and immigrants so that white women would not have to come into contact with dirt, dirtying themselves.[188]

In the above passage by Beauvoir, however, we see that if a feminine being resists pieces of the myth, she is typecast into other parts. For an example, if she refuses to be passive, she becomes the praying mantris, or the ogress. If she refuses to embody all masculine desired morals, she becomes darkness, if she follows the given moral script, she becomes light.[189] Because the myth of the eternal feminine is multiplicitous and its contradictions constrains resistance to enacting another piece of the myth, femininity becomes associated with deception as well. Beauvoir writes:

> woman has a double and deceptive image: she is everything he craves and everything he does not attain. She is the wise mediator between auspicious Nature and man; and she is the temptation of Nature, untamed against all reason. She is the carnal embodiment of all moral values and their opposites, from good to bad; she is the stuff of action and its obstacle, man's grasp on the world and his failure; as such she is the source of all man's reflection on his existence and all expression he can give of it…[190]

This multiplicity and series of contradictions is an essential component of how the myth of the eternal feminine operates. This is twofold. First, the myth contains almost everything and as such changes as needed, making it ready to deploy in different manifestations at any time, and making it very difficult to resist.[191] The multiplicitous, contradictory, indecipherability of this myth contributes to its ready-at-hand deployment, it can be utilized in various ways and various times to create and maintain power relations of femininity as exploitable. What femininity "is" thus changes in the context in which it is deployed. The inconsistencies in the definition of femininity reveal that the inconsistency in the definition itself is useful and is operational.

Second, women are always disappointing in that it is impossible to embody each of these contradictions. Beauvoir writes, "as other she is also other than herself, other than what is expected of her. Being all, she is never exactly *this* that she should be; she is everlasting disappointment…"[192] This disappointment is operational as well. Because she literally cannot be All, she internalizes that others are disappointed in her, or that she must try harder to please, or that she should be and do more. It serves a disciplinary function that is weaponized so she can never be complete or attain that which is expected of her. She can never succeed, no matter how hard she tries. Blame is put onto women for not upholding the myth of the eternal feminine rather than the myth being incorrect: "if the definition given is contradicted by the behavior of real flesh-and-blood women, it is women who are wrong."[193] Women are always wrong, which in turn is used as justification to continue their oppression.[194]

Volume Two: Lived Experience

Volume Two, "Lived Experience" is Beauvoir's investigation into how the myth of the eternal feminine shapes and is shaped by social customs, economic relations, and lived experience. She considers practices and institutions that are supported by and support the myth

of the eternal feminine, including economics, marriage, religion, education, and legal systems.[195]

These practices and institutions contribute to the materialization of the myth—that is, the

feminine becomes needing of economic support if she is legally prevented from owning property

or earning as high of a wage as masculine beings.[196] The institution of Christianity contributes to

the myth of sexual purity as it socializes girls into sexual purity and disciplines them (with at

times legal sanctions) if they do not follow this practice, leading to the manifestation of the myth

of sexual purity. The myth of sexual purity, one myth within the cluster of myths that compose

the myth of the eternal feminine, will be showcased here as an example of how myths are lived

and how systems of meaning shape and are shaped by institutions, history, and practices.[197] This

myth additionally was chosen as it will appear in the following two chapters in a racialized

manner, which is missing from Beauvoir's analysis.

The Myth of Sexual Purity

In the European context, before private property was practiced and theorized, women had

more sexual freedom as resources were shared; families belonged within clans, whose bonds and

interests allowed her freedom to choose. Sexual choices "had no effect on society's deep

structure" and thus the myth of sexual purity did not emerge until these structures changed.[198]

The institution of private property changed the structures of family and availability of

resources. Private property becomes "more important to [its owner] than life itself; it goes

beyond the strict limits of a mortal lifetime; it lives on after the body is gone." [199] Private

property provides a form of transcendence for those who are allowed to own it: men. Private

property is already patriarchal as women were not allowed to own it, or only could own it under

extenuating circumstances.[200] The institution of private property is ontologically motivated based

on contingent understandings of mortality, death, and the afterlife. Ownership is ontologically

motivated as it appeases fears of mortality, death, and ephemerality; property is "an earthly and tangible incarnation of the immortal soul"[201] but only if it is owned by those "who are extensions of himself… who are *his own.*"[202]

Women's sexuality is restricted as she is deemed to be responsible for ensuring the transcendence of the owner of property through reproduction with said owner. Giving an inheritance and passing down property to a "foreign offspring" "would be the worst of crimes."[203] Women's sexuality is thus restricted and *criminalized* if acted upon outside of those restrictions. The institution of private property is thus part of the sociogenic construction of the myth of sexual purity; "as long as private property lasts, conjugal infidelity on the part of a woman is considered a crime of high treason."[204] The myth of sexual purity justifies the criminalization of women who express their sexuality freely and justifies retributive violence against them, including the taking of her life. Within the patriarchal system of private property, the murder of a woman for infidelity is seen as a balanced life for a life.[205] Feminine sexuality was strictly curtailed because of the human desire for transcendence and the fear of impermanence understood through European ontologies. The institution of private property and its social, political, history contributes to the "constitution of sexual myths."[206]

Biological reproductive affordances are given meaning through social values. Parentage through female reproductive affordances becomes policed and disciplined. Man "wants a virgin, and he demands total fidelity to ensure his immortality through property."[207] This is not a reciprocal societal demand as "biological fact" is always already imbued with social values.[208] When patriarchal social values imbue reproduction, not only does private property ensure masculine immortality, but women are also not allowed to own property and are considered property themselves.[209] So, "under the patriarchal regime, she was the property of a father, who

married her off as he saw fit" and, once married, the ownership of the property that she is taken to be is "transmit[ted] entirely to her spouse."[210]

This dynamic of women-as-property is not universal.[211] It arose in Europe as private property was institutionalized and spread through European colonialism and imperialism (as well as the globalization of capitalism therein). In the pre-colonial United States context, private property was not a theory or practice, patriarchal private property did not asymmetrically police sexuality.[212] But in dominant Euro-American culture, the sexuality of feminine human beings was expected to be abstinent, chaste, and pure.[213] The demand of feminine sexual purity created by this myth was utilized as a "sign of civilization" for colonial interests and served as justification for the institutions of chattel slavery and Indigenous boarding schools.[214] This strict demand for feminine sexual purity was racialized as part of whiteness.[215] Simultaneously, myths constructed Black people as overly sexual, promiscuous, and Indigenous people as "closer to nature" with animalized sexual practices.[216] During the institution of slavery, Black women were mythologized as promiscuous and impure; the violent exploitation of their reproductive capacities for economic gain contributed to the appearance of the materialization of this myth.[217] After the institution of slavery, during Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras, the myth of the Black rapist was constructed to justify white supremacist violence.[218] The myth of white feminine purity worked alongside both of these myths. First, the mythologization of Black promiscuity was utilized to contrast the myth of white feminine purity to justify white supremacist mythologies and practices like the institution of slavery and to naturalize/obscure the sexual violence white men were enacting on Black women.[219] Second, the inaccurate mythologization of the Black rapist as threatening this highly valued white feminine purity served as justification for white mob violence including the practice of lynching.[220] Additionally, because Indigenous

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women were mythologized as closer to nature and thus sexually available, sexual violence against Indigenous women was also supported by the myth of white feminine sexual purity.[221] The myth of white feminine sexual purity thus supports the meta-myth of white supremacy and operates as a foil for the sexual mythologization that supports institutions and practices of white supremacy. Beauvoir's analysis on the myth of sexual purity is inadequate as it does not acknowledge its support of the meta-myth of white supremacy. The methodology of critical feminist semiology seeks to remedy this inadequacy and the enactment of this methodology in this project highlights the myths that collectively support the meta-myth of white supremacy. These clusters of myths will be attended to in more detail with Indigenous and decolonial scholars in chapter three and Black feminist thinkers in chapter four.

For white women in Beauvoir's context, the demand for sexual purity was a significant part of gender socialization (though material conditions have changed since Beauvoir's writing, the legacy of this myth remains). The myth of virginity shaped feminine life and social practices.[222] Virginity, the virtue demanded of feminine human beings, is "motiv[ated]: like chastity for the wife, the fiancées innocence is necessary to protect the father from incurring any risk of bequeathing his goods to a foreign child."[223] Additionally, the highly valued virtue of virginity "is demanded more imperiously" if women are themselves considered property.[224] This demand increases in severity for at least two reasons. The first is that "possession is always impossible to realize positively; the truth is that one never has anything or anyone; one attempts to accomplish it in a negative way; the surest way to assert that a good is mine is to prevent another from using it."[225] People cannot be possessed positively, though they can be treated as property and theorized as property. One can feel more certain in one's "possession" of a woman through ensuring that no one has "possessed" her before. Preventing others from "using" her

ensures a more certain feeling ownership and solid basis for possession. The impacts on the lived experience of those considered to be property cannot be overstated.

Second, another way to assert ownership is through consuming the object that one possesses. Consumption entails the destruction of one's possession. Thus, although the association between an "intact hymen" and sexual purity is not true, "breaking the hymen" is mythologized as the taking of virginity: "By breaking the hymen, man possesses the feminine body more intimately than by a penetration that leaves it intact; in this irreversible operation, he unequivocally makes it a passive object, asserting his hold on it."[226]

The myth of sexual purity/virginity is also imbued into language; colloquial phrases like "deflowering" or "taking" reflect these myths, as do social behaviors of sex as a kind of "conquering" or "destroying."[227] Myths seep into our everyday practices, habits of perception, and embodiment. Women are constructed as property and are perceived as objects to possess. The sexual objectification of women through the "male gaze" is one such habit of perception.[228] These myths also impact embodiment and movement; often women move through the world hyper-aware of being objectified (by others and themselves), leading to restrictions in movement, or thinking about what one *looks* like as one moves, or doubting their capabilities of movement as they are socialized to think of their bodies as objects rather than the emanation of agency.[229]

The social, economic, and ontological stakes of sexual purity (the virgin myth) are high. The myth of sexual purity is of extreme importance for the future well-being of young women in Beauvoir's context: "marriage was her only means of survival and the only justification of her existence."[230] Economically, she is dependent as she cannot own property, work for livable wages, have credit, or provide for herself (unless there are exceptional family dynamics).[231] As such, "her economic dependence puts her at their disposal."[232] Her material subsistence and well-

being is mediated through her husband. Without economic autonomy, the situation remains unchanged, as her well-being requires that she "please men to succeed."[233] Because of the forced economic dependence on men to survive, sexual purity becomes an economic value for her, as that is what he desires to feel certain in his possession of her and ontologically fulfilled through transcendence through her reproductive capacities. Her future economic situation is directly related to her purity. "Catching a husband" is the only way to "material and moral security, a home of one's own, wifely dignity; a more or less successful substitute for love and happiness" which are curtailed or impossible to achieve without a husband.[234]

In Beauvoir's context (with some remnants remaining today), a "marriage kind of woman" is "virtuous, devoted, faithful, pure, and happy, and she thinks what she should think."[235] Aspiring towards this constructed ideal, the myth of the eternal feminine, becomes a financial necessity. This requires abandoning herself to become an object (that she must be to survive): "as soon as she thinks, dreams, sleeps, desires, and aspires without orders, she betrays the masculine ideal."[236] The pressure to abandon herself to the masculine ideal with her financial well-being and existence on the line often results in just that, but not without suffering, rebellion, and resistance. The institution of Euro-American marriage was not based on love, but rather enforced economic desperation and a desire to survive.[237] Marriage requires her to take her husband's name, religion, family; requires her to give "him her person: she owes him her virginity and strict fidelity."[238] In addition to the economic stakes, in tandem with the institution of marriage and the institution of private property, there are ontological stakes as well. Marriage is "the only justification of her existence;" that is, the "meaning of her existence is not in her hands."[239]

Myths of sexual purity appear in feminine gender socialization at a very young age.[240] The myth of sexual purity and the myths of the eternal feminine shape her place in the world. Being someone else's property begins in her early childhood and education, "children's literature, mythology, tales, and stories reflect the myths created by men's pride and desires: the little girl discovers the world and reads her destiny through the eyes of men."[241] The desire for a virgin appears in her coming to be in the world; she is steeped in a world of private property where her only means of survival is through the institution of marriage which requires her to be sexually pure.[242] As she grows up, her body becomes laden with meanings she does not choose for herself—this brings feelings of worry, displeasure, horror, shame, disgust, fear.[243]

Her body once was her means of expressing herself and moving through the world, experienced as "the radiation of a subjectivity, the instrument that brings about the comprehension of the world."[244] Yet, throughout her childhood she is socialized into the myths of the eternal feminine, "her vocation is imperiously breathed into her from the first years of her life."[245] She is socialized into a passive object, a possession, a thing that must be desired but must not be desiring, and a pure virgin.

Myths imbue her grasp on the world and her understanding of and relationship with herself. She realizes she must be a beautiful passive object which is reinforced by the toy she is instructed to play with: the doll. She begins to think of herself as "a marvelous doll;"[246] which is reflected in our language surrounding the practice of getting "dolled up" or being asked to "be a doll, won't you?" Myths surrounding sexuality are thus internalized; at a young age girls know they have "to be admired and to exist for others."[247] As she grows up, her body becomes "grasped by others as a thing: on the street, eyes follow her, her body is subject to comments; she would like to become invisible; she is afraid of becoming flesh and afraid to show herself."[248]

Rather than her body being her experience of the world or her instrument or the radiation of her agency, her body is "an object destined for another."[249] This instills a sense of terror, horror, impending doom; if she has desires of her own, if her body betrays her through being desirous instead of desired by someone else, she feels at fault and is riddled with shame and embarrassment. She becomes "dedicated to 'purity,' to innocence."[250] She must protect herself but is not allowed to practice physical assertiveness, strength, force, or violence. These are reserved for men, and as such, they become her "protectors." She becomes something requiring protection to stay pure.

Though she "makes her way toward the future wounded, shamed, worried, and guilty," she realizes that her economic well-being, her entire future, rides on her embodying the myth of sexual purity and "catching a man."[251] Finding a husband "is for her the most important undertaking;"[252] the institution of private property and the institution of marriage, supporting and supported by the myth of sexual purity, shape her life, the projects she takes on, her practices in the world, her habits, her perception.

Whereas in childhood, these myths are spread and indoctrinated through children's books, toys, novels, stories, and film, in adolescence,

> magazines cynically teach girls how the art of 'catching' a husband like flypaper catching flies: this is 'fishing' and 'hunting' demanding great skill: do not aim too high or too low; be realistic, not romantic' mix coquetry with modesty; do not ask for too much or too little.[253]

The art of this task is taken seriously as it has a significant weight on her life; her successful passivity is how she can shape her future. Her entire being, the meaning of her life, is in the hands of another. Her "self is constituted as for others, by others" which she follows through with because "she ha[s] no chance of achieving success through an independent existence."[254] Today, magazines are still a source of feminine socialization, as is social media.[255]

Contemporary language still resonates with this art of catching, which is a kind of tightrope walking. Phrases like "he's a catch" or someone as "out of my league" or "punching above one's weight" or "marrying above one's station" continue to reflect this socialization of tightrope partner selection.

The perception of feminine bodies as objects to possess, through breaking and/or through preventing others from having her, contributes to the societal, economic, and political scaffolding of rape culture.[256] Sexual purity is metaphysically not possible as purity is a metaphysical myth; yet being "sexually pure" requires continued effort through denying one's own desires, through painfully accepting one's place in the world as property. It requires defending her sexual purity with her life because if she fails to live up to the myth, it is her that is at fault, even if she is sexually assaulted. She is at fault, not that the myth is metaphysically impossible, not the myth is economically and ontologically motivated, not the myth that is sustained by and sustains institutions like private property or marriage, not others who treat her body as an object to be possessed, but her individually for not conforming to the myth: "If the [mythical] definition given is contradicted by the behavior of real flesh-and-blood women, it is women who are wrong… experiential denials cannot do anything against myth."[257] Beauvoir does not acknowledge that this sexual violence is also racialized. The sexualization of people of color creates an impossible task; the myth of white feminine sexual purity is set as a standard that often cannot be met.[258] This myth is completely foreclosed for Black women whose reproductive capacities are utilized economically against their will (as in the institution of slavery) or those who experience white masculine sexual violence which is mythologized as protection of white feminine purity (see chapter four for more detail).

Akin to the way the feminine is a detriment as soon as she begins to think, act, and live

for herself, if her virginity is not given to a man in a timely manner, she is demonized. Beauvoir

explains, "Virgins that men have not subjugated, old women who have escaped their power, are

more easily looked upon as witches than other women; as women's destiny is to be doomed to

another, if she does not submit to a man's yoke, she is available for the devil's."[259] Within the

myth of sexual purity, feminine "virginity" belongs to man, God, or the devil. The "flesh that is

object for no subject" is disquieting, troubling, repulsive.[260] The woman who refuses to become

object for another is treated with bitterness, suspicion, vulgarity.[261] She is not considered to be a

"real woman" as a "real woman" "is required to make herself object, to be the Other."[262]

The myth of the eternal feminine also shapes lived experience of masculine beings—

Beauvoir describes that for the heterosexual man, instead of being in relationship with an

autonomous, authentic, existent, he is faced with a mirage or a monotonous cliché.[263] She writes,

> Man would have nothing to lose, quite the contrary, if he stopped disguising woman as a
> symbol. Dreams, when collective and controlled—clichés—are so poor and monotonous
> compared to living reality… To recognize a human being in a woman is not to
> impoverish man's experience: that experience would lose none of its diversity, its
> richness, or its intensity if it was taken on in its intersubjectivity; to reject myths is not to
> destroy all dramatic relations between the sexes… it is only to ask that behavior, feelings
> and passion be grounded in truth.[264]

The dismantling of the myth of the eternal feminine would be beneficial not just for those

entrapped in the myth, who could live for themselves with less hesitation or temptation to flee

their freedom. It would also be beneficial for those in heterosexual relationships with them—they

would experience a "far more generous resource than a worn-out fantasy" that is, "living reality."

In Beauvoir's work feminist movements, or the destruction of the myth of the eternal feminine,

is beneficial for feminized and masculinized peoples. The destruction of the myths of white

femininity begins the work of untangling mythologies supporting the meta-myth of white

supremacy. Destroying myths of white femininity will not destroy the meta-myth of white

supremacy, as this meta-myth is supported by several clusters of myths. Each of the clusters of

myths that support the meta-myth of white supremacy must be addressed to destruct the meta-

myth, which is why a critical feminist semiology that acknowledges the operations of clusters of

myth is necessary. The meta-myth of white supremacy, and its materializations in institutions

and practices, must be dismantled from every angle. Addressing just one or two of these myths

leaves the rest of the clusters intact, leaving the meta-myth intact.

 Despite its shortcomings, Beauvoir's work has significant contributions to make to

phenomenological semiology. Her work can be considered as a feminist semiology as the myth

of the eternal feminine (as a cluster of myths) and how it impacts lived experience is central to

her work. She studies this myth as a part of social life, addressing the institutions that create and

maintain myths as well as the myths that maintain institutions and provide social buy-in. The

myth of sexual purity is one of the myths included in the cluster of myths that make up the

eternal feminine. The myth of sexual purity is a part of the myth of the eternal feminine, as such,

we can see already that myths are multiplicitous, contradictory, motivated economically

politically and ontologically, that they shape lived experience including practices, habits,

behavior, projects that people take on, relationships, etc. This is just one of the myths that

Beauvoir details throughout her work, this chapter opens space to address the other myths that

she details as a part of the myth of the eternal feminine, as this is by no means the only myth that

Beauvoir analyses.

Conclusion

 Studying Beauvoir as a semiologist, recognizing her contributions to the philosophy of

mythology and her work de-naturalizing and re-politicizing the myth of the eternal feminine is

vital. To ignore the work that Beauvoir contributes to the study of mythologies would be to ignore most of the *Second Sex.* Her phenomenological semiology is more akin to the kind of political semiology Saussure envisioned than Barthes' work, as she includes the study of signs as a part of social life as expressed in institutions, practices, environments, habits, behavior, perception. Yet, her work goes further than both Saussure and Barthes as she describes not just systems of meaning but also how we might imminently resist them or change them. She describes not just how the myth of the eternal feminine impacts lived experience but also how "women of today are overthrowing the myth of femininity."[265] She addresses both what it is like to face "a weighty past, [and] to forge a new future."[266] Thus, she is doing more than what Saussure opened with the potentiality of semiology; she also *critiques* the systems of meaning she studies from within.

Saussure describes the individual as lacking agency in changing systems of meaning.[267] Barthes also critiques myths but deems resistance only possible through a revolution that completely abolishes myth.[268] Barthes aspires toward the absence of myths.[269] While we could imagine the absence of oppressive myths as emancipatory, what Barthes does not do is describe how to resist myths in a concrete situation, as they are lived and sedimented into the world in which we find ourselves. We are always already in an intersubjective sociohistorical world wherein we speak a language, social customs are practiced and naturalized, economic requirements shape our lives that are not of our own making. We live myths imminently. To resist myths, we must resist myths from the situation that we live; there is not a situation where social meanings are absent, myths absent. Beauvoir describes that while resisting myths takes great ethical and ontological effort, myths do not have to be destiny. Rather than necessitate the absence of myths, or the absence of social meaning, Beauvoir starts from lived experience

wherein we are not outside of the systems of meaning that we live. We must figure out how to resist myths from our situation, which is something Beauvoir's work pursues in contrast to Barthes' work. Beauvoir's work considers ontological and moral motivations for myth in addition to the political and economic ones that Barthes considers. Thus, we will see that her work can also address the ways in which myths emerge out of and alongside ontology.

This is an important part of the methodology of critical feminist semiology that I am building. That is, it is not merely a descriptive endeavor to reveal the political weight of myths, or to de-naturalize and re-politicize myths. It is to also be able to resist them from within, as Beauvoir demonstrates throughout her work. The fields of feminist phenomenology and critical phenomenology seek to do this work and often turn to Beauvoir and Frantz Fanon as originators of these methodologies.

Because semiology studies systems of meaning from a situation within them, this work is context-dependent, offering a detailed analysis of the myth of the eternal feminine from the situation of France in the 1940s. No semiology will address all systems of meaning from every time and place. Her work can reveal much about the methodology necessary for a critical feminist semiology, even if her analysis of the myth of the eternal feminine does not describe contemporary myths of femininity. However, the legacy of the myth of the eternal feminine continues today even as material conditions have changed. As such, we can see how aspects of Beauvoir's work continue to reflect contemporary systems of meaning. Often, toys are still gendered, girls are still encouraged to play with dolls; gender reveal parties remain. Purity balls continue as a tradition. Though they have changed, the institution of private property and the institution of marriage remain. Beauvoir's work has its shortcomings as she does not analyze how myths of femininity contribute to racial mythologies, or myths that support settler

colonialism. The next chapter will consider clusters of myths that support settler colonialism and the meta-myth of white supremacy. The last chapter will consider clusters of myths that support the meta-myth of white supremacy, including myths about gender.

CHAPTER THREE: BLACK FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY OF COLLECTIVE MYTHOLOGIES AND A CRITIQUE OF THE META-MYTH OF WHITE SUPREMACY

> "The matriarch concept, embracing the clichéd 'female castrator,' is, in the last instance, an open weapon of ideological warfare. Black men and women alike remain its potential victims—men unconsciously lunging at the woman, equating her with the myth, women sinking back into the shadows, lest an aggressive posture resurrect the myth in themselves. The myth must be consciously repudiated as myth and the black woman in her true historical contours must be resurrected."[270]
> –Angela Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*

Introduction

Myths operate collectively to create, maintain, and reinforce themselves and the network of which they are a part; the network of concern here is the meta-myth of white supremacy as this collective of myths materializes into white supremacist materiality including practices and institutions. A plurality of myths operating collectively complicates approaches to myth that treat them discretely, or individually, the naïve approach to myth. Thinking myths collectively more adequately reflects the nuances of their material manifestations in the rich, entangled, thickness of the lifeworld. Thus, I argue that building a critical feminist semiology is necessary; critical feminist semiology is a methodology that treats myths collectively and is concerned with their material manifestations in patriarchal, settler-colonial, and white-supremacist practices, institutions, embodiment, and habits. Critical feminist semiology de-naturalizes and re-politicizes clusters of myths that are motivated to establish, maintain, and reproduce patriarchy, settler-colonialism, and white supremacy. The first myth this chapter will consider is the myth of *limpieza de sangre* which relies upon the myth of metaphysical purity discussed in chapter three. This myth predates and contributes to the myth of biological race and was invoked later in the myth of racial purity (the "one drop" rule). The rest of the chapter draws from Black feminist

philosophers, such as Angela Davis and Patricia Hill Collins, who demonstrate the relationship between multiple myths as well as between myths, lived experiences, and institutions. Unlike Barthes, who approaches myths one at a time (in his early work especially), Black feminist philosophers have made vital contributions to the study of myths as collectives.

Myths have generally not received enough attention to the harm that they can produce and maintain—often, they are treated as "just" myths, as unrelated to material conditions and lived experiences, which is another facet of the naïve approach to myths. The naïve approach to myths is unable to address the impacts of the myth of the promiscuous Black woman has on Black women and Black people more generally as it also reinforces the myth of the Black rapist. The cluster of myths this chapter will address include the myth of the black rapist, the myth of the pure white woman, the myth of white masculinity as protection, the myth of the mammy, and the myth of the matriarch. This cluster of myths (1) supports and normalizes the practice of lynching,[271] (2) lessens white support for Black emancipation,[272] (3) continues justifying "superexploitation of Black labor," (4) guaranteed solidarity from the white working class with the white upper class (including past enslavers),[273] (5) continued white masculine entitlement to violence[274], (6) contributed to the normalization and naturalization of violence against Black bodies and Black pain as spectacle or entertainment,[275] (7) naturalized sexual violence against women, and people gendered as feminine, especially women of color,[276] (7) normalized the "unchallenged authority" of capitalist, propertied men and incentivized their sexual violence,[277] (8) reinforced the police as necessary to "protect and defend" (white women), framing police violence as protection, and (9) the continued justification of police violence against Black people.[278] Thus, myths are not individual nor immaterial.

The Myth of *Limpieza de Sangre*: Clean, Pure Blood

The myth of biological race did not appear ex nihilo but rather was built upon European discourses that were employed to justify religious discrimination as well as colonial conquest. These discourses spread globally through European colonialism and practices such as the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In 1492, Jews were expulsed from Spain; they could choose to either convert or accept exile.[279] The possibility of conversion makes religion an impermanent, contingent, category subject to change. In the 15th century on the Iberian Peninsula, *limpieza de sangre* –or "cleanliness of blood"—developed to solve the problem of conversion.[280] The myth of *limpieza de sangre* held that the *blood* of Catholic heritage (older Christians who were born into Christianity rather than converted into Christianity), was clean and pure. The blood of converts to Christianity, whether of Jewish (*conversos)* or Muslim (*moriscos)* heritage was mythologized as dirty and impure.[281] The supposed sin and immorality of "god killing" Jews was thought to be transmitted by blood to descendants.[282]

Blood-as-religious-heritage became a more permanent signifier of morality and was made unchangeable. That is, the myth of *limpieza de sangre* ontologized religious heritage and immorality. No matter the sincerity with which *conversos* adopted Christianity, according to this myth, they did not have *clean* blood. Their blood was tainted by their religious ancestry to make permanent and naturalize politically, socially, and economically motivated discrimination based on religion.

Conversos were deemed immoral and unfit for community membership based on the dirtiness of blood. The blood lines of religious heritage determined the morality and appropriate cleanliness of blood for full participation in the Spanish state.[283] *Estatutos* (statues) enforced segregation practices and discriminatory laws to prevent the dirty, impure, and immoral from

contaminating the pure-blooded, Christian population. That is, this myth was materialized into institutions, the legal system, political practices, rituals, and habits.

The *myth of limpieza de sangre* and the problem of conversion crossed the Atlantic in the year of 1492 as well. The long history of human habitation and the multiplicitous rich cultural traditions as *unknown* to Europe ended as the inauguration Catholic-sponsored colonization of the so-called "New World" began.[284] The myth of *limpieza de sangre* shifted with the colonial change in geography and was materialized in the institution of *encomienda,* Indigenous enslavement. *Encomienda* was justified through the non-Christianity of Indigenous peoples.[285] Christians could enslave non-Christian Indigenous peoples without moral scrutiny and with social, political, and economic reward. However, religious conversion of Indigenous peoples to Christianity was a justification for colonial settlement, so that religious affiliation and the "problem of conversion" became a concern in the colonial context as well. It was difficult to justify the brutality of colonial practices against those who converted to become fellow Christians.[286][287] Thus, the myth of *limpieza de sangre* was employed in the colonial context as well—religion was contingent because of conversion but blood heritage was more permanent. Conversion revealed a contradiction in Spanish colonialism and the solution was the myth of *limpieza de sangre* which manifested through colonial institutions and practices in addition to the Spanish Inquisition on the Iberian Peninsula. The adaptation of the myth of *limpieza de sangre* in the colonies, was extended back across the Atlantic to *moriscos* in Spain. In 1526, Islam was banned in Spain also.[288]

This problem of the contingency of religious affiliation through conversion and the solution of the myth of *limpieza de sangre* contributed to the construction of race.[289] Over time, Christian/Non-Christian changed to White/Non-White; colonial violence could continue with less scrutiny when based on whiteness than when it was framed in religious terms as mistreating fellow

Christians.[290] Scholars have shown the influence that the myth of *limpieza de sangre* has had on racial formation, logics of colonization, and Anti-Semitic and Anti-Islamic institutions and practices.[291]

The 15th century myth of *limpieza de sangre* and the myth of the "one drop rule" in the 19th and 20th century United States operate similarly. "One drop" of "black blood" meant that one was considered Black.[292] Whiteness was the *absence* of "one drop" of Black blood, or as the purity of blood from blackness, or the cleanliness of white blood. To be considered white, one had to have "clean" or pure blood.[293] This myth materialized in practices and institutions of segregation, racial violence, miscegenation laws, the field of eugenics, and other racialized state-sponsored violence. These mythic ontologies of blood and its supposed morality promoted racial and religious violence over across the last five-hundred years.[294]

Cleanliness *practices* also reflect and reinforce the myth of *limpieza de sangre.* In the European world during the Middle Ages (11-15th centuries), Arabic people built extensive water infrastructure and conserved Roman baths. When the Iberian Peninsula was controled by Arabic people largely practicing Islamic traditions, bathing was a significant and frequent practice incorporated into religious rituals.[295] In the 16th century, as Christians controlled the Iberian Peninsula, bathing practices were associated with the religious practices of "infidels" of *unclean* blood. Ironically, abstinence from bathing was taken to be "evidence of Christian ancestry and a badge of purity."[296] Legal decrees *against* bathing were enacted; "people were brought before the Tribunal of the Inquisition, tortured and punished, under accusations of bathing or even for being too clean."[297] Bathing was dangerous for those "known or suspected to be Jews, Muslims, or recent converts to Christianity" but was not for those of clean blood. Social status and safety was dependent upon religious heritage.[298] The *myth of limpieza de sangre* thus shaped cleanliness

practices and social life: "Cleanliness was one area in which social, moral, religious, and class distinctions were established."[299]

In the "New World" bathing was also scrutinized. Ample Indigenous bathing practices across Turtle Island were common before Spanish colonization, including Aztec elite's "daily bathing customs," Mayan women's bathing in cold water, Incan soaking hot springs, and *temazcal* (sweat lodge) practices. [300] These practices became significations of Indigeneity in the systems of meaning that support settler colonialism.

Thus, the myth of *limpieza de sangre* was employed with the motivation of justifying and manifesting state-sanctioned discrimination and colonial regimes. This myth contributed towards the myth of biological race and the myth of racial purity seen in the "one drop rule," both of which attempted to naturalize contingencies and manifested in institutions, practices, rituals, habits of everyday life.

The Myth of White Femininity

In the 18th and 19th century, a sharp hierarchical gender dualism was a sign of "civilization," and justification for both settler colonialism and the institution of slavery.[301] This dualism was taken to be natural, eternal, and universal even though it is a contingent form of social organization.[302] This dualism is supported by multiple myths that coalesce under the "myth of the eternal feminine," framing femininity as sexually pure, submissive, domestic, and irrational in contrast to masculinity which is taken to be sexual, strong, agential, rational, and powerful.[303] The myths of the eternal feminine (wherein the feminine is pure, fragile, irrational, emotional, closer to nature and animals, naturally maternal and domestic) "justify social hierarchies via hegemonic, interrelated scripts."[304] People who are included in the myth of femininity face behavioral norms and expectations that are often enforced with violence. [305] If

these scripts, or mythologies, are not practiced by people who are feminized, they are in the wrong and may face retribution for not following the script of femininity.[306]

This gender dualism included sexuality within it; heterosexuality was normalized and naturalized.[307] Being feminine entailed sexual relationships with the masculinized exclusively, being masculine entailed sexual relationships with the feminized exclusively.[308] Further, sexual purity was an expectation of femininity even as feminized people were sexualized.[309] Feminine sexual agency was forbidden, as sexual purity was the property of the masculine (whether fathers or husbands), yet masculinity involved sexual objectification of femininity and sexual conquest over the feminine.[310] This is one of the contradictions inherent to the myth of the eternal feminine.[311]

A hierarchical gender dualism is a *contingent* European/Euro-American practice that obscures its contingency through descriptions of hierarchical gender dualisms as natural and/or biological (even though natural and biological descriptors are also culturally constructed and value-laden).[312] Other forms of social organization that contrasted this hierarchical gender dualism were encountered through colonialism.[313] These included: gender as less hierarchical, gender as multiplicitous instead of dualistic, gender as unrelated to (hetero)sexuality, gender as impermanent and changeable, and social organization that was not reliant upon gender at all.[314] These were taken to be "uncivilized" "less advanced" and more akin to animality than white gender and sexuality norms. The practice of this hierarchical dualism was wielded as a sign that white people were the most "advanced," "civilized," and removed from nature.[315] This gender dualism reinforced racial hierarchies in addition to gender hierarchies as it became symbolic of white supremacy. Thus, the myth of white femininity becomes a yard stick against which to measure the lack of civilization or "backwardness" of people who do not follow a hierarchical

dualistic form of gender.[316] Thus, the myth of the eternal feminine transforms into the myth of white femininity in the colonial encounter. The virtues of white femininity were more strictly demanded and socially policed as they contributed to the justification of white supremacist practices. Thus, the myth of white femininity is a cornerstone of the meta-myth of white supremacy.

The myth of white femininity is *hegemonic* as it requires "the visible presence of black women and others who fail to measure up."[317] Performing the script of white femininity is "neither possible nor desirable" as these gender norms are oppressive and impossible (or made impossible) for people who are not white to achieve.[318] White masculinity is hegemonic as it requires "control over women" to be considered a "real m[a]n."[319][320] Being masculine by definition requires wielding power and superiority over the feminine, yet is mythologized as in the best interests of feminized people; because the myth of white femininity includes weakness, daintiness, and irrationality, masculine violence is mythologized as protection, or as caretaking. Thus, white masculine violence is mythologized as protection over white femininity, mythologized as needing protection.

Patricia Hill Collins describes these myths as negative and positive controlling images. Myths value those who embody positive controlling images and devalue those who embody negative controlling images. Positive controlling images "hol[d] up societal ideals that are seemingly embodied by the experience of privileged groups," in this case, the myth of white femininity is a positive controlling image. However, positive controlling images also "serve a similar function as their negative counterparts," that is they *devalue* those who do not follow the positive controlling image, the myth of white femininity.[321] This devalues Euro-American feminine people who go "off script" and anyone who embodies other gender practices. Thus, the

positive controlling image of white femininity is (1) a form of patriarchal oppression for white women, (2) a racializing myth wherein hierarchical gender dualism justifies white supremacy, (3) and a definition of femininity that excludes women of color (and gender nonconforming and trans women) through negative controlling images.[322] Negative controlling images include the myth of the promiscuous Black woman, the myth of the mammy, and the myth of the Black matriarch, which operate in part because they contrast the positive controlling image of the myth of white femininity. For an example, the myth of white femininity involves purity, which becomes a positive controlling image, and the myth of the promiscuous Black woman contradicts purity, as such it becomes a negative controlling image. The positive controlling image of white femininity (mythologized as pure) serves a similar function as the negative controlling image of the Black promiscuous woman, that is justifying Black subordination and white supremacy.

Further, the myth of white femininity supports the feminization of Black men, who are feminized if they do not dominate or assert superiority over Black women and because they face white domination and exploitation.[323] We can see a pattern of the feminization of people when they are under the control or domination of another group of people, in this case through white supremacist institutions and practices.[324] Further, the myth of white femininity supports the masculinization of Black women, who are not dominated by or submissive to Black men. [325] Black women are also masculinized through the labor conditions of the institution of slavery, which required them to work as hard and as long as Black men.[326] Thus, they were forced to be strong and powerful, not dainty, fragile, or weak as the myth of white femininity constructs femininity to be. The violent exploitation of their reproductive capacities during the institution of slavery forces Black women to be sexually "impure," furthering them from the myth of white femininity, which mandates sexual purity.

Black people are mythologized as sexually promiscuous as they are "closer to nature" because they do not follow a hierarchical gender dualism, which is a sign of civilization and a departure from the "state of nature." The myth of white femininity supports and is supported by the myth of the Black rapist as white feminine purity is a positive controlling image and Black promiscuity is a negative controlling image. Together, they work towards sustaining patriarchal white supremacy. The myth of white femininity also supports the myth of the promiscuous Black woman wherein Black women are blamed for the sexual violence they experienced during the institution of slavery. The myth of white femininity, the myth of the Black rapist, and the myth of the promiscuous Black woman operate collectively to support the meta-myth of white supremacy.

The Myth of Black Promiscuity and the Myth of the Black Rapist

Myths operate collectively to reinforce and sustain themselves and other myths; Davis' work opens the discussion of a plurality of operating myths in the world that reflects the complexity and nuances of the system of meanings we live. Unlike Barthes' early work, which approaches myths individually, Davis' work contributes to building a critical feminist semiology as she demonstrates the relationship between myths as well as between myths, lived experiences, and institutions.

In her chapter, "Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Rapist," Davis details how the titular myth was deployed to justify white mob violence during Jim Crow—despite this myth's dangerous inaccuracy. This myth is a masculinized version of the (older) myth of Black promiscuity and is reinforced and reinforces the myth of Black promiscuity, as well as the myth of the white woman as pure, fragile, virginal, defenseless, and needing protection. The myth of the Black rapist also reinforces and is reinforced by the myth of white masculine violence as

"protection," and the feminized version of the myth of Black promiscuity: the myth of the impurity of Black women. The myth of white-masculinity-as-protective entitles white men to violence against Black men and sexual violence against Black women, which, Davis argues, is encouraged by the material, economic, social, and political conditions under late-stage capitalism.[327] Davis also details the myth of the Black matriarch, its role in supporting the above myths, and its consequences of slowing progress towards Black liberation *and* causing divisions within the Black community.[328] The myth of the Black matriarch follows the pattern/grammar rule of scapegoating the oppressed as responsible for their own oppression while attempting to obscure white supremacy and patriarchy's responsibility.[329] While this chapter engages in depth with Davis' work, it also brings other Black feminist thinkers into the conversation as they contribute to the re-politicization of naturalized myths.

The myth of the Black rapist contradicts historical facts; this myth *constructs* Black sexual violence against white women, naturalizing the myth of Black promiscuity.[330] The myth of the Black rapist, although fiction, presents itself as non-fiction, as natural. The myth of the Black rapist was politically, economically, and socially motivated to attempt to justify white supremacist violence against Black people post-Emancipation; it specifically emerged to justify the practice of lynching. Lynching became a "valuable political weapon" during Reconstruction era.[331] Black people were no longer economically valued as private property and as such, their physical well-being and lives were not economically profitable to white enslavers.[332] This contributed to the motivation of lethal violence against Black people.[333] The threat of lynching continued the superexploitation of Black labor and "the political domination of Black people."[334]

Before the myth of the Black rapist was devised to "justify" the horrors of lynching, the practice was described as "a preventative measure to deter the Black masses from rising up in

revolt."[335] The white social anxiety of retributive Black violence against white people motivated white supremacist violence including lynching;[336] white social anxiety motivated white mob violence to *also* prevent "Black people [from] achiev[ing] their goals of citizenship and economic equality."[337] The political and economic function and justification for lynching, that it would prevent Black violence against white people, lost its effectiveness. [338] There wasn't a movement of Black retributive violence against white people.[339] Thus this justification was no longer believed: "the lie has lost its ability to deceive."[340] As this justification for lynching began to wane in effectiveness, "the cry of rape emerged as the major justification for lynching." [341] The myth of the Black rapist replaced the fear of Black retributive violence. The myth of the Black rapist thus shares much of the motivation for earlier white supremacist violence including the prevention of Black economic, political, and social equality as well as inhibiting Black wellbeing.

The myth of the Black rapist "became a popular explanation," for white mob violence, white terrorism, and white disregard for humanity.[342] The foil myth of white womanhood—pure, chaste, fragile, and weak, needing to be defended and protected at all costs—contributed to the effectiveness of the myth of the Black rapist. "[P]ublic opinion had been captured," "lynching was a just response to the barbarous crimes against white womanhood."[343] The extremity of the violence of lynching was excused in public opinion through the patriarchal ownership of women as private property (described in chapter 2): "men who were motivated by their duty to defend *their* women could be excused of any excesses they might commit."[344] The myth of the Black rapist is intertwined with the myth of the white woman, including that femininity is fragile, incompetent, vulnerable, naïve, needing protection, and the myth of white masculinity, masculinity is framed as strong, protective, capable, smart, the "caretaker" of women, entitled to

violence perceived as "protection" or "service." In sum, the myth of the Black rapist is reinforced by the myth of white feminine purity (reliant upon the myth of metaphysical purity), and the myths of white masculine violence-as-protection.

Further, Davis writes, "the reliance on rape as an instrument of white-supremacist terror predates by several centuries the institution of lynching."[345] Rape was a tool to keep "Black women and men alike in check."[346] Thus, the myth of the Black rapist "has always strengthened its inseparable companion: the image of the Black woman as chronically promiscuous."[347] The racial myths of Black hypersexuality are intertwined with patriarchal myths. Myths of Black hypersexuality are gendered and they support and are supported by patriarchal myths. The mythic hypersexualization of Black men appears as the myth of the Black rapist: a threat to white women's purity and to white society. The mythic hypersexualization of Black women frames them as sexually available to white men and frames their reproductive capacities as exploitable for economic gain.

As such, the myth of the Black rapist obscures the systematic and structural sexual violence occurring against Black women as encouraged economically, legally, and socially by white men.[348] Sexual violence against Black women was economically and legally sanctioned and encouraged; exploiting Black women's reproductive capacities increased the population of people experiencing enslavement and developed enslavers' wealth;[349] when the Transatlantic slave trade was banned, enslavers employed "natural" reproduction to increase the numbers of the people they enslaved, often done through sexual violence. Sexual violence was economically encouraged, and economic domination relied on the "institutionalization of rape."[350] Davis writes, "The license to rape emanated from and facilitated the ruthless economic domination that was the gruesome hallmark of slavery."[351]

Sexual violence was also socioculturally sanctioned as "an essential dimension of the social relations between slave master and slave."[352] Sexual violence established a property relationship between enslavers and the people they enslaved. Sexual violence was normalized into everyday behavior and social interactions and was naturalized. White "men [were] convinced that their acts were only natural."[353] This naturalization of sexual violence against Black women was further "sanctioned by politicians, scholars, and journalists, and by literary artists who have often portrayed Black women as promiscuous and immoral."[354][355] The portrayal of Black women as promiscuous further naturalizes the myth of Black promiscuity, which in turn supports the myth of the Black rapist.

Rather than reflect the circumstances of sexual violence that occurring against Black women, the myth of the Black rapist obscures the naturalization of sexual violence against Black women as well as the economic, political, legal, and social encouragement of this violence.[356] Davis explains, "The portrayal of Black men as rapists reinforces racism's open invitation to white men to avail themselves sexually of Black women's bodies."[357] The entanglement between the myth of the Black rapist, and the myth of the promiscuous Black woman, echoes myths in ethnological depictions of Black people as hyper-sexual.[358] The myth of Black women's promiscuity operates alongside the foil myth of white women as pure, as virginal, as chaste (a measurement of the ideal hegemonic femininity that requires others that do not "measure up").[359] The myth of the Black rapist is portrayed as a threat to the myth of white women as pure. As such, each of these myths are intertwined; "inseparable" in Davis' words. The myth of white feminine sexual purity (discussed in chapter two) supports and is supported by the myth of the Black rapist as well.[360]

The myth, or the *controlling image,* of the promiscuous Black woman appears across centuries, directing public attention away from the immoral behavior of white men and towards Black women's supposed immoral behavior. [361] The atmosphere of racialized and gendered violence during Jim Crow is supported by this cluster of myths: white men "explai[n] and excus[e their] own moral derelictions by emphasizing the 'immorality' of women of the 'inferior race.'"[362] Black women are scrutinized and blamed for white men's acts of sexual violence against them. This is an instantiation of a dominant pattern, or grammar, of white innocence/Black culpability; "the old racist sophistry of blaming the victim" is achieved through this cluster of myths. [363]

The myth of Black women as promiscuous had serious social, political, economic, and legal repercussions.[364] This myth contributed to the conditions of possibility in which white men were entitled to enact sexual violence with impunity and Black women experienced an atmospheric potentiality of sexual violence.[365]

During Reconstruction and Jim Crow, maintaining the economic design of the institution of slavery (but without the name) guided policy.[366] To maintain Black economic precarity and continue Black women's social reproductive labor in white homes, Black women were denied employment outside of white homes (and in certain situations were legally required to work for white families, enforced through legal or extralegal violence).[367] Employment in white homes entailed being around white men, who often exploited Black women's situation of economic and legal precarity by continuing practices of sexual violence; "From Reconstruction to the present, Black women household workers have considered sexual abuse perpetrated by the 'man of the house' as one of their major occupational hazards."[368]

Black women were forced into an economic predicament; they were "compelled to choose between sexual submission and absolute poverty for themselves and their families."[369] The myth of the promiscuous Black woman contributed to the maintenance of social and economic inequality materially, not just in an ideological/mythical realm. The material consequences faced by Black women promoted by this myth are not to be discounted. The harm that myths can produce and maintain is not often acknowledged—generally, they are treated as "just" myths, as unrelated to material conditions and lived experiences, which I consider another facet of the naïve approach to myths. The naïve approach to myths is unable to address the impacts of the myth of the promiscuous Black woman has on Black women and Black people more generally as it also reinforces the myth of the Black rapist.

This myth delegitimized Black voices: "Black women's cries of rape would necessarily lack legitimacy."[370] Epistemic injustices,[371] political injustices, and social injustices follow. Kimberly Crenshaw describes how Black womens' accounts of their experience are still not believed today. These myths are still invoked today; their naturalization contributes to their longevity.

The myth of the promiscuous Black woman had other violent consequences that reinforce the foil myth of the white woman as pure. The emerging field of gynecology continued to emphasize Black female bodies' reproductive capacities and the devaluation of Black bodily autonomy and agency.[372] White women's bodies were considered fragile, dainty, and needing of protection, not fit for the exploitation of gynecology. These myths—the promiscuous Black woman and the pure white woman—continue to inform medical practices today. Black women's voices are not given credibility, medical professionals continue to mistakenly believe that Black

people experience less pain than white people, mortality rates for childbirth reflect the devaluation of Black women and the enforced lack of agency in their reproductive capacities.[373]

The myth of the Black rapist, the myth of Black promiscuity, the myth of white femininity, and the myth of white masculinity are entangled. They have serious material consequences and shape our social imaginary, institutions, practices, habits, legal systems, and perception. Thus, with these consequences in mind, myths (1) are weapons, (2) mystify historical/socioeconomic violence, (3) create social anxieties and mobilize fear to maintain power relations and reinforce the "status quo" of white supremacy and patriarchy, (4) and prevent solidarity between groups that have shared interests in one another's emancipation. Myths establish and maintain the white supremacist and patriarchal settler colonial nation state of the U.S. The invention of the myth of the Black rapist was motivated by social, political, and economic interests: to ensure the continuation of white supremacy in ideology and practice, especially when white supremacy was threatened. The myth of the Black rapist increased and continued the practice of lynching. It shaped the social imaginary, delayed the struggle for Black emancipation, continued white supremacist institutions of exploitation of Black labor, reinforced the meta-myth (or organizing myth) of white supremacy. The myth of the Black rapist was reinforced by and reinforces the myths of Black women's promiscuity, white women's purity, white men's entitlement to violence, framed as protection. Each of these myths support the meta myth of white supremacy along with its institutions and practices.[374]

Black feminist thought demonstrates that myths are not discrete, individual phenomenon, but rather are entangled from the very start. Myths aren't individual or separable. They operate in conjunction with one another, contributing to the naturalization of political practices and institutions, social norms and behaviors, economic exploitation, and habits of perception. We

cannot understand them individually (as Barthes attempts to do) because this approach is inadequate for understanding how myths function. The method of critical feminist semiology, inspired by Black feminist thought, Indigenous thought, decolonial thought, is necessary to understand how myths operate collectively *and* how to dismantle them. Our attempts to disrupt myths individually will fail as they do not operate individually, but rather, collectively.

The Myth of the Mammy and The Myth of the Black Matriarch

The myths of the Black mammy and Black matriarch operate as a seemingly contradictory dualism (akin to the operations of the myths of the ecological saint/ecological savage) that also reinforce the meta-myth of white supremacy along with its material practices. The creation of "reified images," "fictitious cliches," and "grossly distorted categories through which the Black woman continues to be perceived," are mythical.[375] The consequences of the myth of the mammy include justifying and romanticizing the institution of slavery and labor conditions during Reconstruction.[376] The consequences of the myth of the black matriarch include the justification of patriarchy within the Black community as necessary for the success of the Black Liberation movement and division within the Black Liberation movement about gender roles.[377] Both of these myths operate alongside the myth of white femininity, which is hegemonic as it requires the presence of women who do "not measure up" to white feminine ideals.[378] Both of these myths sediment racist and sexist habits of perception so that they are naturalized; we see *through* these habits of perception, we do not see them or take notice of them operating.[379]

These two myths operate as together, creating impossible expectations of Black women under the mythical and material systems of white supremacy. Patricia Hill Collins writes,

While the mammy typifies the Black mother figure in white homes, the matriarch symbolizes the mother figure in Black homes. Just as the mammy represents the "good" Black mother, the matriarch symbolizes the "bad" Black mother.[380]

The myth of the mammy as, "the faithful, obedient domestic servant"[381] was in part "designed to mask [the] economic exploitation" of Black women's labor that "many white families in both the middle class and working class [use(d)] to maintain their class position."[382] This myth obscures the economic exploitation of Black women and romanticizes it through fashioning the mammy as "contented" and "accept[ing] of her subordination." Thus this myth alleviates white guilt surrounding the super-exploitation of Black labor.[383] This myth is far from accurate; Black women resisted their oppression in many forms, including in the domestic sphere, unlike the image that casts her as content.[384] After Emancipation, many Black women did not want to work in white homes; yet this labor was *enforced* through the legal system, and the threat of extra-legal mob violence.[385] These labor conditions were exploitative, and the threat of sexual violence in domestic settings was atmospheric, the mammy is described as "loved"[386] "by their white 'families.'"[387]

Black women were encouraged to internalize the myth of the mammy and "transmit to their children the deference behavior many are forced to exhibit… potentially becom[ing] effective conduits for perpetuating racial oppression."[388] The internalization of myths is encouraged because internalization slows resistance to the practices that the myth reinforces.[389] The internalization of the myth of the mammy was not successful as Black women "discouraged their children from believing that they should be deferent to whites and encouraged their children to avoid domestic work."[390] However, for "economic survival" and the avoidance of violence, Black women were often forced to "play the mammy role in paid work settings."[391] This myth

appears to be true because it is was a role performed under the threat of violence or economic ruin if not performed.

The myth of the mammy is intertwined with the myth of the matriarch. The myth of the matriarch is an "overly aggressive, unfeminine" Black woman, or a Black woman who resists the myth of the mammy, resists performing the submissive Black woman contented with their labor for white families done often against their will.[392]

> From an elite white male standpoint, the matriarch is essentially a failed mammy, a negative stigma applied to those African American women who dared to violate the image of the submissive, hard-working servant.[393]

Resisting the myth of the mammy often entailed being cast into the myth of the matriarch. This controls the narrative of Black resistance, as one is cast into a second myth (the matriarch) if the first myth (the mammy) is resisted. This operation is similar to the seemingly opposed myths of the ecological saint/ecological savage where resistance to one often meant being cast into another.

The myth of the Black matriarch was popularized by the 1965 "Moynihan Report," which blames Black women for the "status of the Black race," because Black women do not embody or enact the myth of the mammy or the myth of white femininity.[394] White femininity is a myth "according to [which], 'true' women possessed four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity."[395] Thus, femininity is a racialized social signification, as "true" femininity has been white from the start. The myth of the promiscuous Black woman framed Black women as impure and impious, obstructing Black women from those virtues of (white) femininity. The myth of the mammy framed Black women as submissive and domestic, but if this myth was resisted and submissiveness not performed, the myth of the black matriarch was employed to further prevent Black women from inclusion in "true" (white) femininity.

Domestic labor was "supposed to complement and confirm [women's] inferiority" as "the myth that only the woman, with her diminished capacity for mental and physical labor, [necessitated she] should do degrading housework."[396] However, for Black women, the domestic sphere was a place of resistance and empowerment, "in a very material sense, it was only in domestic life" that Black women could assert their humanity and exercise their freedom.[397] Under the institution of slavery, Black women were forced to work outside of the home and enact the same workload that Black men were forced to enact. They were punished for resisting their enslavement just as violently as Black men and also "had to surrender her child-bearing to alien and predatory economic interests."[398] The institution of slavery ensured that "the Black woman [was] released from the chains of the myth of femininity" thus, Black women were often excluded from being considered "women" or feminine.[399] The myth of the Black matriarch is intertwined with the myth of the white woman. The myth of the matriarch is thus reinforced by and reinforces the myth of the mammy, and the myth of the white woman. It is thus also connected with the myth of Black promiscuity, the myth of the Black rapist, and the myth of white-masculine-violence-as-protection.

One consequence of the myths of the mammy and the matriarch is the division of the Black Liberation movement. The Black matriarch "emasculates" their masculine partners because they "fail to fulfill their traditional 'womanly' duties" (submissive domesticity) and they fail these duties through the myth of the mammy, "spending too much time away from home" working for white families rather than their own.[400] The myth of the Black matriarch was internalized by the Black community; the Black Liberation movement was divided because this myth frames Black women as responsible for "Black economic subordination [which] links gender ideology to explanations of class subordination."[401] This myth "divided the Black

community at a critical period in the Black liberation struggle and created a wider gap between the worlds of Black and white women at a critical period in women's history."[402] In this myth, Black women are collaborators with white supremacy. Within racial uplift ideology and at times within the Black Liberation movement, a dualistic gender hierarchy was seen as a solution.[403]

The myth of the matriarch emerges, thus, in contrast to the myth of white femininity—as white femininity is hegemonic in structure—and as such is used as a rule stick against which to hold others.[404] That is:

> the source of the matriarch's failure is her inability to model appropriate gender behavior… Moreover, the absence of Black patriarchy is used as evidence for Black cultural inferiority. Black women's failure to conform to the cult of true womanhood can then be identified as one fundamental source of Black cultural inferiority.[405]

The myth of the Black matriarch is intertwined with the myth of white femininity as well as myths regarding masculinity as superior. The myth of the Black matriarch prevents solidarity within the Black community, slows progress in resisting and dismantling material conditions and practices that support white supremacy.

The myth of the Black matriarch is reinforced by and reinforces the myth of white femininity as it is "a powerful symbol for both Black and white women of what can go wrong if white patriarchal power is challenged."[406] The myth of white femininity requires submission, domesticity, purity, and piety for white women with the threat of misogynistic violence if resisted.[407] The myth of the Black matriarch reinforces patriarchal myths in addition to white supremacist myths. The myth of the matriarch reinforces the idea that the Black woman is unable "to model appropriate gender behavior," including submissiveness, domesticity, and purity/virginity as described in Beauvoir's work on the myth of the eternal feminine and the unacknowledged racial dynamic therein.[408] The myth of the Black matriarch thus also supports the myth of the promiscuous Black woman as the myth of the matriarch demonstrates that Black

women did not "measure up" to white womanhood. In the "Male supremacy of Southern culture[,] the purity of white womanhood could not be violated by the aggressive sexual activity desired by the white male."[409] White women's sexual purity was of significant economic, social, and political concern; white women promised their virginity to future husbands, whose property they would be. Their sexuality was not a form of self-expression (nor even their own property) but the property of their future husbands. Marriage was vital for the survival of women who were not wealthy; one's virginity had life-changing economic consequences. Rape laws were designed around women-as-property, whose valuable virginity would be stolen from her father (whose property she was until she married) or her husband (whose property she was destined to be).[410] Black women are mythologized as promiscuous in comparison to white women, whose purity was necessitated for economic (and social) survival; they are mythologized as promiscuous through the systematization of rape to maintain the institution of slavery and as an assertion of naturalized white masculinity's entitlement to violence.[411] Following a grammatical pattern of this system of meaning, the myth of the Black matriarch and the myth of the promiscuous Black women blames the oppressed for their own oppression. Myths can hold the oppressed responsible for their oppression through ascribing an "essence" or nature and/or through holding responsible the individual behavior that resists dominant values for their oppression, obscuring the actual systemic and structural causes of oppression.

Conclusion

Myths normalize and naturalize hegemonic social hierarchies. As myths naturalize contingencies, resistance becomes difficult as they are seen as givens. Because they "permeate popular culture and everyday social interaction, they appear to be permanent."[412] However, the method of semiology intends to de-naturalize and re-politicize myths that seem natural or

apolitical. Many Black feminist thinkers do this work in their writing. Though few of them consider their work as semiology,[413] their insights into the ways myths operate together and shape material conditions is significant for building the method of critical feminist semiology.

CHAPTER FOUR: INDIGENOUS AND DECOLONIAL PHILOSOPHIES OF COLONIAL MYTH-MAKING: DE-NATURALIZING, RE-POLITICIZING, AND PURGING SETTLER COLONIAL MYTHOLOGIES

"Indians, the original possessors of the land, seem to haunt the collective unconscious of the white man and to the degree that one can identify the conflicting images of the Indian which stalk the white man's waking perceptions of the world one can outline the deeper problems of identity and alienation that trouble him… Underneath all the conflicting images of the Indian one fundamental truth emerges—the white man knows that he is an alien and he knows that North America is Indian—and he will never let go of the Indian image because he thinks that by some clever manipulation he can achieve an authenticity that cannot ever be his"[414]

–Vine Deloria, Jr., "Foreword: American Fantasy"

Introduction

Indigenous and decolonial scholars demonstrate that myths produce and maintain settler colonialism and white supremacy mythically and materially on Turtle Island (a name for the North American continent based on a common creation story).[415] According to Glen Sean Coulthard, settler colonialism's establishment and longevity requires naturalizing mythologies: "over time, colonized populations tend to internalize the derogatory images imposed on them… these images, along with the structural relations with which they are entwined, come to be recognized (or at least endured) as more or less natural."[416] Two myths employed in the United States to establish and reproduce settler colonialism are the Myth of the Ecological Savage and the Myth of the Ecological Saint.[417] Vine Deloria Jr. and Brian Burkhart describe that these myths reduce the diversity of millions of Indigenous peoples with hundreds of languages, various

cultural practices and forms of social organization, multiplicitous histories and ontologies into two images.[418] These myths reduce millions of diverse peoples into two stereotypical myths and also supports the Myth of Wilderness, that is that the land on North America was pure, pristine wilderness, untouched or unmodified by human beings.[419] Rather than address the existence of millions of diverse peoples already living with substantial modifications to land, Indigenous peoples are reduced to two myths which minimize the perception of multiplicitous human ways of life already occurring. Thus, the Myths of the Ecological Savage/Ecological Saint are intertwined with the Myth of Wilderness, all three of which support one another. Tracy Brynne Voyles' work demonstrates that another myth that produces and reproduces settler colonialism is also related with this cluster: The Myth of Wasteland. The Myth of Wasteland, is that Indigenous people living on the land are wasting its potential, is intertwined with the above three, as I will argue with these scholars in conversation. A fifth myth, the Myth of Biological Race, has also become intertwined with this cluster of four myths, notably through its support from (and of) the Myth of Wasteland as described by both Khiara Bridges and Kim TallBear. That is, the Myth of Wasteland and the Myth of Biological Race mutually reinforce one another. Indigenous and decolonial scholars demonstrate that myths operate together to support the material conditions of settler colonialism and the meta-myth of white supremacy along with its practices and institutions.

Each of these myths, along with the myth of white feminine sexual purity discussed in the previous chapter and the myths of racial purity and Black sexual promiscuity in the next chapter, rely upon the metaphysical myth of purity. The metaphysical myth of purity contributes to each cluster of myths that support the meta-myth of white supremacy discussed in this project. As such, the myth of metaphysical purity operates like a kind of "grammar" rule, as Hortense

Spiller's semiological work describes.[420] That is, other myths rely upon it like a grammar rule or an operational tendency within the system of meanings discussed here. As such, we will discuss it first before turning to the clusters of myths that support the meta-myth of white supremacy as it will be relevant for each of them.

The Myth of Metaphysical Purity

The metaphysical myth of purity is, that a pure, uncontaminated, homogeneous, untouched, uninfluenced entity can exist. This myth operates as a descriptively and normatively to describe qualities of entities, such as sexual purity, racial purity, pure reason, pure wilderness, etc. The myth of metaphysical purity is imbricated with racialization, gender socialization and sexuality: "the metaphysics of purity is necessarily a fragile fiction, a conceit under constant but dis avoided threat" that requires "pretend[ing] that things are separate and unconnected."[421] Categories that are separable in this way require "logic of binaries that produces hard – edged, ossified, exclusive groups."[422] Ambiguity, connectedness, multiplicity, entanglement, complexity, co-constitution, and heterogeneity are treated as transgressions and threats to the myth of metaphysical purity, and such should be avoided.

European modernity's individualism–the self-as-fortress that can be separated from the world and others around them assumes that metaphysical purity is possible. With enough purification of the mind from the body for example, we can access a pure, universal, objective, rationality. However, as feminists, philosophers of race, environmentalists, and phenomenologist, have shown, being-in-the-world is being-of-the-world, or "being co-constituted with the world, ontologically inseparable" from it.[423] The condition of possibility of existing is connection, inseparability, ambiguousness, multiplicitousness, and opaque. The myth of metaphysical purity is "impossible in the actually existing world."[424] Metaphysical purity,

then, requires believing or pretending that the world is other than it is. We are always already situated in an inter-subjective world where in we are dependent on others and interdependent with our environment.

Metaphysical purity, though impossible, is not just descriptive, but is aspirational and normative. Metaphysical purity is something to aspire to, is something that should be inspired to, and something valuable. Metaphysical purity becomes a moral imperative. Whereas "impurity" (being) is something to avoid, is devalued, and is constructed as a threat. The myth of metaphysical purity "is always implicated with the forever failing attempt to delineate material purity – of race, ability, sexuality, or increasingly illness."[425]

The study of purity illuminates the imbrication of the myth of metaphysical purity with other myths of purity. Purity practices and rituals are systems of meaning materialized: "Rituals of purity and impurity create unity in experience… By their means, symbolic patterns are worked out and publicly displayed. Within these patterns… disparate experience is given meaning."[426] Purity practices are systems of meaning-making. They symbolize and express contingent cultural values. Purity practices are contingent – they shift and change overtime and are not universal. Studying them "can help us understand the symbolic work of social relations that stitch together society."[427]

While purity practices are contingent, experience is "inherently untidy."[428] Purity practices appease the aspirational desire for metaphysical purity, they are culturally contingent ways of making sense and meaning of ontological impurity. Purity practices define "an inside and outside; they are practices of defining a 'we.'"[429] Purity practices define belonging, community, who is included in "we" and who is not. Those who are not a part of the inside, who do not belong to "us" are othered. Purity practices express a group self-understanding of us and

them and also serve to uphold this delineation. The myth of white feminine sexual purity, for example, defines a "we" as in white women *and* also defines an "other" within whiteness, as in the myth of the eternal feminine.

Transgressions of purity practices that cross this delineation are punished. These practices and ideologies are normative and moral. Following purity practices is a moral norm – if one does not follow the common dominant practice, one is punished, is not a part of "us," otherness is demonstrated through following alternative practices. Transgressing purity practices is a moral failing and expresses one's immorality: "Purity practices are also productive, normative formulations – they make a claim that a certain way of being as aspire to, good, or to be pursued."[430]

Managing dirt is an example of a purity practice: "dirt is essentially disorder. There's no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eyes of the beholder… Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement but a positive effort to organize"[431] Managing dirt is a purity practice that organizes social life, that expresses a group system of meaning-making and value-ascribing. Purity practices demonstrate how groups of people socially, politically, and economically organize themselves, as well as express their self-understanding: "concepts and practices of purity and impurity, in relation to dirt, as well as other things understood as dirty, tell us something about how people understand the world they live in, and how they can imagine the world becoming."[432] The myth of metaphysical purity operates behind the scenes in the next several myths, but is apparent in the myth of the ecological saint and the myth of wilderness.

The Myth of the Ecological Savage and the Myth of the Ecological Saint

Four interconnected myths contribute to settler colonialism in practice and theory: the Myth of the Ecological Saint, the Myth of Wilderness, the Myth of the Ecological Savage, and

the Myth of Wasteland. These myths *appear* to be oppositional: if a piece of land is wilderness, it is not wasteland; if one is deemed to be a saint, one is not a savage. However, these seemingly oppositional myths can be employed simultaneously and interchangeably. Resistance to one myth is framed as expressing the other, for example, if the myth of the Ecological Saint is resisted, the myth of the Ecological Savage is deployed in its place.[433] Thus, the *meaning* ascribed to resistance (to racializing myths) also attempts to be framed by the system of meaning of settler colonialism and white supremacy, making resistance difficult or as reinforcing the system of meaning in another way. Thus, seemingly opposing individual myths do not operate individually, but rather together. This is yet another way that the naïve approach to myth, treating myths individually, falls short as it cannot explain how oppositional myths work together to reinforce a meta-myth like the myth of white supremacy.

Each of these myths has its supposed contradiction working in tandem, that is the Myth of Wilderness contradicts the ideas of the Myth of Wasteland and vice versa, the Myth of the Ecological Saint contradicts parts of the Myth of the Ecological Savage, but while seemingly contradictory they operate together: they are employed to justify settler colonialism's changing needs. As Vine Deloria Jr. writes, these myths are handy: "The legend of the Indian was embellished or tarnished according to the need of the intermediaries to gain leverage."[434] Myths are ready to be deployed and changed for changing colonial needs. Their inconsistency allows their application to variable needs and also makes resistance difficult: "The white man presented the *problem* of each group in contradictory ways so that neither black nor Indian could understand exactly where the problem existed or how to solve it."[435] Thus the seeming contradictions are useful to colonial interests as there is the danger that of reinforcing one myth through resisting another.[436] These myths shape dominant discourse and limit interpretations of

resistance to fit their needs.[437] Brian Burkhart describes this framework as the "narrative of colonial difference,"[438] a projection that colonizers create in service of colonial goals. In this colonial narrative,

> Indigenous people can only be seen as either anticolonialist or protocolonialist. Indigenous people are either in binary opposition to the colonist (savage vs. civilized) or they are backwards versions of the civilized in the process of trying to reach the status of the civilized colonist.[439]

The narrative of colonial difference impacts how Indigenous people are *perceived.* As I argue, with Deloria and Burkhart, Indigenous people are perceived through the myths that are constructed by colonial frameworks. In the "narrative of colonial difference, which serves to create and maintain the coloniality of power, Indigenous people are seen as transparent to the Western mind."[440] Colonists construct Indigeneity to maintain colonial relations and benefit colonial interests and claim (these constructions of) Indigeneity as an area of their expertise. Regarding this feigned expertise, Deloria writes:

> There appears to be some secret osmosis about Indian people by which they can magically and instantaneously communicate complete knowledge about themselves to these interested whites. Rarely is physical contact required. Anyone and everyone who knows an Indian or who is *interested,* immediately and thoroughly understands them… Easy knowledge about the Indians is a historical tradition. After Columbus "discovered" America he brought back news of a great new world which he assumed to be India and, therefore, filled with Indians. Almost at once European folklore devised a complete explanation of the new land and its inhabitants… they were soon relegated to a picturesque species of wildlife.[441]

The "transparency" of Indigenous peoples builds mythical constructions beneficial to colonial interests. These invented and motivated myths are not historically accurate. The narrative of colonial difference "maintain[s] the 'invented delusional world' of settler coloniality."[442]

Though delusional, these myths are potent as they contribute to settler colonialism in theory and practice, contribute to the elimination and assimilation of Indigenous peoples across

Turtle Island, and they are conditions of possibility for the U.S. nation state and the contemporary American lifeworld. They have historically shaped material conditions and dominant ways of life, and these myths are not remnants of the past but are presently operating.[443]

These myths are two sets of interconnected binaries: Indigenous peoples are *either* saints or savages; the land is *either* wilderness or wasteland; the myth of the Ecological Saint works with the myth of Wilderness and the myth of the Ecological Savage works with the Myth of Wasteland. As Deloria describes,

> American Indians were stereotyped in literature and by the media. They were either a villainous warlike group that lurked in the darkness thirsting for the blood of innocent settlers [(this is the myth of the Ecological Savage)] or the calm, wise, dignified elder sitting on the mesa dispensing his wisdom in poetic aphorisms [(this is the myth of the Ecological Saint.)][444]

That is, these myths operate in an either/or format, as a dualism or a binary. Burkhart also describes these two myths of Indigeneity as operating together in dualism or binary: "If Native people are not ecological Indians, then they are savage Indians."[445]

Both myths also emerge in relation to the myth of wilderness and wasteland, which relies upon a human/nature and a civilization/nature dualism as well. The dualistic myths of the Ecological Savage/Ecological Saint are dependent upon the human/nature and civilization/nature dualism for their operation. As Burkhart describes, within the mythical system of colonial meaning-making,

> some humans are, in fact, outside of nature, and this is what makes them human… [this] paints Native people as a part of nature and so less than human and more like animals, which means being uncivilized and perhaps incapable of being civilized. The Native-as animal… accounts for both of the traditional stereotypes of Native American people: the noble and pristine as well as the vicious and cannibalistic. Native people are like animals, then, like all animals, on this view, they are either innocent and natural, like a deer, or violent killers by nature, like a bear…[this] is a purely mythological construction of

Native people from within the Western mind on the basis of and support of the coloniality of power.[446]

These myths emerge out of and support settler colonialism and the meta-myth of white supremacy. Additionally, a form of the individual myth of white supremacy is detailed above; *white* civilization is outside of nature and being outside of nature is what makes white people human and dehumanizes non-white people as a part of nature.[447][448]

These myths are sedimented into the social imaginary, collective unconscious, and habits of perception. Deloria writes about the perception of Indigenous activism during the Civil Rights era, which illuminated how

> Americans simply refuse to give up their longstanding conceptions of what an Indian is. It was this fact more than any other that inhibited any solution of the Indian problems and projected the impossibility of their solution anytime in the future. People simply could not connect what they believed Indians to be with what they were seeing on their television sets.[449]

The myths of the Ecological Savage and Ecological Saint shape the perception of Indigenous peoples. These myths have become habituated, baked into practices of perception. Euro-Americans would rather cling to these two myths than make sense of contemporary Indigenous activism and Indigenous activism of the 1970s. Deloria here is describing a problem that myths enact in a way that resonates with Angela Davis' perspective of myths slowing progress towards emancipation.[450] This is a pattern, or a grammar if we stretch and employ Hortense Spiller's language, of mythical clusters of racialized myths slowing progress towards emancipation. These myths are *naturalized* over time and are thus difficult to disrupt, which contributes to continued success of settler-colonial operations: "[E]xperiencing the reality of Native people alive today does little to disrupt the seemingly naturalness of these imagined Native people."[451]

The Myth of Wilderness

The Myth of Wilderness is that the land in the "new world" was *pure, virginal, untouched, pristine.* The myth of wilderness entails refusing to recognize human modification to land.[452] The Myth of Wilderness is part of a dualism with the Myth of Wasteland (land that is a waste because it is inhospitable by European standards, land resisting order with wasted or left-over potential by the non-European people living there, and/or land that is unwanted or undesirable by/for Europeans). These dualistic myths about land operate similarly to the myths of the Ecological Saint/Savage. Burkhart writes, "Nature is, just as with Indians, under coloniality and the narrative of colonial difference, either pure, innocent, and pristine (noble) or wild, cruel, and without order (savage)."[453] Land and Indigenous peoples are mythologized into either/or dichotomies that serve colonial interests. Land as wilderness and land as wasteland operate with the dualism between nature and culture. Charles Mills describes the nature/culture dualism as "the crucial human metamorphosis" in dominant Euro-American narratives "from 'natural' man to 'civil/political' man, from the resident of the state of nature to the citizen of the created society."[454] This mythical metamorphosis in European social contract theory adds what is *unsaid* in the delusions required to establish and maintain white supremacist politics, morals, and epistemology in the white settler colonial state. Mills identifies this metamorphosis as the "transformation of human populations into 'white' and 'nonwhite' men."[455] The "role played by the state of nature" is the demarcation of white/nonwhite space and a racialization of land.[456] The creation of the myth of wilderness and the myth of wasteland depend upon and are intertwined with the dualistic myths of nature/culture, nonwhite/white. According to this mythical metamorphosis, the white settler state "establishes" society and

> implies the denial that a society already existed; the creation of society *requires* the intervention of white men, who are thereby positioned as *already* sociopolitical beings.

White men who are (definitionally) already part of society encounter non-whites who are not, who are 'savage' residents of a state of nature characterized in terms of wilderness, jungle, wasteland.[457]

With Mills' passage above, we can see that both the myth of wilderness and the myth of wasteland racialize land; within the colonial system of meaning, nature is mythologized as dichotomous with culture, civilization, society, and/or the human.

The myth of wilderness also relies on the myth of metaphysical purity: "the land is *terra nullius, vacuum domicilium,* again 'virgin,'" whereas the myth of wasteland as Traci Brynne Voyles describes, "is a racial and spatial signifier that renders an environment and the bodies that inhabit it pollutable."[458] Environments that are typically described as wasteland include deserts and marshes. They are perceived as worthless (for colonial interests), unfit for farming, or as "utterly unfit for white civilization."[459] Yet, wastelands became valuable for colonial interests when extractable resources the land "possessed" were "discovered".[460] Lands once described as wasteland become exploited, unchecked extraction of resources ensues,[461] which leads them to *become* wastelands and furthermore the *waste* from these processes of extraction is often toxic, not removed or cleaned, leading to serious environmental racism and social injustices.[462] According to the myth, wasteland is not pure, like wilderness, and thus it can be exploited. This operates similarly to the valued sexual purity of white women and the protection of their virginity as property alongside the constructed sexual impurity of women of color and the perceived availability of their bodies to white men because of it.

The Myth of Wilderness became part of the U.S. origin narrative naturalized in the dominant American system of meaning. The myth of wilderness still permeates discourses of the establishment of the U.S. nation state, Indigenous ways of life, the perception of "nature," as well as Euro-American environmentalists' conservation efforts.[463]

The Myth of Wilderness entails that before European settlement, the land was pure, untouched, *virginal*, for-the-taking, not managed, not cared for; this myth contributes to the language of "discovery." This myth requires overlooking millions of people with distinctive cultures, religions, languages, and lifestyles;[464] major roadways and trade routes; large-scale gardening and forest management; the creation of habitats for wildlife that contribute to the sustenance of large numbers of people; agricultural know-how that created the conditions for corn to grow across Turtle Island; massive irrigation projects and canals that provide drinking water; the construction of structures for living, practicing religion, bathing, etc. The violent removal and ethnic cleansing of millions of people is denied through this myth. This myth negates that people lived on Turtle Island at all. The myth claims that Europeans discovered a *virginal*, pure land for the taking, that took no violence to acquire.[465]

As Burkhart writes, this myth is intertwined with the myth of the Ecological Saint, "the view of Native people as existing in a state of nature as seen in the concept of the noble ecological Indian." The Ecological Saint is also intertwined with the myth of metaphysical purity; Burkhart continues, "As ecological Indians, Native people are considered to live *in* nature, whereas civilized people live *outside* of nature by operating or controlling nature to create civilization in the first place. Native people, like their animal counterparts, do no harm to their environment or even modify their environment beyond the manner in which an animal might."[466] These myths, though seemingly oppositional, are complementary and mutually reinscribing. The myth of wilderness and the myth of the ecological Saint/Savage operate together to render land "morally open for seizure, expropriation, settlement, development, in a word *peopling.*"[467] The myth of wilderness, also known as *terra nullius,* holds that

> [t]here is just no one there. Or even if it is conceded that humanoid entities are present, it is denied that any real appropriation, any human shaping of the world, is taking place. So

there is still no one there…In both cases [(the myth of wilderness and the myth of the ecological saint/savage)], then, this will be *unpeopled* land, inhabited at most by 'varmints,' 'critters,' 'human beasts,' who are an obstacle to development, rather than capable of development themselves, and whose extermination or at least the clearing away is a prerequisite for civilization.[468]

Thus, although contradictory, either myth justifies expropriation of Indigenous land and people, the dispossession of Indigenous people from their land, and the extermination/genocide of those who inhabit the land, who are perceived and described as wild animals as Deloria, Burkhart, and Mills describe.[469] These myths continue to operate today, even though they are fabricated.[470]

This myth is naturalized into the social imaginary of the U.S. population, serving as "an insidious smoke screen meant to obscure the fact that the very existence of the country is a result of the looting of an entire continent and its resources."[471] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz describes that this myth obscures the violence and force making possible the U.S. nation state, the wealth accumulated by Europeans and European nation-states, and the contemporary American lifeworld. Hiding this violence "allows one to safely put aside present responsibility for continued harm done by that past and the questions of reparations, restitution, and reorganizing society."[472] This myth thus appeases white guilt through erasing the violence that continues to profit settlers, prevents the currently enjoyed privileges of settlers from being "taken away," and avoids changes in material and economic conditions that were a result of this violence.[473] Myths like the Myth of Wilderness prevent, obscure, invisibilizes, the reality that the creation of the United States "has entailed torture, terror, sexual abuse, massacres, systematic military occupations, removals of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral territories, and removals of Indigenous children to military-like boarding schools." Myths are avoidance mechanisms[474] and appease collective white guilt.[475] This myth demonstrates how myths operate and contribute to other myths' reinforcement even though they may appear to be incongruous.

These myths operate regardless of their verity or accuracy. Myths do not have to be true to operate; in relation to the Myth of Wilderness/Myth of the Ecological Saint, Burkhart writes, "A forest where humans have never been is considered pristine, as pristine is another way of describing something existing in a state of nature without human interference. The narrative of colonial difference then constructs Native identity as one where existing in a forest is the same as not existing in a forest; a forest where only Native people have lived is the same as a forest where no one has lived."[476] Thus we can see that these myths are "*localized and global cognitive disfunctions*" that are "*psychologically and socially functional"* that is, these myths *function* even though they are historically inaccurate.[477] They function as "a cognitive and moral economy psychically *required* for conquest, colonization, and enslavement."[478]

The Myth of Wilderness is connected to the Myth of the "Ecological Saint," that is, Indigenous people here were not considered to be *people* impacting the land, but were rather perceived as a part of the "natural" world or as animals living in harmony with the land.[479] Thus, this is how a forest where Indigenous peoples live is constructed as a forest where no one lives.[480] Though this myth is nonsensical and relies upon other myths that also are not accurate, it has a serious and deadly grip on the social imaginary and collective.[481]

These myths shape and compose the social imaginary and become sedimented into our habits of perception. The Myth of Wilderness involved not perceiving (or acknowledging that one had indeed perceived) the presence of human beings and management of the environment. Note the inaccurate perception involved in this encounter described by Robin Wall Kimmerer:

> For millennia, from Mexico to Montana, women have mounded up the earth and laid these three seeds [–corn, beans, and squash—] in the ground, all in the same square foot of soil. When the colonists on the Massachusetts shore first saw indigenous gardens, they inferred that the savages did not know how to farm. To their minds, a garden meant straight rows of single species, not a three-dimensional sprawl of abundance.[482]

Indigenous gardening practices involve planting species of plants *together* because there are reciprocal benefits to plants. Through an intimate knowledge of plants, soil, bacteria, and insects, Indigenous peoples learned that these three plants grow best together.[483] Indigenous agriculture focused on relationships of reciprocity: "There are layers upon layers of reciprocity in this garden: between the bean and the bacterium, the bean and the corn, the corn and the squash, and ultimately, with the people."[484]

This contrasts with Euro-American agriculture, wherein plants are grown in evenly spaced rows; one plant per area, never two or three plants together. The end of rows marks divisions of private property:

> In indigenous agriculture, the practice is to modify the plants to fit the land. As a result, there are many varieties of corn domesticated by our ancestors, all adapted to grow in many different places. Modern agriculture, with its big engines and fossil fuels, took the opposite approach: modify the land to fit the plants, which are frighteningly similar clones.[485]

While Indigenous agriculture focuses on the relationships, European agriculture is concerned with "produc[ing] a 'clean' field;" that is, this kind of agriculture values "uniformity and the efficiency it yields."[486]

Indigenous agriculture practices were successful and sustainable. This was perceived by colonizers as a "messy" field instead of a clean one. Between these stark differences in practice and the habits of perception therein, "the long ranks of corn in the conventional fields seem like a different being altogether."[487] With a Euro-American understanding of what a garden *should* look like already in place, settlers did not perceive a garden as a garden. Admitting they did indeed perceive a garden was not to their benefit. The habits of perception sedimented into colonialist experiences of the world included a normative image of agriculture—clean, efficient, rows of one plant, ending at private property lines. With these habits of perception baked into

place, upon perceiving Indigenous agriculture, colonizers did not perceive agriculture at all. This is an example of the "agreement to *mis*interpret the world" that is required for white supremacist practices and institutions to be established and maintained.

Kimmerer, in her description of the delusional habits of perception required to not see a garden where a garden is (or to see a forest where Indigenous people live as a forest where no one lives) alludes to the myth of the "Ecological Savage" as well. The intimate and extensive knowledge that these Indigenous practices expressed could not be the case as the myth of the "Ecological Savage" considers Indigenous peoples as less advanced, less "civilized," further back in the teleological history of progress than Europeans.[488] These two myths demonstrate an unwillingness to perceive Indigenous peoples as practicing an agriculture that works (and that works more sustainably than Euro-American agricultural practices). Rather, the perception of Indigenous peoples either as "Ecological Saints" or "Ecological Savages" naturalized through myths animalizes and dehumanizes Indigenous people as such a part of nature. That they were not perceived as human, but rather, as animal, allows violent practices required to establish the white settler nation state.[489] The perception of Indigenous peoples as "savages" furthered the Myth of Wasteland; Indigenous people were perceived as not taking care of their land, or as *wasting* its potential to produce.

The myth of wilderness *materializes* itself in pernicious ways alongside this cluster of myths; Mills describes the collective operation like this:

> there are no people there in the first place [(the myth of wilderness)]; in the second place, they're not improving the land [(the myth of wasteland)]; and in the third place—oops!— they're all already dead anyway [(owing to the violence required for settler colonialism to establish itself)] (and honestly there really weren't that many to begin with), so there are no people there, as we said in the first place.[490]

Even though the myth of wilderness requires that no one lives on the land and the myth of wasteland requires that people *do* live on the land, this contradiction between the two does not prevent the myth of wilderness from manifesting. The contradiction between the two is operational to mediate the inaccuracy of the myth of wilderness to begin with. When the myth of wilderness is contradicted through encountering people actually living on Turtle Island, the myth of wasteland is conveniently deployed; when the myth of wasteland is deployed, the myth of wilderness manifests through genocidal practices ("extermination of vermin,"/genocide of the animalized Ecological Savage/Saint) until it becomes "true." When Indigenous people resist the myths of the Ecological Saint, the myth of the Ecological Savage is deployed; this cluster of myths change as necessary for the establishment and continuation of the white settler state.

We can see how the naïve approach to myth can be dangerous as it prevents understanding how myths operate together to establish, maintain, and reproduce material conditions. Thus, the methodology of critical feminist semiology is necessary to understand how myths function together to establish and maintain the settler colonial white supremacist state including its practices and institutions.

The Myth of Wasteland

The myth of wasteland is the coalescence of (at least) three interrelated forms. Each form is entangled with the other myths in this cluster (myth of wilderness, myth of ecological savage/ecological saint).

The first form of the myth of wasteland is that Indigenous people *wasted* their land. Within Euro-American perception, Indigenous land was not utilized as efficiently or "effectively" as possible. In the hands of Euro-Americans practices of private property and

capitalist modes of production, this land would not be "wasted." The myth of wasteland is

motivated by the desire for Indigenous land, as Deloria writes:

> Whenever Indian land was needed, the whites pictured the tribes as wasteful people who
> refused to develop their natural resources. Because the Indians did not "use" their
> lands…the lands should be taken from them and given to people who knew what to do
> with them.[491]

In this colonial encounter, Euro-American relation with land is based on land as object or

private property whereas Indigenous relations of land, "land as kin," contrasted with this

framework.[492] Private property is a contingent sociohistorical economic construction that shapes

Euro-American perception. The "waste" that Euro-Americans perceived was that the land has the

potential to produce more; more could be extracted from the land.[493]

If the myth of wasteland is employed rather than the myth of wilderness, Indigenous

practices are not engaging with land as they *should* or *could* be. The myth of wasteland is

normative, as it values Euro-American private property practices and capitalist production and

devalues Indigenous relationships with land. In this myth, Euro-American land management

doesn't "waste" the land's potential—that is, all the land's potential is utilized, none is

preserved. In this myth, Euro-American practices are considered more "advanced," "civilized,"

and superior to Indigenous practices as measured by maximizing the volume of production and

resource extraction. Indigenous practices of land relationships, including agriculture, gardening,

hunting, caretaking, fire burning etc., are generally not oriented to the land through maximizing

production or profit. Indigenous practices with land tend to be relationships of reciprocal care.

Glen Sean Coulthard describes Indigenous relationships with land as anticapitalist: they are "*a*

system of reciprocal relations and obligations [that] can teach us about living in relation to one

another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms."[494] Euro-Americans

perceived *lack* of domination and exploitation as a waste of the land's potential, rather than as caring for land in the long term as kin.[495]

The second form of wasteland stems from the capitalistic Euro-American orientation towards land, which according to Voyles establishes "an extractive, proprietary relationship that assimilated land itself into a capitalist political economy and required that the land in question be, we might say, properly productive."[496] Lands were valued for their productivity and what could be extracted from them. Lands that are not "properly productive" were perceived as "barren." As Voyles describes, the land-as-barren habit of perception is a "deeply gendered stand-in for 'wasteland' that feminized the land in a way that foreclosed traditionally valued feminine traits, particularly reproduction."[497] Land on Turtle Island presented challenges to "American notions of what good agricultural land should look like." This gendered and capitalistic perception of land constructed the narrative of the "American West" and is sedimented into habits of perception in a racialized manner as well. For an example, Diné land was taken to be "useless for agricultural purposes" and described as "utterly unfit for white civilization".[498] This myth of wasteland is discursive and material. The myth of wasteland manifests itself, a process and a verb that Voyles calls *wastelanding*, in which "racialized lands are made to seem uninhabited or unimportantly inhabited, represented as worthless, and then— 'abracadabra, hocus pocus'—systematically stripped of their material and ideological worth."[499] Extractive Euro-American land practices turns lands that were perceived as wasteland *into* wasteland *materially* as they extract everything possible from the land. Mythical wasteland becomes wasteland through Euro-American practices. Under Euro-American treatment, lands are unsustainably exploited for short-term gain in contrast with care-based relationships that center the well-being of land and its interconnected inhabitants in the long term.[500]

The perception of land as "unimportantly inhabited" is the myth of wilderness and the related invisibility of Indigenous peoples through the myth of the Ecological Saint. The myth of wasteland is entangled with the myth of wilderness, the myth of the Ecological saint, and the myth of the Ecological savage. These myths weave together a system of meaning, a white settler system that upholds the meta-myth of white supremacy. The delusional mythical system is ontologized or naturalized.

This material manifestation of wasteland (wastelanding) connects to the third form of wasteland. *Wastelanding* is "a racial and spatial process of signification that makes extreme environmental degradation possible."[501] Wasteland signifies racialized people and racialized land as pollutable. This myth manifests environmental injustices in "wasteland," and environmental privileges on land that is deemed to be white civilization.[502] This third manifestation of wasteland is the result of *wastelanding* (the second form of wasteland) detailed above. These two intertwined manifestations of wasteland occur on opposing ends of the process of resource extraction/removal and the dumping of toxic materials/creation of environmentally hazardous conditions through "waste" (here intended akin to "trash").[503] Voyles utilizes the metaphor of a treadmill to illuminate this dynamic:

> The treadmill requires 'wastelands' from which resources are increasingly extracted and where (often toxic) waste is increasingly dumped... raw materials for products, after all, must come from somewhere, and toxic waste must go somewhere... In this way, just as civilization has been constituted on and through savagery, environmental privilege is made out of the discursive process of rendering a space marginal, worthless, pollutable.[504]

The myth of the ecological savage is employed in the myth of wasteland as land that can be polluted, in contrast to white "civilization" which stands apart from and outside of "nature" and must not be polluted. People inhabiting these lands are also rendered pollutable. Wasteland then

is a "racial and spatial signifier that renders an environment *and the bodies that inhabit it pollutable*" (italics added).[505] This leads to environmental and health injustices that will be explained through the myth of biological race.[506] People as pollutable is naturalized as "biological difference." The Myth of Biological Race hides environmental and health injustices as contingent and created through claiming the source of health disparities in biology, rather than because of racialized *wastelanding* and its impacts on inhabitants of those lands deemed to also be waste.[507] The myth of wasteland is intertwined with and supported by the myth of biological race. The Myth of Biological Race is in turn supported by the manifestations of the Myth of Wasteland, as I argue, though Voyles does not describe.

The Myth of Biological Race

Khiara Bridges describes that the Myth of Biological Race proposes that "not only are races biologically distinct from one another, but, by virtue of this biological distinction, deficiencies and dysfunctions can be found in some races (i.e. the non-white ones) and not others (i.e. the white race.)"[508] My interpretation of Bridges' description is that the Myth of Biological Race has two interrelated parts: (1) races are biologically distinct (2) and the normative claim that some races are more dysfunctional and deficient in comparison to others. This myth applies to Indigenous peoples and other racialized groups.

The myth of biological race is charged with the value statement that the "white" race has a superior biology. Thus in the conceptual framework I offer of clusters of myth, we can see that the myth of biological race reinforces the myth of white superiority: "the genetic heritage of this group destined them to be free of the pathologies of poverty, nonwhiteness, and importantly, physical and mental impairments."[509] The valuation of the white race over other races supported the eugenics movement (in addition to wastelanding as seen above).

State sanctioned eugenics claimed a "hierarchy of racial difference, with non-white races being biologically *inferior* to the white race."[510] The emphasis on race as a genetic, biological distinction, led to state reproductive control; the state sought to maintain supposed white biological superiority and the "purity" of the white race, employing the myth of metaphysical purity as well. The myth of biological race naturalized the myth of white superiority, utilized to justify white supremacist institutions and practices. The myth of biological race naturalized and normalized white supremacist institutions and practices: white people *should* be in positions of power and in control of the state because they are biologically, naturally, fit to do so.

This racial myth backgrounds the eugenics movement; white, middle-and-upper-class people born in the United States pass on genes benefitting the human species; eugenics' preservation of white racial purity would supposedly "save the country, and the world, from falling into disrepair."[511] The myth of biological race attempts to manifest materially through eugenic institutions, systems, and practices. According to Bridges, the eugenic state—seeking to eradicate disability—manifests the appearance myth of biological race through the dysgenic state, which seeks to create or manufacture disability among certain racialized groups.

While eugenics naturalized this myth, it "did not give rise to the myth of biological race." Rather, this myth was in circulation as pro-slavery ideology. The myth of biological race was used as justification for the institution of slavery: "black people's biology rendered them not intelligent enough, industrious enough, and non-criminal enough to assume the august task of freedom."[512] Anti-black cultural perception and practices were reinforced by the novel "science" deemed to be objective and given epistemic authority, "Though the pseudoscientific classification of persons based on race in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave greater legitimacy to racism, this new science merely reinforced old ideological notions."[513] The myth

of biological race was utilized to justify the institution of chattel slavery and eugenic practices, which make this myth appear real, "expanded and deepened" the myth itself.

Racial disparities in health makes the myth of biological race *appear* to be the case (Bridges describes, "there is just *something* about nonwhite people that causes them to be born more frequently with anencephaly, heart defects, oral clefts, musculoskeletal impairments, spina bifida, cognitive disabilities, etc."[514]), but this myth is sociogenic, not natural. There are *no* biological differences between people who are racialized into blackness, brownness, or whiteness.[515] The myth that racial biological differences exist, with some races more biologically fit than others, is a naturalized, biologized sociogenic construction created for economic and political ends; what we *refer* to when we employ the term "race" in this biological register are "genetically arbitrary groupings" of people.[516][517] Myths justify and naturalize institutions and practices that make the myth of white supremacy *seem* true or *appear* to be the case. For an example, racial environmental injustices, like practices of wastelanding, naturalize contingent sociogenic health hazards, removing responsibility from settler colonial expropriation of land and white supremacist exposure of racial populations to hazardous waste.[518]

Racialized populations (and low-income populations) are exposed to more environmental toxins than white middle-class populations. Environmental toxins lead to serious health complications and fetus impairments.[519] Nationally, "race was by far the most prominent factor in the location of hazardous-waste landfills."[520] People who live in proximity to toxic waste sites are more likely to be hospitalized for asthma.[521] Living near toxic waste facilities can increase chronic health problems (including asthma, diabetes, hypertension).[522] Practices ensuring/perpetuating social, political, and economic inequalities, including housing, education, and employment, and healthcare, produce disproportionate health effects (including heart attacks,

birth defects, and asthma).[523] The state deploys the myth of biological race to naturalize and justify white supremacist practices and institutions (such as wastelanding, placement of waste facilities, and eugenic practices) which produces what appears to be the myth. In the myth of biological race, "racial minorities were imagined to be impaired" and then "actually become impaired due to environmental injustice" because the state "fails to protect its disproportionally nonwhite citizens from impairment-producing environmental toxins."[524][525]

The appearance of the myth of biological race also removes moral scrutiny from white supremacist practices and institutions, as biology is held responsible instead.[526] The state, utilizes the myth of biological race to mystify *why* these health disparities occur, hiding cultural, political, and economic policies and practices that contribute to these health disparities. The myth of biological race is instantiated as the cause of health disparities rather than white supremacist institutions and practices.[527] The grammatical pattern of white innocence/non-white culpability within the meta-myth of white supremacy occurs here as well:[528] "The elusive search for the gene that causes Black people to die from *everything* at higher rates than white people" demonstrates the way that the myth of biological race is employed to deny responsibility for racial environmental injustices *and* employed to place blame on the racially oppressed for the results of their oppression.[529] Looking away from environmental injustices and towards genetics reproduces this myth. Rather than address environmental injustices (and housing discrimination), the state blames (or finds the "origin" of the problem within) oppressed people for the consequences of their oppression. This myth follows a deployment to production to deployment cycle (like the myth of wasteland).[530]

This myth ensures that the state does not have to protect citizens from environmental toxins, which would be expensive, and a threat to corporations' profits. This is one way in which

the myth of biological race is politically and economically motivated for settler colonial ends, supporting the meta-myth of white supremacy.[531] The myth of biological race reinforces the myth of superior white biology, which strengthens white supremacist institutions and practices, all the while deflecting responsibility away from said institutions and practices. The previous chapter demonstrated how the myth of biological race is politically and economically motivated to justify the institution of slavery, the Black Codes, and the practice of lynching.

Conclusion

Indigenous and decolonial scholars have shown that mythologies are useful for settler colonialism—the primary scholars considered in this chapter include Vine Deloria Jr., Brian Burkhart, Glen Sean Coulthard, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Traci Brynne Voyles, and Khiara Bridges. Systems of meaning (including mythical clusters) are interrelated with material manifestations (in this case settler colonialism and expropriation of Indigenous land).[532] Over time, clusters of myths are naturalized and internalized by Indigenous peoples and settlers alike, reproducing conditions of settler colonialism.[533] Internalized myths of Indigeneity, when Indigenous people believe the myths that are constructed about them, can also make myths *appear* to be true: "Indians became convinced they were the world's stupidest people."[534] Leanee Betasamosake Simpson describes the production of these internalized myths, "this pillar of white supremacy and colonialism—the idea that we are naturally less than our white counterparts— continues to produce generations of Native youth that believe they are."[535] Constructions of Indigeneity are internalized as real Indigeneity "a key block in the development of young Indian people."[536] Because epistemic authority has been granted to myths about Indigenous people that support the meta-myth of white supremacy, and they are internalized and naturalized, they begin

to be produced by Indigenous peoples themselves, ensuring settler colonialism's longevity.

Deloria describes,

> Indian people begin to feel that they are merely shadows of a mythical super-Indian. Many anthros spare no expense to reinforce this sense of inadequacy in order to further support their influence over Indian people… Many Indians have come to parrot the ideas of anthropologists because it appears that anthropologists know everything about Indian communities. Thus many ideas that pass for Indian thinking are in reality theories originally advanced by anthropologists and echoed by Indian people…[537]

These myths are internalized and naturalized so that it is difficult to tell myth from reality, especially as myths manifest in material conditions or attempt to make themselves appear real. Naturalized myths retold intergenerationally reproduces the meta-myth of white supremacy and the material conditions of settler colonialism. Revealing myths, de-naturalizing and re-politicizing them can resist the continuation of the meta-myth of white supremacy and the continuation of settler colonialism. Thus, as Coulthard describes, decolonization requires a "process of purging the psycho-existential complexes battered into [Indigenous peoples] over the course of their colonial experiences."[538]

Settler colonialism's maintenance also depends upon "the production of the specific modes of colonial thought, desire, and behavior that implicitly or explicitly commit the colonized to the types of practices and subject positions that are required for their continued domination."[539] That is, Coulthard identifies that adopting colonial *practices*, participating in colonial institutions, desiring colonial values, are all helpful for colonialism's maintenance, which contributes to ongoing Indigenous oppression. Simpson describes that this produces generations of Indigenous youth who believe they "are naturally less than [their] white counterparts" and that "perhaps more dangerously, believe that achieving what matters in settler colonial [society]—degrees, economic prosperity, home ownership, or whatever—makes them a

more valuable Indigenous person. It does, but only through the lens of white supremacy."[540]

Thus, treating practices, institutions, rituals, as included in systems of meaning, is necessary; as argued in chapter one, practices, institutions, rituals, are political and motivated systems of meaning that should be within the semiologists' concern. To disregard them is to ignore or erase vital aspects of the reproduction of systems of meaning, including the reproduction of the meta-myth of white supremacy.

CONCLUSION: RACE AS A SEMIOLOGICAL SYSTEM AND LIMITATIONS OF THE METHOD

> "The black man must wage the struggle on two levels: whereas historically these levels are mutually dependent, any unilateral liberation is flawed, and the worst mistake would be to believe their mutual dependence automatic. […] An answer must be found on the objective as well as the subjective level. […] Genuine disalienation will have been achieved only when things, in the most materialist sense, have resumed their rightful place."[541]
> –Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

Rather than treating myths as discrete and individual, we should consider them as deeply related with one another. The meta-myth of white supremacy demonstrates the necessity of doing so as it operates as clusters of myths that reinforce and are reinforced by one another. If we are attempting to change or resist systems of meaning we must address how they operate, reflect their interrelations, and their material manifestations in the rich, entangled, thickness of the lifeworld we share.

Thus, building a methodology of critical feminist semiology is necessary. Critical feminist semiology is a methodology that de-naturalizes and re-politicizes myths collectively and is concerned with their material manifestations. This enactment of a critical feminist semiology de-naturalizes and re-politicizes clusters of myths that are motivated to establish, maintain, and reproduce patriarchy, settler-colonialism, and white supremacy.

Indigenous scholars, decolonial scholars, Black feminist scholars, and anti-racist scholars have demonstrated that myths operate collectively to create, maintain, and reinforce patriarchy, settler colonialism, and white supremacy. Feminist phenomenologists and critical phenomenologists demonstrate that employing a phenomenological semiology can help us navigate the tension that arises between the embodied subject and the linguistic and mythical world, the inherited meanings and values that the person must face in their lived experience, and

the capacity for potential alternative meaning-making and world-creating that subjects engage in. Studying myth through lived experience, as seen in Beauvoir's work—demonstrates that semiology and a phenomenology that takes seriously the socio-political world, are not only compatible but mutually enriching. Lived experience exceeds myths even though it is shaped by them.[542] Myths make resistance and alternative meaning-making difficult, though not impossible,[543] as seen in the introductory debate between Joan Scott and Linda Alcoff and in the chapter on Beauvoir's semiological phenomenology.

Semiology is a resourceful methodology for scholars studying race, gender, colonialism, class. Race is akin to a semiological system, meaning that race is a contingent, motivated, system of meaning-making that operates like a language and operates through clusters of mythologies; "race belongs to a complex system of meanings that in important ways works very much like a language."[544] That is, race "is nearly as pervasive and intuitive a device for expression and interpretation as any natural language."[545] We think, make sense of the world, and interpret the world through language; language shapes and is shaped by our experiences.[546] Languages express a world of social values and language naturalizes itself and becomes transparent to its speakers.[547] We speak and think through a language without having to consider its rules as we do so—it becomes a facet of our embodiment and the way in which we navigate existing.[548] Therefore, "to think of race by analogy to natural language—foregrounding its pervasiveness and familiarity, its intuitive practicality, and its central role in experience, cognition, and expression—is to position it as a subject that fairly invites the work of philosophy" and the work of critical feminist semiology.[549] Race is "a political symbol" that is "constitutive of social realities within specific historical contexts."[550] Race signifies, is "*produced by* and *productive of* social realities."[551] Because racial myths are produced, they can be changed; changing them

requires significant collective resistance to the social realities they have produced and naturalized. Race is mythical, motivated, and contributes to the constitution of our shared world, even though contingently so. The naturalization and sedimentation of race requires the work of de-naturalization and re-politicization to resist racial myths; racism as "a politically powerful set of sedimented social practices" demonstrates that the methodology of critical feminist semiology is resourceful as it studies practices, institutions, rituals, habits, as a part of social life and as they are lived in order to reveal what has become naturalized, transparent, or assumed.[552] Bodies themselves become racial significations overdetermined by myths imposed upon them.[553] Thus, studying embodiment and lived experiences of navigating a mythical world and resisting overdetermining mythical meanings is vital to the method.[554] Philosophies that center embodiment and lived experiences, such as the Black feminist tradition and feminist and critical phenomenologies, have significant contributions to make to the methodology of critical feminist semiology.

The methodology of critical feminist semiology enacted here identified clusters of myths that support patriarchy, settler colonialism, and white supremacy; demonstrated their interconnections and reciprocal support; revealed their material manifestations; and considered how they are experienced in social life. The mythical network of concern has been the meta-myth of white supremacy as this collective of myths materializes into patriarchal, settler colonial, and white supremacist practices, institutions, rituals, and habits. Myths have generally not received enough attention to the harm that they can produce and maintain—often, they go unnoticed and if they are noticed they are often treated as "just" myths, as unrelated to material conditions and lived experiences. However, following the work of Paul Taylor, if philosophy is "think[ing] through the things that are so close to us, so deeply ingrained in experience, so

seemingly obvious that they can easily escape scrutiny" we must start exactly there: de-naturalizing and re-politicizing the seemingly obvious.

I did not address a limitation of Barthes' semiology that I intended to do in this work. Barthes acknowledges how language can contribute to shaping mythologies, but not how mythologies can contribute to shaping language. I seek to detail this in my upcoming work, first through the under-researched phenomenon of white women's linguistic power emerging during the Jim Crow era, especially in the South. While the area of epistemic injustice has blossomed in contemporary intersectional feminisms, the way in which white women's linguistic claims could (and often would) lead to terrorist violence, including lynching, has been underemphasized. That is, the myth of the Black rapist contributed to white feminine linguistic terrorism, demonstrating that myths can in fact shape language and language use.

While this phenomenon seems on the surface less relevant to language and myths today, this research is unfortunately still necessary, as evidenced by the accusatory spoken language of Amy Cooper leveled at Christian Cooper in Central Park. White women's linguistic power remains a threat today even though this linguistic phenomenon emerged alongside the myth of the Black rapist. Carolyn Bryant contributed to Emmett Till's abduction, torture, and murder through lynching, because of her linguistic accusations that he offended her. As such, white women's linguistic power historically has been leveled at Black men with violent consequences, which is unfortunately still present in our language use today. Because this is an under researched area of philosophy of language, race, and gender that has such severe and violent consequences in our everyday lives, this research is pertinent to pursue and can be done through enacting a critical feminist semiology. This future project also demonstrates a difference in my work from that of Black feminist philosophers included here: because of the methodology of

semiology, I argue that mythology and language influence one another. The thinkers I engaged with here primarily work on a myth here or there, but do not explicitly theorize how myth influences language nor how language influences myth.[555]

The second cultural phenomenon that demonstrates this limitation of Barthes' work is that of "locker room talk." Locker room talk is a linguistic phenomenon based on the perception of a place as safe for language speakers to discuss topics that reflect and enact patriarchal power. Locker room talk is not confined to the literal locker room but emerges in environments that encourage performances of hegemonic masculinity and that also are perceived as shielding consequences of the speakers' language use (because of the assumption that others in the "locker room" also subscribe to hegemonic masculine norms). Just as patriarchy is not confined to rooms where conversations are deemed to be private, locker room talk spreads across social gathering spaces. This linguistic phenomenon is an enactment of gender signification, or performance, which is shaped by patriarchal myths and contributes to their shaping as well. This would contribute to demonstrating that myths and language are more mutually influential upon one another than Barthes had acknowledged.

Another future project includes re-considering my previous work on the myth of whiteness as cleanliness as a critical feminist semiology that would intertwine with the clusters of myths discussed here. The myth of whiteness as cleanliness is shaped by and contributes to myths of purity discussed in this project, but it highlights the limitations of purity myths. Myths of cleanliness emerge through discourses of health and biology, institutions of public sanitation and waste, practices and rituals of bathing and washing.[556] The myth of whiteness as cleanliness has received less scrutiny from feminist philosophy, which has historically focused on myths surrounding purity. The work of investigating racial and gendered myths regarding cleanliness is

vital as they receive even less scrutiny than racial and gendered myths regarding purity but are incredibly harmful as they produce social realities of white supremacy.

There cannot be a universally applicable enactment of the method of critical feminist semiology as it requires attention to the historical, geographical, political, and economic context shaping systems of meaning. This methodology is not a one-size-fits-all, rather it demands a nuanced approach that acknowledges multiplicitous systems of meaning that differ based on context. Now that the importance of this methodology is established, when I enact this method next, I aspire to consider a more restricted historical time and geographical place. This project largely considered the meta-myth of white supremacy as it operates in the United States primarily from the 19th century through today. However, a critical feminist semiology could zoom in; for example, I aspire to consider a narrower context of the South during 1890-1920 to study the myths and language that support white-supremacy ideologically and materially.

As each historical period, geographical location, political climate, economic system, and cultural context has its own systems of meaning that are lived, restricting these factors of study would allow for an approach of depth of rather than the approach of breadth taken here. However, as I have argued, myths from the 19th century still impact us today, though they may materialize differently. One example Michelle Alexander highlights in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Time of Colorblindness* is contemporary mass incarceration. Contemporary mass incarceration—an institution of the industrial prison complex—has striking similarities to systems of racial control during Jim Crow Era. Both the old Jim Crow and the new Jim Crow employ myths of the Black rapist, even though they occur decades apart. As such, there are contexts in which the deployment of a critical feminist semiology that has a larger scope of

historical period, as seen in this example, is relevant. Thus, enactments of this methodology may differ as they reflect the context and content of the systems of meaning they consider.

Systems of meaning change over time; no enactment of critical feminist semiology is permanent or can claim absolute authority. This enactment of a critical feminist semiology may not be relevant in the future. This would mean that oppressive material conditions and systems of meaning that uphold the meta-myth of white supremacy and are upheld by it have changed enough that white supremacy would no longer be a meaningful part of social life. From my perspective, that would entail the success of multiple collective projects that dismantle racially (alongside patriarchal and settler colonial) oppressive material conditions and systems of meaning, rather than demonstrate a failure of this work.

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Notes to Introduction:

[1] Hortense J. Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color : Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 209.

[2] Spillers, 203.

[3] Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind: And Other Essays* (Beacon Press, 1992).

[4] Joan Scott, "Experience," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Joan Scott and Judith Butler (New York/London: Routledge, 1992), 22–40, 33.

[5] Scott, 38.

[6] Linda Martín Alcoff, "Phenomenology, Post-Structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience," in *Femininst Phenomenology*, ed. Linda Fischer and Lester Embree (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 39–56, 45.

[7] Alcoff, 45.

[8] Merle Woo presents after Christian, discussing how art influences what we do—"art is always political… we need analysis, criticism…" I won't go into detail regarding Woo's work here, as it is not as relevant to this debate, but her work is significant to mention and may be referenced in the dissertation itself as she was concerned with the representation of Asian American Women in the media and the repercussions this representation has. Woo taught Asian American Third World Women's Lesbian Literature and Creative Writing at UC Berkeley—the university repeatedly attempted to dismiss her for her critiques of the way the university handled their Ethnic studies department.

[9] Two exceptions of which are Hortense Spillers and Monique Wittig, both of whom are included in the epitaphs at the beginning of this introduction.

[10] Marìa Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (October 2010): 742–59, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01137.x.

[11] G. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Aunt Lute Books, 1999).

[12] Merleau-Ponty approaches language from the position of an embodied speaker of language; language in his work is a form of expression, as is embodiment. With Merleau-Ponty, we can see that embodiment is also a system of meaning, both that we embody meanings and that our bodies are expressive (of meaning. See: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A Landes (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1st Evergreen ed. (New York: New York : Grove Press, 1991); Annalee Ring, "Fanon and Soap Advertising," *CLR James Journal* 29, no. 1 (2023): 221–51; Beata Stawarska and Annalee Ring, "Black Speaking Subjects: Frantz Fanon's Critique of Coloniality of Language in Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology," *Histoire, Épistémologie, Langage : HEL* 45, no. 1 (2023): 65–86, https://doi.org/10.4000/hel.3458.

[13] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

[14] Ring, "Fanon and Soap Advertising."

[15] Ring.

[16] Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1983).

[17] Davis.

[18] Davis.

[19] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2000).

[20] Patricia Hill Collins, "Controlling Images," in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020).

[21] Collins.

[22] I thank Charise Cheney for bringing this to my attention as in our correspondence on this project, she wrote that "myths by their very nature are not true." This represents one perspective found in Black feminist thought but does not acknowledge the operations of myths in the way that Barthes identifies: that they may or may not be true, which is less important than how they operate. Regardless of whether they are true, they operate to naturalize contingencies.

[23] Beata Stawarska, *Saussure's Philosophy of Language as Phenomenology: Undoing the Doctrine of the Course in General Linguistics* (Oxford University Press, 2015); Beata Stawarska, *Saussure's Linguistics, Structuralism, and Phenomenology: The Course in General Linguistics after a Century* (Springer International Publishing, 2020).

[24] Ferdinand Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Open Court, 1986).

[25] See: Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind: And Other Essays* (Beacon Press, 1992) for more.

[26] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 233.

[27] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 16-17.

[28] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*; Angela Y. Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. J. James, Wiley Blackwell Readers (Wiley, 1998), https://books.google.com/books?id=Peut8UbchIsC; Collins, "Controlling Images"; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*; Shatema Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice : The Black Female Body and the Body Politic.* (Oxford: Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2016); Saidiya V Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York : Oxford University Press, 1997).

[29] Brian Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures*, American Indian Studies Series (East Lansing, Mich.) (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2019); Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto*, Avon, ; W213 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Vine. Deloria, *God Is Red a Native View of Religion : 30th Anniversary Edition*, 3rd ed. (Golden, Colo: Fulcrum Pub., 2003). Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastelanding : Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country*, Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country (Minneapolis: Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

[30] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.

Notes to Chapter One:

[31] Roland. Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge*, trans. Richard Howard, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), 159.

[32] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 15.

[33] Stawarska, *Saussure's Linguistics, Structuralism, and Phenomenology: The Course in General Linguistics after a Century*; Stawarska, *Saussure's Philosophy of Language as Phenomenology: Undoing the Doctrine of the Course in General Linguistics*.

[34] Stawarska, *Saussure's Linguistics, Structuralism, and Phenomenology: The Course in General Linguistics after a Century*.

[35] Saussure, 6.

[36] Saussure, 19.

[37] Saussure, 19.

[38] Saussure, 21.

[39] In this way, Beata Stawarska's text *Saussure's Philosophy of Language as Phenomenology* as well as *Saussure's Linguistics, Structuralism, and Phenomenology: The Course in General Linguistics after a Century* will both be utilized to demonstrate the ways in which the dominant interpretation of Saussure's text reads in his work dualistic thinking—the language and speech are pitted against each other, the internal elements of a language and the external elements of a language are also read as mutually exclusive—however, my reading following Stawarska's work is to read language as a much more multiplicitous social phenomena and reads language and speech, the internal and external as interdependent. See citations below.

[40] Stawarska, *Saussure's Linguistics, Structuralism, and Phenomenology: The Course in General Linguistics after a Century*.

[41] Stawarska, *Saussure's Philosophy of Language as Phenomenology: Undoing the Doctrine of the Course in General Linguistics*.

[42] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 21. Saussure goes onto say that "a nation's way of life has an effect upon its language. At the same time, it is in great part the language which makes the nation," see: Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 21.

[43] Saussure writes, that conquest is of "incalculable linguistic importance in all kinds of ways." He argues that "colonization, which is simply one form of conquest, transports a language into new environments, and this brings changes in the language." See: Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 21

[44] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 22.

[45] Saussure, 9. Here Saussure is especially discussing the *structure* of a language.

[46] Ferdinand Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Open Court, 1986), 9.

[47] Saussure, 9.

[48] On inheriting a language, Saussure writes that the system of language and its history are "so close that it is hard to separate them." Saussure, 9.

[49] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 9.

[50] Saussure, 19.

[51] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 14.

[52] Saussure calls language a kind of "contract agreed between the members of a community" and that children gradually assimilate it. *Course in General Linguistics,* 14. I will argue more so that children are socialized into systems of meaning that condition their experience and ability to express themselves; these systems of meaning are a significant part of the formation of subjects, but I will argue they can be subverted. Lugones, Anzaldúa, Lorde, Butler, Collins all suggest ways of subverting given systems of meaning while taking very seriously the ways in which systems of meaning that are inherited have serious consequences for the subjects that navigate them. Furthermore, another course of argument would hold that if language is a contract, the English language would be akin to a "racial" contract and a "sexual" contract, as inspired by the work of Charles Mills and Carol Pateman; if there is room in the dissertation to pursue that line of argument, I would like to do so.

[53] Ferdinand Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Open Court, 1986), 14.

[54] Saussure, 14.

[55] Merleau-Ponty was concerned with this question, and in his work this appears as *style.*

[56] I will engage with Anzaldúa's philosophy of language and Lorde's philosophy of language to demonstrate that they are much more helpful on this problem than Saussure is, but this will arise in Part Four.

[57] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*.

[58] Saussure, 21.

[59] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 22.

[60] Stawarska, *Saussure's Philosophy of Language as Phenomenology: Undoing the Doctrine of the Course in General Linguistics*; Stawarska, *Saussure's Linguistics, Structuralism, and Phenomenology: The Course in General Linguistics after a Century.*

[61] See: Ring, "Fanon and Soap Advertising"; Stawarska and Ring, "Black Speaking Subjects: Frantz Fanon's Critique of Coloniality of Language in Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology."

[62] Roland. Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge*, trans. Richard Howard, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), 5.

[63] Barthes, 5.

[64] Barthes, 178-179.

[65] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 218.

[66] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 220.

[67] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 15.

[68] Roland. Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge*, trans. Richard Howard, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), 178.

[69] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 220.

[70] Barthes, 221.

[71] See Wittig, *The Straight Mind: And Other Essays*. She writes: "The early semiology of Roland Barthes nearly escaped from linguistic domination to become a political analysis of the different systems of signs, to establish a relationship between this or that system of signs—for example, the myths of the petit bourgeois class—and the class struggle within capitalism that this system tends to conceal. We were almost saved, for political semiology is a weapon (a method) that we need to analyze what is called ideology. But the miracle did not last… Barthes quickly stated that semiology was only a branch of linguistics and that language was its only object," 51.

[72] Barthes, 215.

[73] Barthes, 215.

[74] Barthes, 215-216.

[75] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 217.

[76] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 219.

[77] Barthes, 221.

[78] Barthes, 223.

[79] Barthes, 221.

[80] Barthes, 222.

[81] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*. Generally speaking, the signifier refers to the signified.

[82] Farzaneh Najafi and Merza Abbas, "A Study of the Semiotic Understanding of Land Art," *Asian Social Science* 10, no. 170 (2014).

[83] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 223.

[84] Barthes, 223.

[85] Barthes, 224.

[86] Daniele Monticelli, "Critique of Ideology or/and Analysis of Culture? Barthes and Lotman on Secondary Semiotic Systems," *Sign Systems Studies* 44 (December 2016): 432, https://doi.org/10.12697/SSS.2016.44.3.07.

[87] Barthes, 225.

[88] Barthes, *Mythologies,* 115.

[89] Barthes, 225.

[90] Jeffrey Bardzell, Shaowen Bardzell, and Mark A. Blythe, *Critical Theory and Interaction Design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2018).

[91] Barthes, 227.

[92] Barthes, 232-240.

[93] Barthes, 225.

[94] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 225.

[95] Barthes, 225.

[96] See: Collins, Sue. "Structuralism." Michigan Technological University. Course on Popular Culture. Houghton, MI. March 2011. Lecture.Eagleton, Terry. "Chapter 4, Post-Structuralism." Literary Theory: An Introduction. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 110-130. Print. Image accessed here: https://undergradlitcrit.weebly.com/barthes.html

[97] Barthes, 228.

[98] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 229.

[99] Barthes, 227.

[100] Barthes, 228.

[101] Barthes, 224.

[102] See for example: Rebecca M. Herzig, *Plucked : A History of Hair Removal*, Biopolitics: Medicine, Technoscience and Health in the 21st Century (New York: New York University Press, 2015); E.M. Mayes, "As Soft as Straight Gets: African American Women and Mainstream Beauty Standards in Haircare Advertising," *Counterpoints* 54 (1997): 85–108; NAACP, "Natural Hair Discrimination," NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 2021, https://www.naacpldf.org/natural-hair-discrimination/; Noliwe Rooks, *Hair Raising : Beauty, Culture, and African American Women* (New Brunswick, N.J.: New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 1996).

[103] Ashley Alese Edwards, "Who Decided Black Hair Is So Offensive Anyway?," *Glamour*, September 10, 2020, https://www.glamour.com/story/black-hair-offensive-timeline; Ayana D. Byrd and Lori L. Tharps, *Hair Story : Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America*, First revised edition. (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2014).

[104] David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction : American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*, American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928 (Lawrence, Kan.: Lawrence, Kan. : University Press of Kansas, 1995).

[105] J. N Choate, *Souvenir of the Carlisle Indian School* (Carlisle, Pa.: J. N. Choate, 1902).

[106] Adams, *Education for Extinction : American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*; Lauren Eichler and David Baumeister, "Predators and Pests: Settler Colonialism and the Animalization of Native

Americans," *Environmental Ethics* 42, no. 4 (Winteer 2020): 295–311, https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics202042430; Brendan Hokowhitu, "Producing Elite Indigenous Masculinities," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 2 (January 2012): 23–48, https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2012.10648840.

[107] John N. Choate, "Wounded Yellow Robe, Chauncey Yellow Robe, and Henry Standing Bear [Version 3], 1883," 1883, Archves & Special Collections, Waidner-Spahr Library, Dickinson College, Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/images/wounded-yellow-robe-chauncey-yellow-robe-and-henry-standing-bear-version-3-1883-0.

[108] John N. Choate, "Wounded Yellow Robe, Chauncey Yellow Robe, and Henry Standing Bear [Version 1], 1884," 1884, NAA 73420: Photo Lot 81-12 06819400, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/images/wounded-yellow-robe-chauncey-yellow-robe-and-henry-standing-bear-version-1-1884.

[109] See, for example: Beata Stawarska and Annalee Ring, "Black Speaking Subjects: Frantz Fanon's Critique of Coloniality of Language in Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology," *Histoire, Épistémologie, Langage : HEL* 45, no. 1 (2023): 65–86, https://doi.org/10.4000/hel.3458; Geneva Smitherman, *Talkin and Testifyin : The Language of Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977); Jane H. Hill, *The Everyday Language of White Racism*, Blackwell Studies in Discourse and Culture ; 3 (Malen, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

[110] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 233.

[111] Barthes, 240-241.

[112] Barthes, 234.

[113] Barthes, 228.

[114] Barthes, 222.

[115] Barthes, 254.

[116] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 255.

[117] Barthes, 255.

[118] Barthes, 255.

[119] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 257.

[120] Barthes, 235.

[121] Barthes, 239.

[122] Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation,* 259.

Notes to Chapter Two:

[123] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 272.

[124] Saidiya V Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York : Oxford University Press, 1997); Shatema Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice : The Black Female Body and the Body Politic.* (Oxford: Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2016); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2000); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1983); Angela Y. Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. J. James, Wiley Blackwell Readers (Wiley, 1998), https://books.google.com/books?id=Peut8UbchIsC; Davis.

[125] Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity : Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016); Jessica Valenti, *The Purity Myth : How America's Obsession with Virginity Is Hurting Young Women* (Berkeley, Calif.: Seal Press, 2009); "Nivea Removes 'white Is Purity' Deodorant Advert Branded 'Racist,'" *BBC News*, April 4, 2017, sec. World News: Europe, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39489967; Nellie Bowles, "Are White Women Better Now? - The Atlantic," *The Atlantic*, April 30, 2024; Louise Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origin of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: London, 1993); Val Plumwood, *Eye of the Crocodile* (Canberra, Australia: Australian National University, 2012); Val Plumwood, "Wilderness Skepticism and Dualism," in *The Great New Wilderness Debate : An Expansive Collection of Writings Defining Wilderness, from*

John Muir to Gary Snyder, by J. Baird Callicott and Michael Nelson (Athens: Athens : The University of Georgia Press, 1998); Kate Manne, *Down Girl : The Logic of Misogyny* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018); Jackson Katz, *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help*, Revised and updated. (Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, 2019); Alison Hoagland, "Introducing the Bathroom: Space and Change in Working-Class Houses," *Buildings & Landscapes* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 15–42; Chadwick Roberts, "Lily 'White': Commodity Racism and the Construction of Female Domesticity in The Incredible Shrinking Woman: Lily 'White': The Incredible Shrinking Woman," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 43, no. 4 (July 19, 2010): 801–19, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2010.00771.x.

[126] See: Myths are not static but rather are dynamic, as such, the myth of white femininity has *changed* since Reconstruction Era but still operates today.

[127] María Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (October 2010): 742–59, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01137.x; Maria Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System," n.d., 25; Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1983).

[128] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done : Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Dancing on Our Turtle's Back : Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence" (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Pub., 2011); Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*; Davis, *Women, Race & Class*; Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism"; Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System."

[129] Beauvoir does describe how class relates to the myth of the eternal feminine as well as how class changes its manifestations. She does not address how central whiteness is to the operation of femininity.

[130] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 16.

[131] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 17.

[132] Beauvoir, 17.

[133] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 46.

[134] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* 46.

[135] Beauvoir, 47.

[136] Beauvoir, 47.

[137] Beauvoir, 44.

[138] Beauvoir, 44.

[139] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* 47.

[140] Rather than an eternal natural given, "for us woman is defined as a human being in search of values within a world of values, a world where it is indispensable to understand the economic and social structure." Beauvoir, 61.

[141] Beauvoir, 56.

[142] Beauvoir, 56.

[143] Beauvoir, 56-57.

[144] Some critical and feminist phenomenologists today refer to these as "quasi-transcendentals." Lisa Guenther, "Six Senses of Critique for Critical Phenomenology," *Puncta* 4, no. 2 (December 2021): 5–23, https://doi.org/10.5399/PJCP.v4i2.2; Gayle Salamon, "What's Critical about Critical Phenomenology?," *Journal of Critical Phenomenology* 1, no. 1 (June 30, 2018): 8, https://doi.org/10.31608/PJCP.v1i1.2.

[145] Beauvoir, 58.

[146] Beauvoir, 55.

[147] Beauvoir demonstrates that the myth of the eternal feminine is a shared, human signification/symbol of feminine inferiority in a world of values. Psychoanalysis argues that sexuality is determined anatomically, unrelated to this world of values wherein the devaluation of the feminine takes place. Beauvoir, 58.

[148] Beauvoir does not treat the body or sexuality as destiny but rather, she "situate[s] woman in a world of values, [lending] her behavior a dimension of freedom… she has to choose." Beauvoir, 59.

[149] Beauvoir, 56.

[150] Beauvoir, 66.

[151] Beauvoir, 66.

[152] Beauvoir, 66.

[153] Beauvoir, 66.

[154] Beauvoir, 66. She goes on to say "there are periods in history when it is more useful to have children than till the soil."

[155] Beauvoir, 67.

[156] Rather than outright reject each of these fields of study, Beauvoir acknowledges that they can make contributions. From biology and psychoanalysis, Beauvoir finds the experience of the being "a body in the presence of other bodies" significant, including the importance of sexual life therein; from historical materialism, she addresses Marx's vital contribution to be "that the existent's ontological claims take on a concrete form based on the material possibilities offered." Beauvoir, 68.

[157] Beauvoir, 68.

[158] Beauvoir, 68.

[159] As previously cited: "it is impossible to approach any human problem without partiality… every so-called objective description is set against an ethical background," Beauvoir, 16.

[160] Beauvoir, 16.

[161] As already cited: Beauvoir defines woman "as a human being in search of values within a world of values, a world where it is indispensable to understand the economic and social structure," 16.

[162] This is a major concern for Beauvoir in the second volume of the *Second Sex* wherein she describes what it is like to experience feminine gender socialization. She describes that for many girls, their lived experience is being-for-others, that is the "meaning of her existence is not in her hands," 485.

[163] Beauvoir, 17.

[164] Beauvoir, 156.

[165] Beauvoir, 155.

[166] Instead of the feminine as necessarily, naturally, *Other*, Beauvoir describes how reciprocity, friendship, and generosity could have been taken up in the intersubjective world instead. Beauvoir, 159-160.

[167] Beauvoir describes this in Hegelian language, echoed again in her writing on historical materialism detailed above. In Hegel's dialectic, the subject desires recognition of their existence and freedom from the "other," which is a significant part of building social community and actualizing the self in an intersubjective world. Ideally, this recognition is reciprocal—one's freedom is recognized by the other, one recognizes the freedom of the other in turn. However, a risk of intersubjectivity is that one's freedom may not be recognized by the other. In the Hegelian master/slave dialectic, if the master/subject denies recognizing the freedom of the slave/other, the slave/other has options to re-establish themselves as subjects, as they are essential. The Master's desires are met through the Slave's production, as such the Master needs the Slave. The Master is dependent on the slave, but the slave is not dependent on the master, which is how the slave can re-establish themself as subject. Slaves/others also can demand reciprocal recognition from the master/subject as they share a common history and an oppressive situation.

[168] However, the bond between men and women is unlike the bond between master and slave; thus, she calls this the construction of women as the *inessential* Other. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* 17. As such, she demonstrates that Hegel's Master/Slave dialectic is inadequate for addressing the kind of othering that women face: "woman makes no claim for herself as subject because she lacks the concrete means, because she senses the necessary link connecting her to man without positing its reciprocity, and because she often derives satisfaction from her role as Other," 10. See 8-10 and 71-75 for more details. It is difficult to resist this situation except through the difficulty of authentically accomplishing oneself, one's freedom, in a lifeworld wherein there is the temptation to flee freedom and its agonizing responsibility. Thus, complicity emerges from choosing to follow the script of the myth rather than the arduous path of authentic existence.

[169] Beauvoir, 161.

[170] Beauvoir.

[171] Beauvoir, 159-163.

[172] Beauvoir.

[173] Beauvoir, 15.

[174] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 162.

[175] Beauvoir, 269.

[176] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 203.

[177] Harvey Green, *The Light of the Home : An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America*, 1st ed. (New York: New York : Pantheon Books, 1983).

[178] Beauvoir, 262.

[179] Beauvoir, 213.

[180] See also: Rebecca M. Herzig, *Plucked : A History of Hair Removal*, Biopolitics: Medicine, Technoscience and Health in the 21st Century (New York: New York University Press, 2015) for more.

[181] Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*; Plumwood, *Eye of the Crocodile*; Plumwood, "Wilderness Skepticism and Dualism"; Herzig, *Plucked : A History of Hair Removal*.

[182] Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization : A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, Manliness and Civilization (Chicago: Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1995); Gerald J. Goodwin, "CHRISTIANITY, CIVILIZATION AND THE SAVAGE: THE ANGLICAN MISSION TO THE AMERICAN INDIAN," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 42, no. 2 (1973): 93–110; Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism"; Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System"; Simpson, *As We Have Always Done : Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*; Simpson, "Dancing on Our Turtle's Back : Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence."

[183] Herzig, *Plucked : A History of Hair Removal*; Charles W. (Charles Wade) Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastelanding : Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country*, Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country (Minneapolis: Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

[184] Herzig, *Plucked : A History of Hair Removal*; Mills, *The Racial Contract*; Adams, *Education for Extinction : American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*. Carl A. Zimring, *Clean and White : A History of Environmental Racism in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2015); Katherine Ashenburg, *The Dirt on Clean : An Unsanitized History*, 1st American ed. (New York: New York : North Point Press, 2007).

[185] Herzig, *Plucked : A History of Hair Removal*; Patricia Hill Collins, "Controlling Images," in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020); Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*.

[186] Francesca Bartlett, "Clean White Girls: Assimilation and Women's Work," *Hecate* 25, no. 1 (1999): 10–38; Bowles, "Are White Women Better Now? - The Atlantic"; Ariane Resnick, "The Clean Girl Aesthetic: Why This Trend Isn't Harmless," *Byrdie*, October 3, 2022, https://www.byrdie.com/clean-girl-aesthetic-critique-6744031; Françoise Vergès, "Capitalocene, Waste, Race, and Gender," n.d; Rumya Putcha, "White Hygiene, White Womanhood, and Wellness in the United States," in *Practicing Yoga as Resistance: Voices of Color in Search of Freedom*, Routledge Research in Race and Ethnicity (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003033073.

[187] Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Green, *The Light of the Home : An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America*.

[188] Zimring, *Clean and White : A History of Environmental Racism in the United States*; Bartlett, "Clean White Girls: Assimilation and Women's Work"; Davis, *Women, Race & Class*; Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice : The Black Female Body and the Body Politic.*

[189] Green, *The Light of the Home : An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America*. The multiplicitousness of the myth of the eternal feminine operates in a similar style as other racialized myths wherein if one myth is resisted, the other is expressed.

[190] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* 213.

[191] In Beauvoir's words, "if it is difficult to say anything about her, it is because… she is All." Beauvoir, 213.

[192] Beauvoir, 213.

[193] Beauvoir, 266.

[194] There is more to say here, but as this is an invitation and an opening to read Beauvoir as a semiologist, not all of the possibilities this opens can be detailed here.

[195] Beauvoir, 439.

[196] Beauvoir, 279.

[197] Again, this is an introductory opening to reading Beauvoir as a semiologist—each aspect of the myth of the eternal feminine could be explored as a part of lived experience. This particular myth will be relevant throughout the rest of the dissertation, which is why it was selected.

[198] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 91.

[199] Beauvoir, 90.

[200] This is a contingency as Beauvoir describes in the chapter on historical materialism—that women cannot own property and are treated as property is not explained or justified. It is a contingency that is taken to be natural, even in the field of historical materialism which is critical of private property.

[201] Beauvoir, 90.

[202] Beauvoir, 90.

[203] Beauvoir, 91.

[204] Beauvoir, 91.

[205] Beauvoir, 91.

[206] Beauvoir, 162.

[207] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* 91.

[208] Feminine reproductive affordances demonstrate feminine parentage, the certainty of who the female parent is, is already known. However, male parentage is not as clearly known as female parentage, because of the differences in male reproductive affordances. This certainty/uncertainty is part of what gives rise to their asymmetrical, policing and discipline.

[209] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* 90-91.

[210] Beauvoir, 91.

[211] Though Levi-Strauss takes it to be. See Monique Wittig's critique in: *The Straight Mind: And Other Essays* (Beacon Press, 1992).

[212] Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto*, Avon, ; W213 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Vine. Deloria, *God Is Red a Native View of Religion : 30th Anniversary Edition*, 3rd ed. (Golden, Colo: Fulcrum Pub., 2003); Simpson, *As We Have Always Done : Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*; Simpson, "Dancing on Our Turtle's Back : Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence"; George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World : An Indian Reality* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2019); Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 1–25; Kari Marie Norgaard, *Salmon and Acorns Feed Our People : Colonialism, Nature, and Social Action*, Nature, Society, and Culture (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019).

[213] More detail will come on this as seen in Alexis Shotwell's *Against Purity : Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016). The delineation of this purity practice where in feminine sexuality is morally, politically, and economically restricted and policed whereas masculine sexuality is not, contributes to the construction of women as "other." We can see how those who are expected to uphold this purity practice become a *grouping* of people in this system of meaning. That is, in addition to delineating Euro-American peoples from other groups of people whose purity practices are different, this purity practice delineates groupings of people within this culture, sharply delineating feminine beings from masculine beings.

[214] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism"; Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System"; Davis, *Women, Race & Class*; Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*; Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*; Simpson, *As We Have Always Done : Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*; Simpson, "Dancing on Our Turtle's Back : Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence."

[215] Shotwell, *Against Purity : Living Ethically in Compromised Times*; Valenti, *The Purity Myth : How America's Obsession with Virginity Is Hurting Young Women*; "Nivea Removes 'white Is Purity' Deodorant Advert Branded 'Racist.'"

[216] Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto*; Deloria, *God Is Red a Native View of Religion : 30th Anniversary Edition*; Davis, *Women, Race & Class*; Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*; Simpson, *As We Have Always Done : Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*.

[217] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*; Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*; Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice : The Black Female Body and the Body Politic.*

[218] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*.

[219] Davis; Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*; Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*; Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice : The Black Female Body and the Body Politic.*

[220] Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940*, New Directions in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *On Lynchings : Southern Horrors ; A Red Record ; Mob Rule in New Orleans*, The American Negro, His History and Literature (New York: Arno Press, 1969); Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *The Red Record Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States* (Project Gutenberg, 2005); Davis, *Women, Race & Class*.

[221] Annita Lucchesi and Abigail Echo-Hawk, "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls" (Urban Indian Health Institute: A Division of the Seattle Indian Health Board, October 15, 2018), http://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf; Garet Bleir, Anya Zoledziowski, and Carnegie-Knight News21 initiative, "Murdered and Missing Native American Women Challenge Police and Courts," *The Center for Public Integrity*, August 27, 2018, sec. Politics, https://www.publicintegrity.org/2018/08/27/22177/murdered-missing-native-american-women; Lucy Anna Gray, "Forgotten Women: The Conversation of Murdered and Missing Native Women Is Not One North America Wants to Have - but It Must," *The Independent*, August 14, 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/native-american-women-missing-murder-mmiw-inquiry-canada-us-violence-indigenous-a8487976.html; Sacha Pfeiffer, "The Missing And Murdered Indigenous Women From Across The U.S.," *National Public Radio*, November 25, 2018, Weekend Edition Sunday edition, https://www.npr.org/2018/11/25/670631164/the-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-from-across-the-u-s; Andrea Smith, "Sexual Violence as a Tool of Genocide," in *The Feminist*

Philosophy Reader, by Alison Bailey and Chris Cuomo (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008); Andrea Smith, "Not an Indian Tradition: The Sexual Colonization of Native Peoples," *Hypatia* 18, no. 2 (May 2003): 70–85, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2003.tb00802.x; Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism"; Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System"; Simpson, *As We Have Always Done : Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*; Simpson, "Dancing on Our Turtle's Back : Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence."

[222] Intertwined with and reliant upon the metaphysical myth of purity. See: Shotwell, *Against Purity : Living Ethically in Compromised Times*.

[223] Beauvoir, 173.

[224] Beauvoir, 173.

[225] Beauvoir, 173.

[226] Beauvoir, 174.

[227] Lynn M. Phillips, *Flirting with Danger : Young Women's Reflections on Sexuality and Domination*, Qualitative Studies in Psychology (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Katz, *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help*.

[228] Iris Marion Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990).

[229] Young.

[230] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 440.

[231] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, Penguin Modern Classics (United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 2020).

[232] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 521.

[233] Beauvoir, 721, 722.

[234] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 505.

[235] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 512.

[236] Beauvoir, 512.

[237] Beauvoir, 448.

[238] Beauvoir, 442.

[239] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 485.

[240] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 308-309.

[241] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 302.

[242] Beauvoir.

[243] Beauvoir.

[244] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 283.

[245] Beauvoir, 283.

[246] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* 293.

[247] Beauvoir, 294.

[248] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 321.

[249] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 336.

[250] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 336.

[251] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 340.

[252] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 342.

[253] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 447.

[254] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 361.

[255] The social media phenomenon of the "clean girl aesthetic" is one such form of this feminine socialization into purity, and/or appearing pure through an aesthetic of cleanliness and whiteness.

[256] Phillips, *Flirting with Danger : Young Women's Reflections on Sexuality and Domination*; Katz, *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help*; Nicola Gavey, *Just Sex?: The Cultural Scaffolding of Rape*, Second edition., Women and Psychology (Boca Raton, FL: Routledge, 2018), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429443220; Manne, *Down Girl : The Logic of Misogyny*; Katherine Angel, *Tomorrow Sex Will Be Good Again : Women and Desire in the Age of Consent* (London ; Verso, 2021).

[257] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 266.

[258] Collins, "Controlling Images"; Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*.

[259] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 174.

[260] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 174.

[261] "Deflowering rites" become exorcisms. Beauvoir.

[262] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 274.

[263] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 272.

[264] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 273.

[265] Beauvoir, 279.

[266] Beauvoir, 279.

[267] Ferdinand Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Open Court, 1986).

[268] R. Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*, ed. R. Howard, trans. A. Lavers, Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux; Hill and Wang Division, 2013), 259.

[269] Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation,* 259.

[270] Angela Y. Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," in *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. Joy James (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 111–28.

Notes to Chapter Three:

[271] Davis, 194; Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940*, New Directions in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

[272] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 1983, 187-188.

[273] Davis, 190; Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*.

[274] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 1983, 196, 200. See also : *Tough Guise 2 : Violence, Manhood & American Culture*, *Violence, Manhood & American Culture* (San Francisco, California, USA: Kanopy Streaming, 2016); Shira Tarrant and Jackson. Katz, *Men Speak out : Views on Gender, Sex and Power* (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2008).

[275] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*.

[276] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 1983, 200.

[277] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 1983, 199-201.

[278] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Loaded: A Disarming History of the Second Amendment* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 2018).

[279] Ryan, E. A.. "Spanish Inquisition." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 11, 2022. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Spanish-Inquisition.

[280] Mills, *The Racial Contract*.

[281] Josias Tembo, "Race-Religion Constellation: An Argument for a Trans-Atlantic Interactive-Relational Approach," *Critical Research on Religion*, 2022.

[282] Tembo.

[283] From 1390-1406, threats of violence against the Jewish community in Spain resulted in pressure to convert to Christianity; pogroms, or mob attacks, killed many Jews. Faced with the choice to baptize or encounter violence, many converted. Those who had converted but maintained the Jewish faith in secret (known as *Marranos)*, were perceived as a dangerous threat to Christian Spain. The Inquisition began in the mid-15th century, and these practices were continued off and on through the 18th century, finally being renounced in the 19th Century.

[284] See: Columbus was incredibly violent, imposing unfathomable brutality on Indigenous populations, such as the Taínos, Arawaks, and Lucayan peoples, through practices of enslavement, torture, sexual violence and mutilation. See also: Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York, NY: New York, NY : Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2015).

[285] Timothy J. Yeager, "Encomienda or Slavery? The Spanish Crown's Choice of Labor Organization in Sixteenth-Century Spanish America," *The Journal of Economic History* 55, no. 4 (1995): 842–59.

[286] Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto*, Avon, ; W213 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 101-107.

[287] Mills, *The Racial Contract*.

[288] Stafford Poole, "The Politics of Limpieza de Sangre: Juan de Ovando and His Circle in the Reign of Philip II," *The Americas* 55, no. 3 (1999): 359–89, https://doi.org/10.2307/1007647.

[289] Mills, *The Racial Contract*.

[290] Mills; Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*.

[291] Tembo, "Race-Religion Constellation: An Argument for a Trans-Atlantic Interactive-Relational Approach." Such as Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Sylvia Wynter, María Elena Martinez, Willie James Jennings, and Rosa O'Connor Acevedo, for example.

[292] See Saidiya V Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York : Oxford University Press, 1997) for more.

[293] As Naomi Zack notes, this conception of blood in the "one drop" rule means that whiteness is definitionally dependent upon blackness: it is the absence of blackness.

[294] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*.

[295] Casey Walsh, "Bathing and Domination in the Early Modern Atlantic World," in *Virtuous Waters*, 1st ed., Mineral Springs, Bathing, and Infrastructure in Mexico (University of California Press, 2018), 15–33, http://www.jstor.org.uoregon.idm.oclc.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt2204r3b.6, 23.

[296] Walsh, 23.

[297] Walsh, 23-24.

[298] James H Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2022).

[299] Walsh, "Bathing and Domination in the Early Modern Atlantic World." Although the Romans had public bathhouses and practices of bathing, places in Europe that were predominantly Christian and had less Arabic influence had minimal cleanliness practices throughout the Middle Ages. See my published work for more: Annalee Ring, "Fanon and Soap Advertising," *CLR James Journal* 29, no. 1 (2023): 221–51; Annalee Ring, "A Critique of Whiteness as Cleanliness," *Center for the Study of Women in Society Annual Review*, 2022; Annalee Ring, "A Critique of the Colonial Cleanliness Crusade," *American Philosophical Association, Women in Philosophy Blog* (blog), November 3, 2021, https://blog.apaonline.org/2021/11/03/a-critique-of-the-colonial-cleanliness-crusade/.

[300] Walsh, "Bathing and Domination in the Early Modern Atlantic World." Indigenous peoples "from the Pacific Northwest to Central America" practiced bathing of various kinds. Some of these practices are depicted in Indigenous drawings and language around bathing is included in many Indigenous languages. See Walsh for more.

[301] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism"; Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System."

[302] Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women : Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[303] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*.

[304] Collins, "Controlling Images"; Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Thinking Gender (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990); Judith Butler, Judith Butler: "We need to rethink the category of woman," interview by Jules Gleeson, The Guardian, September 7, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/sep/07/judith-butler-interview-gender.

[305] Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason : "male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*; Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*; Manne, *Down Girl : The Logic of Misogyny*.

[306] Manne, *Down Girl : The Logic of Misogyny*; Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*; Butler, *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

[307] Wittig, *The Straight Mind: And Other Essays*. Didier Eribon, *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*, Series Q (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

[308] Wittig, *The Straight Mind: And Other Essays*.

[309] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*; Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*.

[310] Susan Bordo, *The Male Body : A New Look at Men in Public and in Private*, 1st ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999); Katz, *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help*; Phillips, *Flirting with Danger : Young Women's Reflections on Sexuality and Domination*.

[311] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*.

[312] Lloyd, *The Man of Reason : "male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*; María Luisa Femenías, "Women and Natural Hierarchy in Aristotle," *Hypatia* 9, no. 1 (1994): 164–72; Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*; Sandra Harding, "RETHINKING STANDPOINT EPISTEMOLOGY: WHAT IS 'STRONG OBJECTIVITY?,'" *The Centennial Review* 36, no. 3 (1992): 437–70; Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99, https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066.

[313] Pedro Monque and Rita Laura Segato, "Gender and Coloniality: From Low-Intensity Communal Patriarchy to High-Intensity Colonial-Modern Patriarchy," *Hypatia* 36, no. 4 (2021): 781–99, https://doi.org/10.1017/hyp.2021.58; Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women : Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*; Kari Marie Norgaard, Ron Reed, and J. M. Bacon, "How Environmental Decline Restructures Indigenous Gender Practices: What Happens to Karuk Masculinity When There Are No Fish?," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 4, no. 1 (January 2018): 98–113, https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649217706518.

[314] Monque and Segato, "Gender and Coloniality: From Low-Intensity Communal Patriarchy to High-Intensity Colonial-Modern Patriarchy"; Norgaard, Reed, and Bacon, "How Environmental Decline Restructures Indigenous

Gender Practices"; Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women : Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Stephen Linstead and Alison Pullen, "Gender as Multiplicity: Desire, Displacement, Difference and Dispersion," *Human Relations* 59, no. 9 (September 1, 2006): 1287–1310, https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726706069772; Audrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake, "Unnatural Discourse. 'Race' and Gender in Geography," *Gender, Place & Culture* 1, no. 2 (September 1, 1994): 225–43, https://doi.org/10.1080/09663699408721211; Judith Mackay, "Global Sex: Sexuality and Sexual Practices around the World," *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 16, no. 1 (February 1, 2001): 71–82, https://doi.org/10.1080/14681990123347; Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, Oxford Handbooks (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History : Global Perspectives*, 2nd ed. (Malden, Mass ; Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

[315] Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*; Plumwood, *Eye of the Crocodile*. Patricia Hill Collins, "Controlling Images," in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 77.

[316] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism"; Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System"; Adams, *Education for Extinction : American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*; Simpson, *As We Have Always Done : Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*; Davis, *Women, Race & Class*.

[317] Collins, 194.

[318] Collins, "Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology," 197. Collins also writes, "Black women, by definition, cannot achieve the idealized feminine ideal because the fact of blackness excludes them. Dominantt gender ideology provides a social script for black women whereby everyone else needs black women to be on the bottom for everything else to make sense;" see: Collins, "Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology," 199.

[319] Collins, 189.

[320] Additionally, this perpetuates heterosexual relationships as the norm as "real men" are in relationships with "submissive women"—contributing to a heteronormative framework of sexuality in addition to strict, binary gender norms. See Collins, 192.

[321] Collins, 79.

[322] Angela Y. Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. J. James, Wiley Blackwell Readers (Wiley, 1998).

[323] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism"; Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System"; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[324] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*.

[325] Collins, "Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology."

[326] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*.

[327] Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1983), 177, 200-201.

[328] Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves."

[329] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*.

[330] Wells-Barnett, *The Red Record Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States*; Wells-Barnett, *On Lynchings : Southern Horrors ; A Red Record ; Mob Rule in New Orleans*; Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*.

[331] Davis, 183.

[332] Importantly, this is when slave catchers transitioned into police officers, who could now harm, maim, rape, and/or kill Black people without causing damage to or losing someone else's private property. Dunbar-Ortiz, *Loaded: A Disarming History of the Second Amendment*. This inaugurates ongoing indiscriminate police violence against and murder of Black people. See also: Christopher J. Lebron, *The Making of Black Lives Matter : A Brief History of an Idea* (New York, NY, United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[333] Dunbar-Ortiz, *Loaded: A Disarming History of the Second Amendment*. See also: Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow : Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010).

[334] Davis, 185.

[335] Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1983), 185.

[336] Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*.

[337] Davis, 185. See also: Carol (Carol Elaine) Anderson, *White Rage : The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (New York, NY: New York, NY : Bloomsbury USA, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2016).

[338] Or the fear of "Black supremacy over white people," which justified ensuring white supremacy over Black people through violence. Davis, 186.

[339] David Roediger, ed., *Black on White : Black Writers on What It Means to Be White*, 1st ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1998).

[340] Davis, 186.

[341] Davis, 186.

[342] Davis, 187.

[343] Davis.

[344] Davis, 187.

[345] Davis, *Women, Race & Class,* 183.

[346] Davis, 183.

[347] Davis, 182.

[348] Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice : The Black Female Body and the Body Politic.*; Davis, *Women, Race & Class.*

[349] Davis, *Women, Race & Class.*

[350] Davis, 175.

[351] Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1983), 175.

[352] Davis, 176.

[353] Davis, 176.

[354] Davis, 176.

[355] It is generally underrepresented in the literature that white women also engaged in sexual violence against Black men. The economic and legal construction of people as property, and the relation of domination, leaks into the social relations as well. Sexual domination is an extension of the sanctioning of the economic, political, and legal domination of Black people.

[356] Davis, *Women, Race & Class.*

[357] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 182.

[358] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism."

[359] Collins, "Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology."

[360] Beata Stawarska, "Vulnerability and Violence: Transgressing the Gender Binary," in *Purple Brains* (Radboud University Press, 2024), 42–51.

[361] Collins, "Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology"; Collins, "Controlling Images." This myth has had many significant impacts including that socially, Black women were "viewed as 'loose women' and as whores." Davis, *Women, Race & Class,* 182.

[362] Davis, 182.

[363] Davis, 181.

[364] Saidiya V Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York : Oxford University Press, 1997), 79-80; Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.

[365] Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice : The Black Female Body and the Body Politic.*

[366] Anderson, *White Rage : The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide.*

[367] Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice : The Black Female Body and the Body Politic.*

[368] Davis, *Women, Race & Class,* 91.

[369] Davis, 91.

[370] Davis, 182.

[371] Miranda Fricker, "Hermeneutical Injustice," in *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 147–75.

[372] J. Marion (James Marion) Sims, "The Story of My Life ...," History of women ; reel 603, no. 4791., 1894.

[373] See: Hoyert DL. Maternal mortality rates in the United States, 2021. NCHS Health E-Stats. 2023. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.15620/cdc:124678; Hoffman KM, Trawalter S, Axt JR, Oliver MN. Racial bias in pain assessment and treatment recommendations, and false beliefs about biological differences between blacks and whites. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2016 Apr 19;113(16):4296-301. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1516047113. Epub 2016 Apr 4. PMID: 27044069; PMCID: PMC4843483.

[374] White supremacy becomes an organizing myth, (supported by and supporting, reinforced by and reinforcing, other myths) in addition to a myth of its own. I call the organizing myth of white supremacy a meta-myth (in addition to a singular/individual myth) and will use the myth of white supremacy to refer to it as an "individual" myth.

[375] Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," 111.

[376] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*; Collins, "Controlling Images"; Collins, "Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology."

[377] Davis, 111-112 and 125-127.

[378] Collins, "Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology."

[379] Linda Martín Alcoff, "Towards a Phenomenology of Racial Embodiment," *Radical Philosophy* 95 (June 1999): 15–26.

[380] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2000), 74.

[381] Who completes the labor of mothering and caretaking for white families, necessary social reproductive labor.

[382] Collins, 72-73.

[383] Collins, 71.

[384] Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves"; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* 73. See also: Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America.*

[385] Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice : The Black Female Body and the Body Politic.*

[386] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*.

[387] Collins, 72.

[388] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* 72.

[389] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1st Evergreen ed. (New York: New York : Grove Press, 1991); Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks : Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

[390] Collins, 73.

[391] Collins, 73.

[392] Collins.

[393] Collins, 74.

[394] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* 75. The myth of the Black matriarch creates divisions between Black activists working for Black liberation, reinforces the myth of white femininity, and operates to blame the victim for their own oppression. Daniel Moynihan popularized the myth of the matriarch through his report that had the intention to persuade the White House that racial equality would need more than just "civil-rights legislation alone," but would also need to address economic inequality: "equal citizenship for African Americans was incomplete without the ability to make a decent living." Liberals responded approvingly as they saw the report as advocating "new policies to alleviate race-based economic inequalities" while conservatives saw the report as arguing that "only racial self-help could produce the necessary changes in family structure" and reinforcing "racist stereotypes about loose family morality among African Americans." Moynihan received critiques from activists in the Black Liberation movement and leftist allies for Black emancipation because of its inattention to "ongoing systemic racism by focusing on African Americans' family characteristics." William Ryan was one such critic who argued that Moynihan was "blaming the victim." Ryan writes, "*Blaming the Victim* [is] a major weapon being used to slow down progress toward equality." (xii). He defines this methodology as "justifying inequality by finding [constructed] defects in the victims of inequality" (xiii). This is *one* of the operations that myths can enact: focusing the responsibility for structures of injustice on those who are oppressed by these structures of justice, usually through focusing on an ascribed "essence" or essential nature of "just how they are" or through focusing on their individual behavior as misaligned with dominant values. Blaming the victim is one of the things that the myth of the Black matriarch enacts.

[395] Collins, 71.

[396] Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," 116.

[397] Davis, 115.

[398] Davis, 113; Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 1983.

[399] Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," 116, 123.

[400] Collins, 74-75. The myth of the Black matriarch sometimes appears as the "angry Black woman" or the "mad Black woman." See: Therí A. Pickens, *Black Madness : : Mad Blackness*, Black Madness Mad Blackness (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

[401] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* 74.

[402] Gerda Lerner, *Black Women in White America : A Documentary History*, Vintage books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

[403] Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves." See also: Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction*; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Davis writes that the far-reaching consequences of the myth of the matriarch must be resisted, in her words, the "divisive and destructive myths

purporting to represent the Black woman," "had to be refuted at its presumed historical inception" that is, during the institution of slavery. She is writing just after the gruesome murder of George Jackson, whom she loved. She expresses her respect for the direction in which his thinking was moving; he was "developing an acute sensitivity to the real problems facing Black women and thus refining his ability to distinguish these from their mythical transpositions." (111) At the time of Jackson's murder, he had already began a "systematic critique of his past misconceptions about Black women and of their roots in the ideology of the established order." That is, Jackson considered resisting the myth of the Black matriarch a responsibility, an obligation of revolutionaries fighting for Black Liberation, in part because of the ways that myths slow projects of emancipation, as this myth does with both the Black liberation movement and the women's rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

[404] Collins, "Very Necessary: Redefining Black Gender Ideology."

[405] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* 75.

[406] Collins, 75.

[407] Manne, *Down Girl : The Logic of Misogyny.*

[408] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* 75.

[409] Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," 122.

[410] Davis, *Women, Race & Class.*

[411] Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," 123-125.

[412] Patricia Hill Collins, "Controlling Images," in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 82.

[413] With the exception of Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in *Black, White, and in Color: Esays in American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 203–30.

Notes to Chapter Four:

[414] Vine Deloria, Jr., "Foreword: American Fantasy," in *The Pretend Indians : Images of Native Americans in the Movies*, by Gretchen M. Bataille and Charles L. P. Silet, 1st ed. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1980); I originally found this Deloria quote in Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca, N.Y. and London, U.K.: Cornell University Press, 2001).

[415] See Elia's description of terminology: Nada Elia, *Greater than the Sum of Our Parts : Feminism, Inter/Nationalism, and Palestine* (London, England ; Pluto Press, 2023), 15.

[416] Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks : Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 32.

[417] Brian Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures*, American Indian Studies Series (East Lansing, Mich.) (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2019).

[418] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Boston : Beacon Press, 2015).

[419] Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto*, Avon, ; W213 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 21.

[420] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book."

[421] Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity : Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 16.

[422] Lugones, María. "Purity, Impurity, and Separation." *Signs* 19, no. 2 (1994): 458–79. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174808. See also: Maria Lugones, "Impure Communities," in *Diversity and Community*, ed. Philip Alperson (Malden, MA, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2004), 58–64, https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470756102.ch4. Shotwell, 15.

[423] Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity : Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 7.

[424] Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity : Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 8.

[425] Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity : Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 4.

[426] Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity : Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 13.

[427] Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity : Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 13.

[428] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger; an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966). This text expresses its own forms of racism, sexism, ableism, but details how purity *practices* are systems of meaning. As such, its own expressions demonstrate what it is describing, even if it is not a self-reflective text.

[429] Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity : Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 13.

[430] Shotwell, 14.

[431] Douglas, *Purity and Danger; an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*.

[432] Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity : Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 13.

[433] Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto*, Avon, ; W213 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 99.
Notes:

[434] Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto*, Avon, ; W213 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 10.

[435] Deloria, 173.

[436] Brian Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures*, American Indian Studies Series (East Lansing, Mich.) (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2019), 184.

[437] This is similar to Simone de Beauvoir's description about the contradictory myths that uphold the myth of the Eternal Feminine.

[438] Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures,* xviii.

[439] Burkhart, xviii.

[440] Burkhart, 180.

[441] Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto,* 5-6.

[442] Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures,* 36.

[443] Deloria writes, "Therein lies the trap into which American society has fallen and into which we all unknowingly fall. There is an undefined expectation in American society that once a problem is defined, no matter how, and understood by a significant number of people who have some relation to the problem, there is no problem any more," *Custer Died for Your* Sins, 93.

[444] Vine. Deloria, *God Is Red a Native View of Religion : 30th Anniversary Edition*, 3rd ed. (Golden, Colo: Fulcrum Pub., 2003), 23.

[445] Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures*.

[446] Burkhart, 183.

[447] See also Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: London, 1993) and Val Plumwood, *Eye of the Crocodile* (Canberra, Australia: Australian National University, 2012) for more on the operations of dualisms and these particular sets of dualisms as well.

[448] See also George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World : An Indian Reality* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2019) for descriptions of the alienation that this mythical system produces for white people as well as the contribution that "being outside of nature" makes to climate change.

[449] Deloria, 29.

[450] Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves."

[451] Davis.

[452] Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures*; Norgaard, *Salmon and Acorns Feed Our People : Colonialism, Nature, and Social Action*; Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*; William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996): 7–28.

[453] Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures,* 187.

[454] Charles W. (Charles Wade) Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 12.

[455] Mills, 13.

[456] Mills, 13.

457 Mills, 13.

458 Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastelanding : Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country*, Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country (Minneapolis: Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 9.

459 Judy Pasternak, *Yellow Dirt : An American Story of a Poisoned Land and a People Betrayed*, *Yellow Dirt : An American Story of a Poisoned Land and a People Betrayed*, 1st Free Press hardcover ed. (New York, NY: Free Press, 2010), 30.

460 Uranium mining on Dinétah, more widely known as Navajo Nation, is exemplary of this phenomenon. Dinétah was perceived as a desert wasteland until Europeans discovered uranium therein, which suddenly grants value to the land for Euro-Americans. See: Voyles, *Wastelanding : Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country*.

461 Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done : Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 50.

462 Voyles, *Wastelanding : Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country*.

463 Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." See also : Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures*; Norgaard, *Salmon and Acorns Feed Our People : Colonialism, Nature, and Social Action*; Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*.

464 Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*.

465 This myth takes on different names, one being "terra nullius," a land without people.

466 Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures*.

467 Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 49.

468 Mills, 49.

469 The myth of wilderness is far from accurate; as mentioned before, "Indigenous peoples had occupied and shaped every part of the Americas, established extensive trade networks and roads, and were sustaining their populations by adapting to specific natural environments, but they also adapted nature to suit human ends." Dunbar Ortiz, *An Indigenous People's History of the United States.*

470 See Charles Mill's work on epistemic ignorance to show how mythical delusions are a crucial way that whiteness produces and reproduces itself, *The Racial Contract,* 15.

471 Dunbar-Ortiz, 5.

472 Dunbar-Ortiz, 5.

473 See Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks : Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014) for the way in which the Canadian state has used "recognition" of Indigenous peoples to avoid making changes materially, politically, and economically.

474 Burkhart describes: "there is a core of irrationality then at the center of the supposed rationality that is to free humanity from immaturity." Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures*, American Indian Studies Series (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2019), 11.

475 This avoidance mechanism of guilt is one reason that the "Indian-grandmother complex plagues certain whites;" the complex, a manifestation of this disconnect in collective consciousness, is another myth that exemplifies settlers appeasing guilt. There is a widespread phenomenon of white claims to Indigenous heritage through a grandmother figure, usually on the mother's side, often through claims to Cherokee ancestry; a myth of feminine Indigenous ancestry. "A male ancestor has too much of the aura of the savage warrior, the unknown primitive, the instinctive animal, to make him a respectable member of the family tree" this, in avoidance of the Myth of the "Ecological Savage" white people choose to claim heritage through grandmothers, or matrilineal lines. This phenomenon can be seen in as public cases as intellectual Andrea Smith who wrote about sexual violence against Indigenous peoples and the exploitation of the environment and claimed Cherokee heritage on her mother's side as well as in the case of Elizabeth Warren, who claimed Cherokee ancestry in law school and presented a DNA test to prove her claims. While in this case, the Cherokee Nation responded that DNA is not how tribal membership is considered, and Warren has publicly apologized for this claim, this is a problematic widespread practice that both Kim Tallbear and Deloria Jr. discuss in their works. Tallbear discusses how Native American bodies have been utilized for knowledge production in harmful ways to say the least: "Native American bodies, both dead and living, have been sources of bone, and more recently of blood, spit, and hair, used to constitute knowledge of human biological and cultural history." Bones, skills, and decomposing bodies have been stolen from gravesites for the "good of knowledge" and the "good of all." Further, Deloria Jr. writes that, "Whites claiming Indian blood generally tend to reinforce mythical beliefs about Indians." Thus, one way that the intertwined myths about Wilderness, Wasteland, Saints, and Savages, continue to be deployed is through white people who claim ancestry and perpetuate these claims from within this

collective conscious disconnect; Deloria Jr. writes, "While a real Indian grandmother is probably the nicest thing that could happen to a child, why is a remote Indian princess grandmother so necessary for so many whites? Is it because they are afraid of being classed as foreigners? Do they need some blood tie with the frontier and its dangers in order to experience what it means to be an American? Or is it an attempt to avoid facing the guilt they bear for the treatment of the Indian?"[475] Deloria exposes a few different ways in which the myth of Indigenous heritage is employed: to claim a sense of "indigeneity" or "nativeness" (a "native" American was once used to describe Euro-Americans born in what is now the United States, rather than a descriptor for Indigenous peoples living on Turtle Island)[475], to identify with the ideology of "American" patriotism that is tied into myths of the frontier (which are themselves quite gendered in addition to racialized), as well as in avoidance of the historical actuality of the United States' coming into being.

[476] Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures, 188.*

[477] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 18.

[478] Mills, 19.

[479] Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto*, Avon, ; W213 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), Indigenous peoples were "soon relegated to the status of a picturesque species of wildlife… because the Indian occupied large areas of land, he was considered a wild animal." 6, 8.

[480] Burkhart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land : A Trickster Methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures*.

[481] One of the aspects of the work that the myth of wilderness/myth of the ecological saint does here that should be noted is that they both are overtly romanticized views of Indigenous peoples as always in all cases and everywhere being in "harmony" with nature, no matter the practices, ways of life, religious views, and land management that different, various groups were enacting. The work of not over-romanticizing Indigenous peoples as in harmony requires not succumbing to the ahistorical acontextual myth of the "Ecological Saint" that goes hand in hand with the myth of Wilderness here. As Vine Deloria Jr. writes, "Experts paint us as they would like us to be. Often we paint ourselves as we wish we were or as we might have been… To be an Indian in modern American society is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical." Deloria, 2.

[482] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, First paperback edition. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Milkweed Editions, 2015), 129. The following information about growing the Three Sisters together is from Kimmerer's work.

[483] Corn grows tall and straight as well as more quickly than the others. Beans grow slower because their roots grow deep into the soil before they grow upward above ground. By that time, the corn is tall enough for the bean plant to wrap around the cornstalk, and in this way, the bean receives more light. Squash is slower still and grows out horizontally like carpet covering the soil. The leaves and vines of squash keep in moisture for all three plants, prevent other plants from disturbing the growth of these three, and the bristles on vines prevent caterpillars and other insects from eating through these plants. In addition to sharing light, these three plants together share soil. Corn roots create a shallow network, not descending deep into the soil as beans do; the squash collects water from its spread away from the vertical growth of the corn and bean together. Further, beans provide nitrogen for the soil that benefits all three plants, and they do so through a reciprocal relationship with a bacteria called Rhizobium which cannot grow when exposed to oxygen. The bean plant grows an oxygen-free nodule that the bacterium grows within and in turn, the bacterium shares its nitrogen with beans, creating a nitrogen fertilizer for all three plants. Kimmerer, 129-135.

[484] Kimmerer, 134.

[485] Kimmerer, 138.

[486] This agriculture focuses on ease at the expense of relationship and well-being. Monocultures are much more susceptible to pests than polycultures, as such, the plants themselves are not as strong in response to insects that eat crops nor in fighting off diseases that may occur. As such, insecticides are used in this kind of agriculture. Further, without the nitrogen that the beans provide, corn is sprayed with fertilizers of ammonium nitrate; additionally herbicides suppress weeds rather than squash protecting the three plants together. As such, the well-being of the plants themselves differ under these kinds of agriculture and rely upon various additional chemicals that also cause damage to the environment over time. Much of this results in environmental racism, as we will unpack in the section on the Myth of Biological Race.

[487] Kimmerer, 138.

[488] See Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning : The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America (New York: Nation Books, 2016), 210-211.

[489] Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto,* Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 19.

[490] Mills, *The Racial Contract,* 50.

[491] Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto*, Avon, ; W213 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 10.

[492] Manuel and Posluns, *The Fourth World : An Indian Reality*.

[493] See John Locke, , *Two Treatises of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration*, Rethinking the Western Tradition (New Haven, Conn. ; Yale University Press, 2003), for an example of this kind of perception of waste.

[494] Glen Sean Coulthard and Taiaiake Alfred, *Red Skin, White Masks : Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 13.

[495] Manuel describes this as the encounter between the colonial relationship with land as "object" and Indigenous "land as kin." George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World : An Indian Reality* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 5.

[496] Voyles, *Wastelanding : Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country,* 31.

[497] Voyles, 30.

[498] Voyles, viii.

[499] Voyles, 10-11.

[500] Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks : Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 13.

[501] Voyles, 10.

[502] Voyles, 9.

[503] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, First paperback edition. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Milkweed Editions, 2015), 326.

[504] Voyles, 9.

[505] Voyles, 9.

[506] See: Zimring, *Clean and White : A History of Environmental Racism in the United States*; Voyles, *Wastelanding : Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country*; Norgaard, *Salmon and Acorns Feed Our People : Colonialism, Nature, and Social Action*; Coulthard and Alfred, *Red Skin, White Masks : Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*; Deloria, *God Is Red a Native View of Religion : 30th Anniversary Edition*; and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done : Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017) for further details and examples of environmental racism.

[507] Laura. Westra and Bill E. Lawson, *Faces of Environmental Racism : Confronting Issues of Global Justice*, 2nd ed., Studies in Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001).

[508] Bridges, 302.

[509] Bridges, 361.

[510] Bridges, 366.

[511] Bridges, 361.

[512] Bridges, 366.

[513] James H Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2022), 144.

[514] Bridges, 368.

[515] Bridges, 367.

[516] Bridges, 367.

[517] The meaning/referent of the word "race" has changed over time and in relation to historical events and economic/political need to maintain the material status quo; Naomi Zack's description of the hegemonic definition for a particular time period (not universally): "race as biologically inherited… was the dominant model and meaning of the word from the 18th to the 20th century" Naomi Zack, *Philosophy of Race: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 4.

[518] In Bridges' words, this is a "racialization of disability" that then "disable[s] the bodies of nonwhite people" (Bridges, 367).

[519] Bridges, "The Dysgenic State: Environmental Injustice and Disability-Selective Abortion Bans," 362.

[520] Carl A. Zimring, *Clean and White : A History of Environmental Racism in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 215.

[521] Juliana Maantay, "Asthma and Air Pollution in the Bronx: Methodological and Data Considerations in Using GIS for Environmental Justice and Health Research," *Health & Place* 13 (April 1, 2007): 32–56, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2005.09.009.

[522] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities Report — United States, 2013," Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (Atlanta, GA: Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

November 22, 2013), https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/other/su6203.pdf; Shannon Sullivan, "Inheriting Racist Disparities in Health," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 1, no. 2 (2013): 190, https://doi.org/10.5325/critphilrace.1.2.0190.

[523] Aneesh Patnaik et al., "Racial Disparities and Climate Change," Princeton Student Climate Initiative, August 15, 2020, https://psci.princeton.edu/tips/2020/8/15/racial-disparities-and-climate-change.

[524] Bridges, "The Dysgenic State: Environmental Injustice and Disability-Selective Abortion Bans."

[525] See also Christina Elizabeth Sharpe, *In the Wake : On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016) for an account this phenomenon.

[526] "Environmental injustice means that low-income people, who are disproportionately nonwhite, will encounter many more fetal impairments that are caused by environmental toxins." Bridges, "The Dysgenic State: Environmental Injustice and Disability-Selective Abortion Bans," 365.

[527] Sharpe, *In the Wake : On Blackness and Being.*

[528] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection : Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America.*

[529] Bridges, "The Dysgenic State: Environmental Injustice and Disability-Selective Abortion Bans."

[530] Bridges, 369.

[531] Bridges.

[532] Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks : Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 7.

[533] Coulthard; Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks.*

[534] Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto*, Avon, ; W213 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 9.

[535] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done : Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 98.

[536] Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins : An Indian Manifesto*, Avon, ; W213 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 83.

[537] Deloria, 82.

[538] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks : Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition.*

[539] Coulthard, 16; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1st Evergreen ed. (New York: New York : Grove Press, 1991), 45.

[540] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done : Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 98.

Notes to Conclusion:

[541] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks.*
Notes:

[542] Linda Martín Alcoff, "Phenomenology, Post-Structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience," in *Femininst Phenomenology*, ed. Linda Fischer and Lester Embree (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 39–56.

[543] Beauvoir, *The Second Sex.*

[544] Paul C. Taylor, *Race : A Philosophical Introduction* (Cambridge, UK : Malden, MA: Cambridge, UK : Polity, 2004), 9.

[545] Taylor, 9.

[546] Taylor, 9; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A Landes (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012).

[547] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*; Stawarska and Ring, "Black Speaking Subjects: Frantz Fanon's Critique of Coloniality of Language in Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology"; Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception.*

[548] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception.*

[549] Taylor, *Race : A Philosophical Introduction,* 9.

[550] Camisha Russell, *The Assisted Reproduction of Race* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 16.

[551] Russell, 18.

[552] Russell, 13.

[553] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book"; Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*; Lewis R Gordon, *What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to His Life and Thought* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2015); Lewis R Gordon, "The Black and the Body Politic: Fanon's Existential Phenomenological

Critique of Psychoanalysis," in *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Lewis R Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Renée T. White (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

[554] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book"; Ring, "Fanon and Soap Advertising"; Stawarska and Ring, "Black Speaking Subjects: Frantz Fanon's Critique of Coloniality of Language in Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology"; Gordon, "The Black and the Body Politic: Fanon's Existential Phenomenological Critique of Psychoanalysis"; Butler, *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*; Alcoff, "Towards a Phenomenology of Racial Embodiment."

[555] The work of Hortense Spillers is a significant exception to this general trend; however, at times she more closely follows Barthes' work whereas I am more critical of pieces of Barthes' method and want to build upon the strengths of his methods but include the strengths of existential phenomenology and Indigenous and decolonial philosophy as well.

[556] For more on this work please see: Ring, "Fanon and Soap Advertising"; Ring, "A Critique of Whiteness as Cleanliness"; Ring, "A Critique of the Colonial Cleanliness Crusade."